

Robert Connor Interview #2

Company G, 318th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Amy Judge)

(MS Word Audio Transcript [NOT edited, just transcribed])

00:00:09 Speaker 1

This is June 21st, 2000.

00:00:11 Speaker 1

The interview is taking place at West Virginia University School of Journalism. The person being interviewed is Robert Connor.

00:00:18 Speaker 1

His date of birth is 6/5/22.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

Mr. Connors, current address is 602 Preston Rd. Morgantown, WV 26505.

00:00:28 Speaker 1

My name is Joel Beason and I am the interviewer.

00:00:32 Speaker 1

I'm a professor at West Virginia University and I'm doing this project with the Veterans History Project in the School of Journalism.

00:00:42 Speaker 1

The camera person is Amy Judge, the veteran I'm interviewing served in with the.

00:00:51 Speaker 1

318th Division 300 and 18th Regiment.

00:00:56 Speaker 2

Of the 80th.

00:00:58 Speaker 1

Of the 80th Division in World War 2.

00:01:02 Speaker 1

His branch of service was the Army infantry, held the rank of first Lieutenant. The areas he served in were France and Belgium, and in the earlier tape.

00:01:16 Speaker 1

You talked about.

00:01:18 Speaker 1

Going from.

00:01:20 Speaker 1

Going to England first, how did you get there?

00:01:26 Speaker 2

Big troop ship similar to the Queen Mary.

00:01:28 Speaker 2

Of.

00:01:29 Speaker 2

I don't remember which one it was, but it was just a massive humanity onboard.

00:01:33 Speaker 1

And where did you leave from?

00:01:38 Speaker 2

I think we left from New York.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

I'm not sure, but I think it was New York.

00:01:44 Speaker 1

And what was it like? What did?

00:01:47 Speaker 2

Sickening. I mean, everybody was seasick and they were packed in.

00:01:52 Speaker 2

You know, just couldn't wait to.

00:01:55 Speaker 2

Where we're going.

00:01:57 Speaker 1

Do you?

00:01:58 Speaker 1

Do you remember?

00:01:59 Speaker 1

What are your strongest memories from that? Do you have?

00:02:03 Speaker 2

The troop ship.

00:02:04

A.

00:02:06 Speaker 2

I guess the awful smell.

00:02:09 Speaker 2

Of it, because it the ship was just packed with soldiers and it was a big ship. But, you know, I say a lot of them are seasick and.

00:02:19 Speaker 2

I think probably took six or eight days to get over there.

00:02:22 Speaker 1

I think.

00:02:23 Speaker 1

And you did you have men to command them?

00:02:27 Speaker 2

No, I was just an individual.

00:02:30 Speaker 2

I don't recall I had any responsibilities just.

00:02:33 Speaker 2

Just get over there.

00:02:36 Speaker 1

What did you do with your time on the ship?

00:02:40 Speaker 2

Hangover. The railing.

00:02:43 Speaker 2

Best I can remember, there wasn't one anything that did.

00:02:46 Speaker 2

Wasn't wasn't exactly like a cruise ship.

00:02:51 Speaker 1

And do you remember arriving in England?

00:02:53 Speaker 1

The ship.

00:02:57 Speaker 2

I'm trying to think where we came in.

00:03:02 Speaker 2

Uh.

00:03:04 Speaker 2

Don't remember too much about it, except we were glad to get on dry land and then we were put on trucks and trucked into our our base where we're going to be situated.

00:03:17 Speaker 2

I don't remember too much about the extra.

00:03:18 Speaker 2

Can't remember where we came in.

00:03:23 Speaker 2

Hmm.

00:03:27 Speaker 1

And.

00:03:31 Speaker 1

When you went to France, how did you get there, remember?

00:03:37 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:03:38 Speaker 2

Remember that pretty well.

00:03:42 Speaker 2

We left on what was called Little Dutch liners.

00:03:44 Speaker 2

There were little boats.

00:03:47 Speaker 2

That traveled a channel.

00:03:48 Speaker 2

They they didn't really go out in the main ocean very much, but that was what they did before the war.

00:03:54 Speaker 2

Just little excursion boats. The bait that we went from, from England to France.

00:04:02 Speaker 2

It really wasn't that big.

00:04:04

It.

00:04:05 Speaker 2

And I don't remember how many troops around it, but it wasn't anything near like the boat that we'd come across from the stage.

00:04:12 Speaker 2

At a very interesting little episode.

00:04:16 Speaker 2

As we were about in the middle of the channel.

00:04:19 Speaker 2

There were some Navy ships going around.

00:04:24 Speaker 2

And this one boy.

00:04:26 Speaker 2

That's my brothers ship and he recognized a member on the side of the destroyer.

00:04:31 Speaker 2

And so the word got around and I don't know how they did it with signal or what, but they stopped both ships in.

00:04:37 Speaker 2

Middle of the channel.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

The Navy destroyer and our little Dutch transport and they put down little doories.

00:04:48 Speaker 2

And both men got in and paddled and met between the two ships. The brothers met in the middle of English Channel.

00:04:53 Speaker 2

Don't know whether they ever met again after that or not.

00:04:55 Speaker 2

Someone who found a bottle of booze for them to celebrate with, and so both ships just stood still while we watched the two brothers.

00:05:01 Speaker 2

Meet thought that was kind of an unusual episode, but they would both get the signal straight so they could do something like that.

00:05:09 Speaker 2

Then we went on about our business.

00:05:12 Speaker 1

How did everybody feel about it?

00:05:13 Speaker 2

Oh, they just.

00:05:14 Speaker 2

They thought that was.

00:05:15 Speaker 2

You know, the brothers got to meet each other in the middle of the channel.

00:05:20 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:05:23 Speaker 1

What was everyone thinking or what were you thinking?

00:05:26 Speaker 2

Well.

00:05:28 Speaker 2

You see, as an infantry officer, you're almost predestined.

00:05:33 Speaker 2

And.

00:05:35 Speaker 2

Your chance of survival are very.

00:05:38 Speaker 2

And I recall there were three of us that were fairly close and then the fellows of big football Player, captain, these football team at Ole Miss.

00:05:49 Speaker 2

And presently student body and president fraternity, great Guy.

00:05:54 Speaker 2

And we were watching them load the ship, and as they were loading, they would take these boxes, these big crates off.

00:06:02 Speaker 2

And he said what all these creatures hanging off.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

Said those are.

00:06:05 Speaker 2

That's the way we're coming back.

00:06:08 Speaker 2

And he said, what do you mean?

00:06:09 Speaker 2

Said well, those.

00:06:09 Speaker 2

Those are the casualties that they're bringing back.

00:06:14 Speaker 2

And he found that coming back that way.

00:06:17 Speaker 2

I knew if it was he was the only one of our group that was killed. Of the four of us, he was killed. The rest of us survived. But.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

It was.

00:06:28 Speaker 2

I.

00:06:28 Speaker 2

I guess I assumed I was going to get hit sooner or later and most the average expectancy for infantry patrols.

00:06:36 Speaker 2

There's maybe a week or 10 days in combat at most.

00:06:41 Speaker 2

Well, I finally was there about 6 weeks.

00:06:44 Speaker 2

I overstayed my welcome.

00:06:47 Speaker 2

One reason because during that we were pulled off the frontline for rest and recreation to get resupplied, and so we had about 3 or 4 days there that we weren't actually in combat, but.

00:07:01 Speaker 2

Life in combat is just a matter of.

00:07:03 Speaker 2

You assume that you're going to get it sooner or later.

00:07:08 Speaker 1

And did you know those statistics before you went?

00:07:11 Speaker 2

I think we knew that there's a chance of an infantry officer pretty slim.

00:07:16 Speaker 2

You weren't going to.

00:07:18 Speaker 2

Without fear of the ages division, the original officers were all shot on the everybody practically company grade down, captain down were all almost all replacements.

00:07:31 Speaker 2

Weren't the original.

00:07:33 Speaker 2

They trained, I think maybe in Kentucky somewhere before the war. And you know, it was.

00:07:39 Speaker 2

A regional kind of division at the time I got over there was replaced by everybody from everywhere.

00:07:46 Speaker 2

But your life, your life in the infantry is very short.

00:07:53 Speaker 2

Or Myrna beach.

