

Charles Robert Harmon Interview

Anti-tank Company, 319th Infantry Regiment

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Palmer McGrew)

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

00:00:03 Speaker 1

This is Palmer magrood.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

I'm interviewing Bob Harmon, World War 2 veteran.

00:00:08 Speaker 1

Today is the 29th of September 2006.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

Bob, tell us about yourself and your service, your country.

00:00:17 Speaker 2

Bob Marvin.

00:00:18 Speaker 2

Robert Harmon, my families, both my mother and father's families, came from the Puget Sound country.

00:00:27 Speaker 2

They both have migrated out there somewhere in the 1880s, usually associated with logging as was very.

00:00:32 Speaker 2

Thing to do at the time.

00:00:35 Speaker 2

Our family.

00:00:36 Speaker 2

My father side came from Maine and they've been in Maine since around 1740.

00:00:42 Speaker 2

That they let them in new.

00:00:43 Speaker 2

Frontier, so far as I know from some family records, they've served in every major war.

00:00:49 Speaker 2

Us ever had.

00:00:51 Speaker 2

So when we grew up thinking about the advent of World War Two, it was assumed that naturally you go to the war. And so there wasn't any question about that.

00:01:00 Speaker 2

What you would do I.

00:01:01 Speaker 2

Was born in 1925, so I was 18 and 1943 graduated from high school, Small High School Olympia, the capital of the state.

00:01:12 Speaker 2

I would say that by August, about 90 or 95% of my high school classmates from male classmates were in the military, and most of them because Olympia is on peek at Sam, wanted to join the Navy.

00:01:24 Speaker 2

Then he did.

00:01:25 Speaker 2

I entered the army because I passed some sort of examination which said that I could possibly could make it through engineering school and they based that simply on some sort of basic IQ test, which we.

00:01:37 Speaker 2

And I thought that the later on, as I learned something about.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

I.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

The screening system was very bad because.

00:01:44 Speaker 2

Just because you pass an IQ exam does do mathematics and engineering.

00:01:51 Speaker 2

Anyway, I had a very good basic training beginning at toward penning in August of 1943.

00:01:58 Speaker 2

Excellent staff, both the Commission and on Commission officers assigned to us, I felt later on overseas that most of my training was very good.

00:02:07 Speaker 2

Were some weaknesses.

00:02:10 Speaker 2

Give you a specific example. I was in the infantry.

00:02:14 Speaker 2

Basic tool of the infantry as a Browning automatic rifle.

00:02:17 Speaker 2

I knew how to use one, but I never stripped 1 before I went overseas.

00:02:22 Speaker 2

I was asked to do radio.

00:02:23 Speaker 2

For a little while.

00:02:24 Speaker 2

I had never really had a course in any training in in radio, so they had to sort of show me on the back of a Jeep as we.

00:02:29

Off.

00:02:31 Speaker 2

Along a.

00:02:32 Speaker 2

Someplace.

00:02:33 Speaker 2

But otherwise I think the training was very good.

00:02:37 Speaker 2

They spend a little bit of time in engineering school and then they busted up the engineering program all across the country.

00:02:44

And literally flooded.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

Thousands of people such as myself, out of the schools into Infantry, General Marshall and others began to realize that we needed infantry replacement.

00:02:54 Speaker 2

This was a definite.

00:02:56 Speaker 2

In the military, as they saw the losses in North Africa, for instance, and then in.

00:03:02 Speaker 2

And later on that year in Italy.

00:03:05 Speaker 2

So I went to infantry training and I was very lucky.

00:03:08 Speaker 2

I must say I've been lucky all of my life and it was in this. I went out to the desert maneuver grounds in Arizona, which had been laid out. I recall. It seems to me, by General George Patton.

00:03:21 Speaker 2

Based in part on experience of North Africa, I had the advantage of joining a very good unit when I was treated well. The non comms. I think in the officer generally were very good.

00:03:32 Speaker 2

Quite contrary to the usual opinions that you get from watching bad TV and stupid movies about the military, I thought that our people were very good.

00:03:41 Speaker 2

They prud themselves in combat.

00:03:44 Speaker 2

Especially the young lieutenants who began to find out.

00:03:46 Speaker 2

That, of course, that young lieutenants.

00:03:48

Replay.

00:03:50 Speaker 2

Candidates for purple hearts? I thought they were good.

00:03:54 Speaker 2

I was assigned again very luckily to first rate division trained by people who knew what they were doing and I got a real.

00:04:03 Speaker 2

I served in two companies.

00:04:05 Speaker 2

One was the anti tank company which was equipped with a version of the 57 millimeter anti tank gun which the British had invented.

00:04:13 Speaker 2

And was not a very good any tank gun.

00:04:16 Speaker 2

And then I served in a regiment headquart.

00:04:19 Speaker 2

And in an infantry unit, if you're not on the line every day and you're not doing the things that the so-called wine companies, ABC companies, rifle companies or D company and so on, the heavy weapons machine, gun and mortar companies.

00:04:33 Speaker 2

If you're not on the line everyday, there's a chance that you might make it.

00:04:38 Speaker 2

Make a Long story short about that. Even though it was an anti tank company, I won a 17 men out of about 165 or 70 of us.

00:04:47 Speaker 2

I guess it would have been.

00:04:48 Speaker 2

Who went through the?

00:04:50 Speaker 2

On injured.

00:04:53 Speaker 2

We lost a lot, killed most of our.

00:04:56 Speaker 2

Were.

00:04:57 Speaker 2

I mean, people go home from.

00:05:00 Speaker 2

Shell shock. I guess you would call it had another one go home with tuberculosis, which he may have had before he came in the army. For all we know, I have no idea.

00:05:10 Speaker 2

Went overseas.

00:05:12 Speaker 2

In June, landed in England in early July 1944, went to France on the 6th of August in 1944, in time for what's called the breakout. I think the army distinguishes between an attempt at a break out at something called Operation COBRA, which.

00:05:30 Speaker 2

Would be familiar with.

00:05:32 Speaker 2

And that a breakout in pursuit as it's entitled in the green books, the so-called Army