00:07:55 Speaker 2

Fatal. But you know you're not going to.

00:07:58 Speaker 2

Walk genuinely every day.

00:08:02 Speaker 1

So do you remember arriving from that boat to?

00:08:06 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:08:08 Speaker 2

We I think we would probably.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

Right close to where the.

00:08:15 Speaker 2

Invasion was because I remember we had to walk up a Cliff.

00:08:20 Speaker 2

And that was what they did invasion.

00:08:22 Speaker 2

So I think we were sort of falling apart the invasion, but when we got to the.

00:08:26 Speaker 2

Of.

00:08:26 Speaker 2

Hill. There was a railroad head. They had already restored the railroads.

00:08:34 Speaker 2

And our orders there were to wait till a train arrived and the whistle blew.

00:08:39 Speaker 2

On the train.

00:08:41 Speaker 2

Whisk away.

00:08:43 Speaker 2

And I remember the other lieutenants and I.

00:08:48 Speaker 2

Were just meddling around waiting for the train and the troops were all there.

00:08:53 Speaker 2

And they had the the French urinals. If you've seen those where they just cover your knees up and you just stand there and.

00:09:04 Speaker 2

Daylight and the mayor had a big time using the French urinals.

00:09:11 Speaker 2

So. So tell him I.

00:09:13 Speaker 2

Well, if we've got to go, let's wait till the man to get on the train.

00:09:18 Speaker 2

And we'll just sort of hold back here.

00:09:23 Speaker 2

So the men were starting on the train and we got in the urinal and we were standing there, you know, get dazed around. And as luck would have it, a couple of army nurses walked by.

00:09:34 Speaker 2

And that same time, the men came off the train.

00:09:36

Hey, look at me.

00:09:37

Tell us.

00:09:37

Look at the Lieutenant.

00:09:39 Speaker 2

You know, I was.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

But they really weren't what we were.

00:09:43 Speaker 2

But you're just not used to that in the states.

00:09:45 Speaker 2

Place to do that all the.

00:09:46 Speaker 2

And the nurses tips their hat, and we saluted them. And awful.

00:09:51 Speaker 2

So they're standing in the oil.

00:09:54 Speaker 2

So that was that was my first action on on land in France.

00:10:00 Speaker 2

But for now, the train took us into Paris.

00:10:04 Speaker 2

And that was a replacement.

00:10:05 Speaker 2

So you were just stationed there to be assigned some place and I wasn't there very long until I was assigned the 80th Division and put on trucks and hauled out and joined the division in the field, so.

00:10:18 Speaker 1

What is it like on the train going to Paris?

00:10:22 Speaker 2

The only thing I remember these were what were called 48 box cars.

00:10:27 Speaker 2

Little small and they got the name because they were one, supposedly a whole 40 man and one mule and eight mules.

00:10:35 Speaker 2

That was they were called the 40 mates.

00:10:38 Speaker 2

And so it had to be pretty compact.

00:10:42 Speaker 2

But somehow another I remember an old Frenchman bump a ride and got on the train.

00:10:49 Speaker 2

And.

00:10:52 Speaker 2

He started apologizing, he said. You know, the French are really in bad shape.

00:10:56 Speaker 2

We've lost all of our good men and wars, and he was commiserating the fact that, you know, here we were a bunch of young Libert young men. And the French had lost all their men, and it was kind of sad to hear him talk about it.

00:11:10 Speaker 2

And then the engineer got off the track.

00:11:12 Speaker 2

Another, and he was supposed to go up the main line instead.

00:11:16 Speaker 2

Switch diverted him onto a siding and we hit another train.

00:11:21 Speaker 2

And there were men sleeping in box cars in this train and they got crushed.

00:11:25 Speaker 2

Then we had to back back and go right by the men we just crushed.

00:11:31 Speaker 2

That was kind of a sad introduction.

00:11:34 Speaker 1

You Americans will feel.

00:11:35 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, they were.

00:11:37 Speaker 2

I think there.

00:11:37 Speaker 2

There was probably a siding that had supplies on there, something they were there to guard the train or something and they were just, I think, sleeping.

00:11:46 Speaker 2

They didn't expect anybody to hit the train, but we just got off in the wrong track.

00:11:50 Speaker 2

And smashed.

00:11:53 Speaker 2

I mean the fact she had to come back and go right by what she had done wasn't very tasteful.

00:11:59 Speaker 1

So you you could see them.

00:12:00 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:12:05 Speaker 1

And.

00:12:06 Speaker 1

What was your impression of France when you were riding on this train when you first got?

00:12:14 Speaker 2

Well, there was a lot of war damage, obviously because of been a lot of bombing.

00:12:20 Speaker 2

But I.

00:12:22 Speaker 2

You really couldn't see? Actually couldn't see much.

00:12:26 Speaker 2

I remember we had to spend one night on the train and.

00:12:31 Speaker 2

The men.

00:12:32 Speaker 2

Kind of.

00:12:35 Speaker 2

Outlined our own area on the train and there wasn't enough room for everybody.

00:12:40 Speaker 2

Laying down sleep took up so much space that there wasn't room for everybody to do that.

00:12:45 Speaker 2

So I the next day, I said.

00:12:47 Speaker 2

Now we're going to do this an organized way and 1/2 the men on one side of the train and half on the other.

00:12:53 Speaker 2

And when I give the signal, I want you to all fall down on the floor and they just.

00:12:58 Speaker 2

Clothes like that. And there was plenty room because we had space, all organized.

00:13:02 Speaker 2

Looked.

00:13:03 Speaker 2

Only space for me.

00:13:06 Speaker 2

I used all the.

00:13:07 Speaker 2

They all had a place to lay.

00:13:08

Down.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

Except I had.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

Sit in the doorway all night.

00:13:12 Speaker 2

But the trains were kinda.

00:13:15 Speaker 2

Basic means of transportation and after that it was big trucks we hauled around.

00:13:20 Speaker 2

All the time.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

Was there any fear of air attack or anything like that when you?

00:13:27 Speaker 2

Never, never saw.

00:13:30

A.

00:13:31 Speaker 2

Enemy plane until couple days before Christmas.

00:13:35 Speaker 2

I guess.

00:13:37 Speaker 2

In the battle, the bulge, the weather had been so bad that the neither side could get their Air Force out.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

And two days before Christmas, the skies cleared.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

And so the we could get our supplies in by transport flying transport through more supplies into the troops in front.

00:14:03 Speaker 2

And I recall we were on the hill.

00:14:06 Speaker 2

And I looked in here.

00:14:07 Speaker 2

Planes fighting.

00:14:08 Speaker 2

I never seen this before, and much of it was flying.

00:14:12 Speaker 2

It was fighting with AB 51, I think, and it would make these big arcs trying to catch each other and you know, it's just like a show and you see it in the movie and how the voice is great.

00:14:23 Speaker 2

And I guess the American must have. And one guy bailed out.

00:14:26 Speaker 2

Saw a parachute come down and.

00:14:30 Speaker 2

Finally.

00:14:32 Speaker 2

I guess the measurement must have been in trouble.

00:14:35 Speaker 2

He was out of ammunition or out of fuel because he started a high tilt back to his side of the line and he flew right over our position and I think I could hit that plane with a rocket.

00:14:45 Speaker 2

Fly so low.

00:14:47 Speaker 2

But he he didn't try to stray for.

00:14:49 Speaker 2

He just zoomed right over us, but it was sudden. Watching it air fight.

00:14:54 Speaker 2

Never thought I'd never see an air fight before.

00:14:57 Speaker 2

And I've never seen these big raids of bombers or any that stuff either.

00:15:00 Speaker 2

There's a lot of that that went on that I I didn't see that.

00:15:05 Speaker 1

So getting back to the train, what was it like arriving in?

00:15:10 Speaker 1

In Paris.

00:15:13 Speaker 2

I don't recall. They they generally had things pretty well organized.

00:15:16 Speaker 2

Get off the train there and trucks.

00:15:17 Speaker 2

You load in the trucks and they hold you someplace else, you know.

00:15:21 Speaker 2

It I'll say one thing. They had things fairly well organized in his replacement depots and.

00:15:31 Speaker 2

The abatement replacement depot twice when I was wounded.

00:15:37 Speaker 2

I was shipped back to a hospital in England.

00:15:40 Speaker 2

And they were so desperate for.

00:15:44 Speaker 2

Officers and men on the front that they got us out of the hospital as quick as they could.

00:15:50 Speaker 2

And apparently they never even X-rayed my neck.

00:15:53 Speaker 2

They had no idea what was and I didn't know anything wrong either, so I was shipped all.

00:16:00 Speaker 2

Hospital in England back to the replacement depot in Paris.

00:16:06 Speaker 2

When I got there.

00:16:08 Speaker 2

The girl weekend another photo. I decided we would walk down the streets of Paris and just see what things were like.

00:16:16 Speaker 2

And about halfway through, I noticed that I'm not right.

00:16:20 Speaker 2

I've been my head.

00:16:21 Speaker 2

I get these shocks all over my body and I see, you know, I'm a flip to go back to combat, so I went on sick call the next morning.

00:16:29 Speaker 2

Time I'd ever been on sick call.

00:16:31 Speaker 2

And the doctor looked at me and took X-rays and said, you know, you got a broken neck. You haven't been going anywhere. And he wanted to put one of those horse collars on me. And then he showed me the X.

00:16:40 Speaker 2

Was not really broken.

00:16:41 Speaker 2

A piece of.

00:16:42 Speaker 2

Seven. Then they ship me back to.

00:16:44 Speaker 2

I was in England for weeks before they finally decided to send me back to the states, so I.

00:16:49 Speaker 2

Made the crossing those times on an airplane. They evacuated me to England by plane.

00:16:57 Speaker 1

So how long did it take for you to get from when you first landed in France to Paris?

00:17:06

OK.

00:17:06 Speaker 2

Two days, I think.

00:17:07 Speaker 1

On the train.

00:17:08 Speaker 2

Yeah, maybe not that long, but I remember sleeping on the train, so it must have been overnight.

00:17:13 Speaker 1

And then you got on trucks mostly, yeah.

00:17:17 Speaker 1

And what happened then?

00:17:19 Speaker 2

Well, we were taken to our units at that time.

00:17:26 Speaker 2

The 8th had moved.

00:17:28 Speaker 2

Far into France in Belgium.

00:17:31 Speaker 2

And we were.

00:17:33 Speaker 2

Assigned to you in a car, you go with the first platoon and that was it.

00:17:37

Yeah.

00:17:38 Speaker 2

Then you go try to get acquainted with your men and your non comms and carry on the war.

00:17:44 Speaker 1

You remember meeting your men the first day. What was that one?

00:17:50 Speaker 2

Well, of course they looked at me as some kind of a green green horn, and I was.

00:17:55 Speaker 2

And some of them have been in combat, you know, for a while, and others weren't much older than I was or or had been in combat very much because.

00:18:04 Speaker 2

So there weren't too many old timers here, but there were some that had been around a while.

00:18:09 Speaker 2

But you learn to.

00:18:11 Speaker 2

On them.

00:18:13 Speaker 2

And they learn to depend on you.

00:18:16 Speaker 1

And so.

00:18:18 Speaker 1

Was it like meeting them? Did you?

00:18:21 Speaker 1

I mean, oftentimes there's a time when you have to pass some test of trust or.

00:18:26 Speaker 1

You know some.

00:18:27 Speaker 2

I don't.

00:18:29 Speaker 2

I don't recall anything that.

00:18:33 Speaker 2

Was unusual about medium and we I just came in there. There. Lieutenant Lee had been killed or wounded prior to that, and I was in taking his place. And then it just. It was a routine. Almost.

00:18:49 Speaker 1

Or were there men in the platoon that you relied upon? You said?

00:18:56 Speaker 2

Yeah, there were some that were more, I guess, dependable than others.

00:19:00 Speaker 2

Was kind of an interesting observation.

00:19:04 Speaker 2

One of one of the men in Platoon was a little Chinese cook.

00:19:08 Speaker 2

And this kid was fearless.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

Would do anything.

00:19:13 Speaker 2

Another guy with a big, strapping football player from high school and a big bully like type and you think, boy, he gonna win the world by himself.

00:19:23 Speaker 2

So but when you really get down to something serious, he was never.

00:19:28 Speaker 2

He he always managed to be someplace else. And when our last attack in the bastone, that particular Guy, City Street, were bad, he's going to have to.

00:19:39 Speaker 2

You know.

00:19:39 Speaker 2

He was all talk.

00:19:42 Speaker 2

And so and one other time I recall it, there was an art professor.

00:19:48 Speaker 2

And we had been on the attack.

00:19:51 Speaker 2

And.

00:19:52 Speaker 2

You know, he mind his own business anyway. He's told to do.

00:19:56 Speaker 2

And then he was told to hold up and dig in and be on the defensive.

00:20:02 Speaker 2

And he couldn't stand being on his fence and waiting for something to happen. He wanted to be on the move, and it didn't fit his personality at all.

00:20:09 Speaker 2

Just amazing how.

00:20:12 Speaker 2

The true personality of a person sometimes come out under combats. People that.

00:20:19 Speaker 2

I remember one time we were on the frontline and we had word that there was hot coffee back in the rear.

00:20:27 Speaker 2

If someone would go back and bring the big Marmite can with coffee up to the front line, the men could have some hot coffee.

00:20:35 Speaker 2

So I designated two men to go back and get the coffee, and then one man said no, wait till I do it by myself. Don't.

00:20:41 Speaker 2

About it, I'll get it.

00:20:43 Speaker 2

So he went up over the hill and came back, got inside of the men who were dug in on the front line, tripped and fell and spilled all the coffee.

00:20:51 Speaker 2

I think they all would have killed him.

00:20:52 Speaker 2

The spot.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

They were looking for something hot and.

00:20:58 Speaker 2

You have a lot of interesting things.

00:21:01 Speaker 1

So you arrived at your new unit and got to know the man. And then what happened?

00:21:07 Speaker 2

Well, we have several skirmishers, not any big battles.

00:21:15 Speaker 2

But the men all stick with stuck with me pretty well.

00:21:20 Speaker 2

And then the day that.

00:21:22 Speaker 2

Jumped off, so to speak, to, by the way, in the bastone they were all right there with me and.

00:21:29 Speaker 2

It.

00:21:30 Speaker 2

But someone has to lead in.

00:21:34 Speaker 2

We had a.

00:21:37 Speaker 2

In the winter of the day was that when we left the lake barn, we were staying in, there was a small patch of woods.

00:21:47 Speaker 2

And there are some light tanks from the 4th Honor Division, and they were to move up and spray the edge of the woods with their 50 caliber machine guns.

00:21:56 Speaker 2

And then we would go into the woods and get any prisoners or get anybody was further into the woods and bring them out as prisoners.

00:22:04 Speaker 2

And then we would get through the woods and when we got through the.

00:22:09 Speaker 2

You know, we were holed up there temporarily.

00:22:12 Speaker 2

And it worked great because I've not worked.

00:22:14 Speaker 2

Tanks that I was happy with and so to see these little tanks go up there, there's a small tanks and and spray the woods and then pull back and let us go in.

00:22:23 Speaker 2

I thought, boy, this is a way of fighting war.

00:22:26 Speaker 2

We get up to the 4 digits of the woods, then over on the left were some medium.

00:22:32 Speaker 2

These were much bigger tanks then they were to move out and spray the next woods and then we would do the same thing in next woods.

00:22:40 Speaker 2

Shall we get up there?

00:22:42 Speaker 2

I saw the medium tanks over there and we were up online in the edge of the woods.

00:22:47 Speaker 2

And we knew the Germans were out in front in the next woods.

00:22:51 Speaker 2

So I told the cat and I said, Captain, I'll go over and tell the tank commander that we're ready to to follow him whenever he moves out.

00:22:59 Speaker 2

And I went over there and some young Lieutenant.

00:23:02 Speaker 2

He'd been.

00:23:03 Speaker 2

Unit had been shot up pretty bad, I'm sure.

00:23:07 Speaker 2

He said. I'm not moving.

00:23:09 Speaker 2

I said, well, you're supposed to go out and we follow you, he said.

00:23:11 Speaker 2

Way, he said.

00:23:12 Speaker 2

I'm not moving. Well, I would have stopped the whole darn war if you know, we'd waited for him.

00:23:18 Speaker 2

So I asked him if he if he could fire on the edge of the woods.

00:23:22 Speaker 2

Said no, I can't do that, I said.

00:23:24 Speaker 2

You get artillery fire in force.

00:23:26 Speaker 2

He didn't know where his observer was.

00:23:28 Speaker 2

Couldn't do that.

00:23:29 Speaker 2

So the tanks that were supposed to support us that morning were completely useless.

00:23:37 Speaker 2

So I went back and told the captain.

00:23:40 Speaker 2

And the captain was he was shell shocked, I guess.

00:23:45 Speaker 2

I said let's get our 60mm mortars out and fire from here over to the edge of the woods.

00:23:53 Speaker 2

60mm more than about that bigger round is it's not really a big weapon.

00:23:59 Speaker 2

But the theory is when it's firing up like this, you move in under the fire and then you withdraw the fire and you're where you want to be.

00:24:10 Speaker 2

He's OK. So I got the guys to set their mortars up and start dropping rounds over.

00:24:16 Speaker 2

Thought the enemy was.

00:24:18 Speaker 2

And so I said, OK, let's go now, cap.

00:24:20 Speaker 2

Now they start going until the mortars go out of action.

00:24:24 Speaker 2

Well, that kills the whole effect. If you if you let them quit firing, then they can.

00:24:28 Speaker 2

Enemy can come up out of their foxhole and you know you have really gained a whole lot.

00:24:33 Speaker 2

But he wouldn't let us jump off until the mortars quit firing.

00:24:36 Speaker 2

And so we started out.

00:24:39 Speaker 2

What's called a skirmish line, which means all the men are online and you just move forward through.

00:24:43 Speaker 2

Snow and whether it was and there were some Barb wire fences thrown along and.

00:24:49 Speaker 2

It was just like ducks in a shooting gallery open field.

00:24:51 Speaker 1

Is it open field?

00:24:54 Speaker 2

Yeah, there's in that one thing there it shows a picture of typical cutter.

00:25:00 Speaker 1

Is there any cover in the?

00:25:01 Speaker 1

All trees.

00:25:02 Speaker 2

No.

00:25:05 Speaker 2

No trees, and I said the trees were in little patches and clumps.

00:25:08 Speaker 2

Where the Germans were.

00:25:12 Speaker 2

And you know, I didn't have any real thought.

00:25:15 Speaker 2

Was probably further advanced than anybody else.

00:25:20 Speaker 2

And I don't know what I was going to do if I'd gotten into that where the Germans were.

00:25:26 Speaker 2

Shrinking within a month.

00:25:29 Speaker 2

But anyway, I didn't make it. I think they were surrendered or they withdrew. I think they withdrew, but they were Rifleman. They were just picking us off like ducks in a shooting guard.

00:25:39 Speaker 1

And and is that where?

00:25:41 Speaker 1

Were injured, yeah.

00:25:44 Speaker 1

And how many? How long after you you said pushed off from that barn till that happened?

00:25:52 Speaker 2

Oh, probably 1520 minutes.

00:25:56 Speaker 1

So with that closed.

00:25:56 Speaker 2

Yeah. See, we just, we didn't realize we're that close. The front line when we were sleeping in the barn at night.

00:26:03 Speaker 2

But when we got out, we just started right into the woods, which is on the other side of the road and then little tanks came up and fired into it and we cleared the woods.

00:26:14 Speaker 2

And we were right on the front line.

00:26:16 Speaker 2

Even know it?

00:26:18 Speaker 2

But.

00:26:20 Speaker 2

If the tanks.

00:26:23 Speaker 2

If the meaning tanks had done what they were supposed to do, we wouldn't have near the casualties.

00:26:28 Speaker 2

But I suppose they were afraid there might be some anti tank fire over there and if they got out in the open field they get shot up.

00:26:35 Speaker 2

You know that's that's what they're there for.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

But we didn't get any support from the tanks at all in that.

00:26:43 Speaker 1

So do you remember that?

00:26:46 Speaker 2

Oh. Oh, yeah, very well.

00:26:46 Speaker 1

Getting getting help.

00:26:49 Speaker 1

Tell us about that.

00:26:51 Speaker 2

Well, you know.

00:26:54 Speaker 2

I was advancing forward and in the infantry in that situation you just keep firing your rifle indiscriminately.

00:27:02 Speaker 2

The idea.

00:27:03 Speaker 2

Maybe I'll keep the other guys head down.

00:27:07 Speaker 2

And I got hit through the side first.

00:27:12 Speaker 2

But it didn't knock me down.

00:27:15 Speaker 2

And I knew that I had to do something. And I remember just.

00:27:18 Speaker 2

Through a little tour of a.

00:27:20 Speaker 2

In the.

00:27:21 Speaker 2

And so I turned around really to to get out of the action. And when I turned around then I got hit in the neck. And that that was just like getting hit with a baseball bat.

00:27:31 Speaker 2

It knocked me flat and I was paralyzed for a while.

00:27:35 Speaker 2

And I was out of the war.

00:27:39 Speaker 2

Oh, it didn't take very long to.

00:27:41 Speaker 2

Get shot up.

00:27:43 Speaker 1

And so you're hit lying on the ground.

00:27:47 Speaker 1

What happened then?

00:27:48 Speaker 2

Well, by that time my men had caught up with me and they all stopped by and commiserated and deflected and looked down on me like I wasn't supposed to happen to me, you know?

00:27:58 Speaker 2

I said, well, you go ahead, Sergeant.

00:27:59 Speaker 2

And so being charged.

00:28:01 Speaker 2

So I, I and they kept moving.

00:28:03 Speaker 2

Give him credit for that.

00:28:05 Speaker 2

And as I say, one of them planted a rifle in the ground and put my helmet on top of it as a marker for the medics and.

00:28:14 Speaker 2

After they left, another soldier came along east.

00:28:16 Speaker 2

Don't think that's a very good place.

00:28:18 Speaker 2

Going to move it.

00:28:20 Speaker 2

Where they can be sure and see it.

00:28:21 Speaker 2

He moved.

00:28:21 Speaker 2

The rifle.

00:28:23 Speaker 2

And then went on. And after he left, the rifle fell over.

00:28:28 Speaker 2

So I thought, boy, now I don't have any marker.

00:28:30 Speaker 2

Don't where I am and.

00:28:34 Speaker 2

I just assumed the medic was medicated me sooner or later, but they were very quick to they.

00:28:40 Speaker 2

I didn't realize how close behind a battle the medics perform there.

00:28:45 Speaker 2

Right in there and got hauled away on a.

00:28:47 Speaker 2

They had a stretcher arrangement on the Jeep, but the Jeep right up on the battlefield and loaded me up and went back to the aid station.

00:28:55 Speaker 1

What happened back?

00:28:57 Speaker 1

Well.

00:28:59 Speaker 2

They sort of sort you out and you know, depending on your injury.

00:29:04 Speaker 2

And so from there I was sent back to the VAC hospital, which is a Ford Army hospital.

00:29:10 Speaker 2

And then from there I go back to a General Hospital, which is equipped to do surgery and all that kind of stuff.

00:29:15 Speaker 2

So it just kind of sorting things out as it goes back. And then finally they said no, sending back to the states or sending back to to.

00:29:25 Speaker 2

England to a General Hospital there.

00:29:28 Speaker 2

So he's sort of bounced around till you finally settle in. Depending on extending your injury, I guess.

00:29:36 Speaker 1

What's your greatest memory?

00:29:36

Yeah.

00:29:40 Speaker 1

Of being in that chain of hospital.

00:29:46 Speaker 2

Well, I think.

00:29:49 Speaker 2

Thing that I recall is that I got sent back to this evacuation hospital on Christmas Day.

00:29:56 Speaker 2

They really hadn't looked at me.

00:29:59 Speaker 2

Or examined me very much I.

00:30:01 Speaker 2

The other place I saw that I was serious enough that they they would send me on back to.

00:30:07 Speaker 2

But I got in this hospital and I just laid in the bed almost all day long.

00:30:11 Speaker 2

Is Christmas Day.

00:30:13 Speaker 2

And I thought, you know.

00:30:16 Speaker 2

They're going to look after me.

00:30:19 Speaker 2

Finally, he came down and got my niece and Lieutenant.

00:30:22 Speaker 2

There was another guy in here named O'Connor and we took him in first at your place.

00:30:28 Speaker 2

And got the name.

00:30:29 Speaker 2

And I'd later all day long when I should have been in there earlier in the day.

00:30:34 Speaker 2

And when I got there, the operating room was in the basement of this building and I've ever seen the old mash programs are not the.

00:30:45 Speaker 2

Now it reminds me of that blood everywhere and white sheets and whatnot. They had to sort of open it back up.

00:30:53 Speaker 2

Dress my.

00:30:53 Speaker 2

They really didn't do that much, but they they wanted to, I guess, examine me and find out the extent of my injuries.

00:31:00 Speaker 1

You said there was something unusual about your scars before.

00:31:06 Speaker 2

Well, it's unusual in the sense that if you see where they penetrated, how close they came to the spine.

00:31:15 Speaker 2

If they'd been quarter of.

00:31:16 Speaker 2

Inch.

00:31:17 Speaker 2

Deeper. You know it would sever the spine and this one.

00:31:22 Speaker 2

Through my side here, just glanced by a rib cage.

00:31:26 Speaker 2

Didn't actually penetrate any organs or anything, so this was fairly close to so.

00:31:33 Speaker 2

I guess everybody has their lucky days.

00:31:38

Yeah.

00:31:38 Speaker 1

So you were sent back to England. You were flown back.

00:31:41 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:31:42 Speaker 1

Do you recall that?

00:31:45 Speaker 2

Yeah, because somehow another somebody had little miniature Scotch whiskies.

00:31:52 Speaker 2

And then they passed those out.

00:31:54 Speaker 2

I didn't have one, but I I thought then that stranger they would pass out whiskey to.

00:32:00 Speaker 1

Troops and it was on the plane. They pass it.

00:32:04 Speaker 2

If you want a plane after we disembark, I don't know which it was, but it was connected with the flights.

00:32:09 Speaker 1

What kind of plane did you fly?

00:32:12 Speaker 2

It was the DC3, the one that they use for everything.

00:32:18 Speaker 1

And you remember that flight?

00:32:20 Speaker 2

Not too much.

00:32:22 Speaker 2

I don't remember where we landed, but.

00:32:26

And what?

00:32:27 Speaker 1

And then how long?

00:32:28 Speaker 1

How long was that from when you?

00:32:30 Speaker 1

Shot wounded.

00:32:33 Speaker 2

Actually, probably a couple days.

00:32:36 Speaker 2

I'm not sure I.

00:32:43 Speaker 2

I recall.

00:32:48 Speaker 2

I think it was when.

00:32:49 Speaker 2

Was.

00:32:50 Speaker 2

In France, the second time after I'd come back.

00:32:55 Speaker 2

Replacement depot and then assigned to a hospital waiting to be transferred back to England.

00:33:01 Speaker 2

We would award.

00:33:04 Speaker 2

And everybody in the ward were company great officers, which means our captains are less.

00:33:11 Speaker 2

And most of them had some.

00:33:13 Speaker 2

Of injury, some of them might have been sick or whatever, but it was in Paris and it could have been anything.

00:33:20

But.

00:33:23 Speaker 2

This was a station hospital in a fairly permanent hospital in Paris.

00:33:27 Speaker 2

This one, Lieutenant.

00:33:29 Speaker 2

You know, we're officers in the United States Army and we're entitled to a whiskey ration.

00:33:35 Speaker 2

Which you know most, most of the men had even thought about that.

00:33:40 Speaker 2

And she made a case and went to the Commanding Officer hospital and said we are entitled to a whiskey ration, which meant little book of coupons. And, you know, 1 coupon would be for a glass of Scotch and other would be for cognac.

00:33:54 Speaker 2

So you could take these things and exchange them for whiskey.

00:33:58 Speaker 2

Well, any place you could exchange him was the medical officers club.

00:34:03 Speaker 2

So after he got his book of coupons for everybody in the ward.

00:34:09 Speaker 2

The the man he wanted to went over to the officers club and had their drinks courtesy the little coupons.

00:34:18 Speaker 2

Well, this didn't sit very well with the medical officers.

00:34:21 Speaker 2

Didn't want the ground troops invading their club.

00:34:25 Speaker 2

So they sent the order today. Next day was.

00:34:29 Speaker 2

All patients using medical officers club must wear hospital garb, which meant they had to go in their bathrooms and of course, the the Nice thing about was a nurses room were there too. That's where the men got to see the nurses.

00:34:45 Speaker 2

So that in bottom.

00:34:46 Speaker 2

Put the bathrobe on, went over and started drinking again.

00:34:50 Speaker 2

Well, the third day the word came out that the officers club would only honor the coupons one more day after such a time.

00:35:03 Speaker 2

And we had a lot of.

00:35:04 Speaker 2

The other guys had never used them, so the reality is the club went over and had collected all the coupons and they proceeded to get stinking drunk.

00:35:13 Speaker 2

This is in a hospital.

00:35:16 Speaker 2

And we came back to the Lord where we were.

00:35:19 Speaker 2

And the Lord was warm.

00:35:22 Speaker 2

And the men had finished all the drinking they could do at the club and came back there and got sick.

00:35:29 Speaker 2

I've never seen such a mess. I mean, there was rumble all over the place.

00:35:33 Speaker 2

Guys have had too much to drink.

00:35:36 Speaker 2

Someone orders to go out and be shipped out the next day. Never.

00:35:39 Speaker 2

They had to be taken off the orders, but to see a drunken scene like that at the hospital was kind of unusual.

00:35:49 Speaker 2

We had some funny time.

00:35:50 Speaker 2

Times.

00:35:51 Speaker 1

So you said you while you were there before you were in that hospital. This is your your second trip to that replacement depot in Paris that you decided with someone to go see Paris.

00:35:58 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:36:06 Speaker 2

Yeah. What had happened?

00:36:08 Speaker 2

We had been sent back as though we were going to the replacement depot and.

00:36:15 Speaker 2

From a person depot to be carted back to our unit.

00:36:29 Speaker 2

And.

00:36:33 Speaker 2

We walked and I remember awful lot of walking.

00:36:39 Speaker 2

And that sort of stimulated my problem and I I suddenly.

00:36:44 Speaker 2

I cannot.

00:36:45 Speaker 2

I am not fit to go back in combat.

00:36:47 Speaker 2

I can't stand a walking town.

00:36:49 Speaker 2

I never really tested myself in the hospital.

00:36:51 Speaker 2

Didn't really.

00:36:52 Speaker 2

They just say that the wounds and the sins the wounds were cleared.

00:36:55 Speaker 2

Wanted you back in action.

00:36:58 Speaker 2

And that's when I went on sick call the next day and they said no, your next broken, which really wasn't quite broken, but enough to cause problems.

00:37:08 Speaker 1

What was Paris like?

00:37:10 Speaker 2

Well, I recall it.

00:37:12 Speaker 2

You know, it was an open city and there the troops were all around having a good time and it.

00:37:19 Speaker 2

During the war, there was number bombing in Paris or any but we walked on the shameless and.

00:37:30 Speaker 2

I don't recall where all we went, but we did a lot of walking under that.

00:37:33 Speaker 1

Did you talk to the people?

00:37:35 Speaker 2

No, no, just the two of us together, sightseeing. I don't recall.

00:37:39 Speaker 2

Did any any visiting?

00:37:46 Speaker 1

So you went on sick call and then what happened?

00:37:49 Speaker 2

Well, the doctor.

00:37:50 Speaker 2

You know you you've got a serious injury to your neck and so he evacuated me then back to England, to the hospitals in England were more permanent in the, I guess they're more qualified to take over.

00:38:05 Speaker 2

Major things. And so I was immediately put on a plane, sent back to England again.

00:38:12 Speaker 1

And you recall arriving back in England that time.

00:38:15 Speaker 2

Not really.

00:38:16 Speaker 2

Not landing or I know that we were taking on the airport to the hospital, but I don't even remember how we got there.

00:38:24 Speaker 1

And what was it like in that hospital?

00:38:26 Speaker 2

Well, it was fun. Most of the people in the hospital were.

00:38:32 Speaker 2

People who had suffered combat injuries and and had pretty good sense of humor.

00:38:40 Speaker 2

I recall 1 fella.

00:38:43 Speaker 2

In the bed next to me.

00:38:47 Speaker 2

He had been.

00:38:50 Speaker 2

Medical administrative officer was one of the field hospitals and the breakthrough came. They had to evacuate the hospital and move it to the rear to save it and at the same time he had a.

00:39:07 Speaker 2

From kind of an organ up here that had to be removed.

00:39:11 Speaker 2

I know I can't think of it.

00:39:13 Speaker 2

Anyway, he had a major operation while they were evacuating hospital, they operated on him and he got up off the operating table and walked to an ambulance and went to the rear and eventually ended up beside me.

00:39:28 Speaker 2

So, you know, he wasn't a combat injury, but he had been on the frontline and and he had this big incision down his stomach with. He looked like a football, he said. Direct hit 88.

00:39:41 Speaker 2

On an 88 to.

00:39:42 Speaker 2

About that big around.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

He was.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

He was a lot of fun.

00:39:46 Speaker 2

Kept everybody cheered up. But.

00:39:51 Speaker 2

If anything, was it?

00:39:54 Speaker 2

He developed phobias, was he's real problem.

00:39:58 Speaker 2

And which means swelling in the legs.

00:40:02 Speaker 2

And.

00:40:04 Speaker 2

They couldn't figure out why he developed.

00:40:06 Speaker 2

It didn't have anything to do with his operation.

00:40:10

And.

00:40:10 Speaker 2

Then they got some kind of a bullet in saying that they had found out in the states that.

00:40:15 Speaker 2

People who remain.

00:40:17

Yeah.

00:40:18 Speaker 2

Immobile.

00:40:20 Speaker 2

Long periods of time after an operation can develop phlebitis that they found pregnant women needed to get up and move around quick, or they develop this.

00:40:30 Speaker 2

And he said, boy, that sure doesn't apply to me because I.

00:40:33 Speaker 2

Up off the operating table.

00:40:35 Speaker 2

And walked to the ambulance.

00:40:38 Speaker 2

But it was a lot of fun.

00:40:38 Speaker 1

So how long are you in that hospital?

00:40:41 Speaker 2

I've been there for a month or.

00:40:43 Speaker 2

And they send spaceless into. Look at me and they shake their head. We don't want to do.

00:40:48 Speaker 2

Finally, one fellow who a neurologist who?

00:40:52 Speaker 2

Come into the army and had his own private practice, he said.

00:40:56 Speaker 2

Problem here is that.

00:40:58 Speaker 2

The spinal cord column.

00:41:02 Speaker 2

Is intact.

00:41:02 Speaker 2

The vertebrae has been misaligned by the impact of the bullet and pinches periodically, and when it gets, when you get exercise and fatigue, the column tends to swell a little bit and so memory bend your neck. There's pressure on the spinal column.

00:41:20 Speaker 2

So everybody agree with his diagnosis and then they start arguing about what to do about it. And finally they said, well, you don't do any use to live with it.

00:41:29 Speaker 2

I came back home and went to a orthopedic friend of mine.

00:41:33 Speaker 2

And he took pictures of it.

00:41:38 Speaker 2

And he said, well, by now that little piece of bone has slipped down in between these 6th and 7th vertebrae. And there's those two vertebrae's are fused together, he said.

00:41:46 Speaker 2

Won't have any more serious problem, so I've never know any more about it.

00:41:53 Speaker 1

How did you get home?

00:41:57 Speaker 2

The mainland on a hospital ship.

00:42:00 Speaker 2

He was pretty nice.

00:42:02 Speaker 2

I mean, we were ambulatory and we were bedridden or anything. And so we had free run of the ship and good food and we we landed at New York, I think.

00:42:16 Speaker 2

The the European war was over while we were on the High Sea.

00:42:20 Speaker 2

And then.

00:42:23 Speaker 2

There.

00:42:24 Speaker 2

There were some.

00:42:25 Speaker 2

That some of the people would be sent on to the Japanese theater. But.

00:42:30 Speaker 2

Not from the hospital ship.

00:42:32 Speaker 1

You recall hearing when the war ended.

00:42:35 Speaker 2

Yeah, we.

00:42:35

Hello.

00:42:36 Speaker 2

We were on the hospital ship. Everybody was excited.

00:42:40 Speaker 1

Where were you when that, when you heard?

00:42:42 Speaker 2

We were.

00:42:44 Speaker 2

I've somewhere on the ship, I don't know.

00:42:47 Speaker 1

And what did people do?

00:42:48 Speaker 2

Well, they just.

00:42:50 Speaker 2

Clapped and get jubilant with.

00:42:54 Speaker 1

What did you do?

00:42:55 Speaker 2

I don't recall.

00:42:57 Speaker 1

What was it like coming home?

00:43:00 Speaker 2

Well it.

00:43:00 Speaker 2

Kind of exhilarating, you know. You knew you were coming.

00:43:05 Speaker 2

You knew you were coming close to home, and I hadn't been at the Greenbrier very long before they my mother and dad came down to see me.

00:43:14 Speaker 2

They.

00:43:16 Speaker 2

Were glad that I was all in one piece.

00:43:17 Speaker 2

Think they were kind of worried, but.

00:43:22 Speaker 2

And it was kind of interesting being a patient to Greenbrier because they didn't really change the building and facilities very much.

00:43:30 Speaker 2

So take a resort like the Greenbrier and make a hospital out of it.

00:43:34 Speaker 2

Only thing they did was just put more people in the room.

00:43:36 Speaker 2

Was in a room on the Virginia.

00:43:40 Speaker 2

I think there were eight guys in the room and.

00:43:45 Speaker 2

That room today would be one of their very expensive rooms if you had to rent it.

00:43:52 Speaker 2

But we had good food.

00:43:54 Speaker 2

Movies and well taken care of.

00:43:59 Speaker 2

Eisenhower came while we were there to Greenbrier and and.

00:44:05 Speaker 2

We all got to see General Eisenhower.

00:44:09 Speaker 2

He sat behind us in a movie one time.

00:44:13 Speaker 2

They had a movie about.

00:44:16 Speaker 2

Had an Israel with it back in those days.

00:44:19 Speaker 2

The movies always show newsreel. They should picture him coming down 5th Ave. in New York and ticker tape ticker tape parade and all the contain everything.

00:44:30 Speaker 2

Some woman ran out and gave him a great big hug.

00:44:34 Speaker 2

And so here he is, sitting behind us, watching this scene up here and he just got so tickled.

00:44:42 Speaker 2

But he he came there for recreation.

00:44:44

And.

00:44:44 Speaker 2

Rest and recuperation.

00:44:48 Speaker 1

And I notice you have two purple hearts.

00:44:51 Speaker 1

You got a Purple Heart for that injury, the.

00:44:56 Speaker 1

That you received that kind of ended your participation in the war.

00:45:02 Speaker 2

Well, the first one was kind of incidental.

00:45:06 Speaker 2

Almost ashamed to take it.

00:45:09 Speaker 2

We had been pursuing the Germans and we ended up on a hilltop.

00:45:15 Speaker 2

And we're going to spend the night.

00:45:18 Speaker 2

So I instructed the men to dig your **** hole down along the front of the hill.

00:45:26 Speaker 2

And we.

00:45:27 Speaker 2

We can see where someone in straight for German column way down the distance.

00:45:33 Speaker 2

The dead horses and everything down there so.

00:45:37 Speaker 2

We just sort of want to settle in for the night.

00:45:41 Speaker 2

And I went up to the men Wallinger foxholes, and I hadn't even dug 1 yet.

00:45:46 Speaker 2

So.

00:45:49 Speaker 2

I just started across the check on the men.

00:45:53 Speaker 2

And that's the same location I think where they spilled the coffee. But when I got to the last one, I was just standing there talking to this guy.

00:46:03 Speaker 2

And I assume it must been an anatak show came in and exploded right beside this man's foxhole.

00:46:11 Speaker 2

He was pretty seriously.

00:46:12 Speaker 2

He his shoulder was all mangled.

00:46:14 Speaker 2

He had to be evacuated, but I just got to.

00:46:17 Speaker 2

A piece of shrapnel on my neck and I didn't think anything about it.

00:46:23 Speaker 2

The media came up and didn't do much more and put a Band-Aid.

00:46:26 Speaker 2

I didn't even go back to the aid station, but apparently they recorded this and without even knowing I was awarded the Purple Heart for a very minor nick in my neck.

00:46:40 Speaker 2

Back in those days, they had a point system for removing you and sending you back home.

00:46:47 Speaker 2

And I think different things have different point.

00:46:51 Speaker 2

Purple Heart was one of the things that contributed to your total point value, so I didn't fight it, but I didn't feel like I deserved it.

00:46:59 Speaker 2

Well then, when I got hit on Christmas Day, I think, you know, I got hit three times on Christmas Day and I got hit once before.

00:47:05 Speaker 2

Nothing wrong with having.

00:47:06

Purple hearts.

00:47:08 Speaker 2

So one of those for very minor thing and the other is for the major damage on Christmas Day.

00:47:15 Speaker 1

Do you remember the first moment you were in combat?

00:47:20 Speaker 1

That you were fired at or.

00:47:23 Speaker 2

Yeah, we.

00:47:23 Speaker 2

We were directed to take a small village.

00:47:28 Speaker 2

And my platoon was supposed to be the lead platoon and we were supposed to get down this hillside and attack this town.

00:47:37 Speaker 2

And the third platoon was supposed to be back here in reserve. They weren't committed.

00:47:43 Speaker 2

Unless we needed him.

00:47:44 Speaker 2

We started down there and things were going according to oil and the prisoners were surrendering.

00:47:50 Speaker 2

I look back and here's the 3rd between Solomon and firing right into us, I had more trouble trying to get these guys to quit firing and fire the enemy.

00:48:01 Speaker 2

I thought what a way to win a war, you know?

00:48:04 Speaker 2

No, but it's amazing they didn't.

00:48:07 Speaker 2

Why they did it, I don't.

00:48:08 Speaker 2

I I, the Lieutenant was was was new.

00:48:11 Speaker 2

Didn't know what he was.

00:48:12 Speaker 2

He wasn't even supposed to be.

00:48:14 Speaker 2

They weren't even supposed to be doing anything unless we needed him, but I guess they wanted to be in the war.

00:48:22 Speaker 1

How did you get them to?

00:48:24 Speaker 2

Well, I don't have to quit. Quit.

00:48:30 Speaker 1

That was your first experience.

00:48:30 Speaker 2

And it's for first experience was fighting both sides, keeping my own men off my back, and then getting the prisoners to surrender.

00:48:39 Speaker 1

What was that?

00:48:40 Speaker 1

I mean, what did you think?

00:48:41 Speaker 2

We're very confusing.

00:48:44 Speaker 2

But there's a lot of confusion. I remember one other time, our battalion commander.

00:48:51 Speaker 2

Was a guy from Parkersburg of all places.

00:48:56 Speaker 2

And he's had an ego problem, I think. And he had recovered a German officers feel coat.

00:49:02 Speaker 2

These are beautiful leather coats and decide to wear.

00:49:07 Speaker 2

Well, most of the time he'd be back in rear.

00:49:09 Speaker 2

And it wouldn't make a lot of difference, but I remember one day.

00:49:12 Speaker 2

He decided to come up on the front line, had his radio man with him, and he's wearing this German officer's fuel.

00:49:18 Speaker 2

And I was up on the frontline and I came upon him and I had my rifle pulled down.

00:49:25 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:49:26 Speaker 2

I guess I would have asked him to.

00:49:28 Speaker 2

I don't know, but before anything had happened, he stood up.

00:49:30 Speaker 2

No, it's it's Curtis also.

00:49:33 Speaker 2

Well, why on Earth a guy would wear a German uniform just because it's a nice coat?

00:49:39 Speaker 2

Among American troops, I don't know.

00:49:41 Speaker 2

Could have shot.

00:49:42 Speaker 2

And had a clear conscience about it. I guess the only reason that I held back was the fact that he had a radio man with him.

00:49:50 Speaker 2

That was complete GI uniform and I thought, well, it's got to be AGI but.

00:49:55 Speaker 2

Why anybody would?

00:49:57 Speaker 2

Where? Matter of fact, I think it's gas regulations to do that.

00:50:04 Speaker 1

And do you recall, did you shoot anyone?

00:50:08 Speaker 2

I shot had a lot of.

00:50:09 Speaker 2

I don't know that I ever killed anybody.

00:50:12 Speaker 2

I didn't see anybody fall asleep my shooting, but.

00:50:16 Speaker 2

In the frontline infantry, you don't just aim, which is mass fire.

00:50:21 Speaker 2

Everybody just shoots and hopes they hit something.

00:50:25 Speaker 2

I recall one time there was a long hillside in front of us.

00:50:30 Speaker 2

And there's one guy retreating, walking up this hillside.

00:50:35 Speaker 2

And I think there must been 25 guys shooting at him and he just kept trashing along.

00:50:39 Speaker 2

Don't know how.

00:50:40 Speaker 2

How so many people could have missed him?

00:50:43 Speaker 2

He was some distance away, but you know he's.

00:50:46 Speaker 2

I often wondered what that guy.

00:50:47 Speaker 2

He's he's trying to escape and the bullets must have been running all around and everybody was trying to hit him and all they ever got hit or not.

00:50:55 Speaker 2

So you know you a lot of the casualties are from shrapnel from artillery shells.

00:51:04 Speaker 2

The actual casualty from bullets.

00:51:06 Speaker 2

Don't know.

00:51:10 Speaker 1

How many men under you were?

00:51:13 Speaker 1

Either killed or wound.

00:51:16 Speaker 2

I have no idea.

00:51:18 Speaker 2

Some were killed while I was there and other skimmers.

00:51:23 Speaker 2

Had me were killed on Christmas Day, I'd I'd say several or least wounded.

00:51:31 Speaker 2

But I had no way of finding out.

00:51:37 Speaker 2

Whole thing is pretty.

00:51:39 Speaker 2

You just do your own thing and try to keep your own men happy and.

00:51:46 Speaker 2

What you think you're supposed to do?

00:51:54 Speaker 2

But the company commander was no use at all.

00:51:57 Speaker 2

Technically, I was supposed to take orders from him that had been passed down to him.

00:52:03 Speaker 2

He may have been in combat before. He just joined the outfit.

00:52:08 Speaker 2

I think he'd been an instructor at the Infantry School or something and never had a field experience and he was just out of it. He couldn't get any decisions out of him and I'm sure he was scared to death.

00:52:21 Speaker 2

But it's it's kind of awkward when you when you're superior officer can't make a decision and you know you're supposed to be doing something.

00:52:29 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:52:31 Speaker 1

And besides that day Christmas Day, were there other times when?

00:52:35 Speaker 1

Affected you?

00:52:38 Speaker 2

Well, we had a couple occasions at least.

00:52:41 Speaker 2

I remember that one of the lieutenants, a patrol leader, got promoted to captain.

00:52:48 Speaker 2

And we had a good relationship and he was more than fearless type, but he got killed.

00:52:53 Speaker 2

So, you know, he didn't last long.

00:53:01 Speaker 2

It's an experience that.

00:53:05 Speaker 2

I was trained for supposedly.

00:53:09 Speaker 2

And I'm glad I did it, but I never.

00:53:11 Speaker 2

To do it again.

00:53:18 Speaker 2

And I don't think war today is anything like that.

00:53:23 Speaker 2

I don't know how much.

00:53:26

Yes.

00:53:27 Speaker 2

I guess there's some face to face combat, but I think a lot.

00:53:30 Speaker 2

Us with high-powered artillery and things like that and a lot of troop carriers where the men are enclosed with. It's not as much not near as much exposure and I notice they all wear.

00:53:43 Speaker 2

Kind of metal flak jackets now.

00:53:47 Speaker 2

I don't think a war today is anything like it was back then.

00:53:55 Speaker 2

But through a lot of men dying.

00:54:03 Speaker 1

Do you want to talk about?

00:54:07 Speaker 1

Any of this?

00:54:08

Well.

00:54:09 Speaker 2

I think.

00:54:11 Speaker 2

That was prepared by a grandson.

00:54:15 Speaker 2

As a social studies project, and I suppose there's some things on there. One thing is a map of the Bastone area and below it is a shot of the field conditions.

00:54:28 Speaker 2

See the snow snow scenes there.

00:54:35 Speaker 2

This this is a map. The circle here is bastone. And here's our troops and their approach to bastone Christmas Day.

00:54:44 Speaker 2

And these this is a typical scene.

00:54:48 Speaker 2

You see, this is a snow covered field and woods over here and the infantry, the German infantry would be dug in over here and we would be moving forward against that.

00:54:58 Speaker 2

So that's just typical of the what the weather was like.

00:55:04 Speaker 2

These are just news releases.

00:55:09 Speaker 2

This is a telegram that.

00:55:12 Speaker 2

War departments that my dad.

00:55:15 Speaker 2

And this is the Bronze Star Medal award. But it doesn't say for heroic achievements. While serving with the 8th Division.

00:55:21 Speaker 2

It doesn't detail it at all.

00:55:23 Speaker 1

What is the? Can you read the telegram?

00:55:28 Speaker 2

Telegram says regret to inform you that your son was seriously wounded in action in Belgium 25 December.

00:55:34 Speaker 2

Until his newest dress is received, mail for his for him.

00:55:38 Speaker 2

2nd Lieutenant Robert Connors, serial number hospitalized. It was just a location where I'd be. So if they wanted to send something, they could.

00:55:48 Speaker 2

None.

00:55:48 Speaker 2

But it's just a brief noticing. It doesn't explain the injury or anything.

00:55:53 Speaker 2

I'm sure it upset my parents.

00:55:57 Speaker 1

What is that?

00:55:58 Speaker 2

This this is for the.

00:56:04 Speaker 2

What's called an Oakley?

00:56:05 Speaker 2

Where if you receive a a medal and then you receive the same medal again, what you get is a cluster and I think one of these has a cluster on it, which means that's the second time you've gotten that medal.

00:56:19 Speaker 2

I don't know which one has it.

00:56:23 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:56:26 Speaker 2

Does that have anything on it?

00:56:31 Speaker 2

Yeah. See that?

00:56:32 Speaker 2

That denotes that this is the second time that that.

00:56:34 Speaker 2

Been awarded.

00:56:37 Speaker 2

But that's a.

00:56:47 Speaker 2

They made it sound pretty fancy up here in one of these news releases and a bullet bounced off of him.

00:57:01 Speaker 2

But this was an assignment that.

00:57:04 Speaker 2

Grandson did for a social studies class.

00:57:10 Speaker 2

A lot of people don't understand the organization of the army.

00:57:16 Speaker 2

If you work your way up.

00:57:19 Speaker 2

The smartest unit the Army is a squad.

00:57:23 Speaker 2

Squad journey is about 12 men.

00:57:26 Speaker 2

And they're generally at least three squads to a platoon.

00:57:30 Speaker 2

And a platoon is the size that's commanded by an officer, in other words.

00:57:38 Speaker 2

I was a platoon leader of the first platoon.

00:57:43 Speaker 2

And then the platoons all belong to a company.

00:57:48 Speaker 2

And the companies are generally identified by letters.

00:57:50 Speaker 2

I was in G Company, first platoon.

00:57:54 Speaker 2

G Company is part of a battalion, so there are so many companies that make up a battalion and I was in the 318th Battalion.

00:58:03 Speaker 2

There's so many metallic battalions that make up a regiment.

00:58:08 Speaker 2

And so the regiment then is part of the division.

00:58:13 Speaker 1

What? And you were in the?

00:58:15 Speaker 2

888 division.

00:58:18 Speaker 2

And the 8th Division is an old Reserve Army unit.

00:58:22 Speaker 2

It originally headquartered somewhere down the Kentucky area, West Virginia.

00:58:28 Speaker 2

And.

00:58:30 Speaker 2

Then the divisions are generally grouped into a core. They call them.

00:58:34 Speaker 2

So when you say somebody's in the second core while you use for your, what now?

00:58:40 Speaker 2

But patent I think 3rd army now. I don't know what all was in the 3rd Army, but he commanded the 3rd Army.

00:58:49 Speaker 2

And 80th Division was one of the divisions in the 3rd Army.

00:58:55 Speaker 1

We have a couple minutes left on.

00:58:57 Speaker 1

Do you have anything else you think is important to say?

00:59:05 Speaker 2

Not that I.

00:59:06 Speaker 2

I think it's a good idea that some of these stories are being recorded, because I think some of them.

00:59:12 Speaker 2

Kind of interesting.

00:59:15 Speaker 2

And as I told you, I think it's good to doing it now because if they want very many stories from.

00:59:22 Speaker 2

World War 2. I think the veterans are dying off. The rage about 1000 a day.

00:59:27 Speaker 2

And so, you know, they're not going to be too many of us left to get stories from if we don't get them pretty soon.

00:59:34 Speaker 1

What do you think the significance of your services?

00:59:39 Speaker 2

To who?

00:59:40 Speaker 1

You're lying.

00:59:42 Speaker 2

Well, you know, it's kind of funny.

00:59:45 Speaker 2

When I got out of the service.

00:59:50 Speaker 2

I thought I'm just going to go home my own way and forget whatever happened.

00:59:56 Speaker 2

And then strangely enough.

01:00:01 Speaker 2

I belong to Presbyterian Church and decided we're going to build a new church.

01:00:07 Speaker 2

Our Sunday school teacher before the war.

01:00:11 Speaker 2

Got us all together and he.

01:00:13 Speaker 2

Now you guys are going to benefit more from a new church.

01:00:17 Speaker 2

Than anybody.

01:00:17 Speaker 2

So I'm going to pledge I will get one of us \$5000 or.

01:00:21 Speaker 2

Some outlandish figure from you guys toward the building, a new church, and we all just got now the service.

01:00:27 Speaker 2

All just gotten married and you know we didn't have a whole lot of money.

01:00:32 Speaker 2

And so we all decided we'd join the active reserve as a way of getting money to pay our church place and.

01:00:41 Speaker 2

So you meet maybe once a month and you get so many dollars for a meeting.

01:00:46 Speaker 2

And among those was this the same school teacher son who?

01:00:49 Speaker 2

A rod friend of.

01:00:50 Speaker 2

I'd gone all through high school with him.

01:00:53 Speaker 2

So we all join the active reserve in order to get money past church pledge.

01:00:57 Speaker 2

But when you know the Korean War came along and at least two of those guys got called up for active duty again, including Sunday school teacher son.

01:01:06 Speaker 2

He'd been in World War 2 and I had to buy into Korean War because he signed up to get money for his church pledge.

01:01:13 Speaker 2

Luckily, I didn't get called up.

01:01:15 Speaker 1

So how many years were you in the reserve?

01:01:19 Speaker 2

I stayed in a couple of years and it didn't seem like there was any real purpose in it for me.

01:01:24 Speaker 2

We went to summer camp twice I recall, and that was kind of a vacation.

01:01:28 Speaker 2

Wasn't any very serious, and of course the war was over then and.

01:01:34 Speaker 2

And they had a policy that you could not change branch.

01:01:39 Speaker 2

Well, the unit I was in was an ordinance outfit.

01:01:43 Speaker 2

Ordinances you know, way behind the line, and no. And I thought if I could stayed in ordinance outfit, I wouldn't mind staying in the reserved.

01:01:51 Speaker 2

And then he said that the policy that you cannot change branch, you can work in it, but you can't actually have your branch change from Infinity Ordinance, I thought, well, I can't actually join it.

01:02:04 Speaker 2

And I'm. I'll be infantry. I don't want to.

01:02:07 Speaker 2

Can be an infantry.

01:02:08 Speaker 2

That's the lowest job in the world.

01:02:10 Speaker 2

Anybody can do that. So I just quit because it was. It was kind of a nuisance.

01:02:17 Speaker 2

I became active in all kind of civic affairs here in town and just.

01:02:22 Speaker 2

Just put the army behind me.

01:02:25 Speaker 1

OK.

01:02:27 Speaker 1

Thank you.

01:02:27 Speaker 2

You're welcome.

01:02:28 Speaker 2

Glad I could help you.

01:02:29 Speaker 1

Yeah, it was really.

01:02:32 Speaker 1

Interesting story. Well, after a lot.

01:02:34 Speaker 2

Of little stories, I don't wanna hear anything outstanding or not, but.

01:02:39 Speaker 1

You go ahead and put those.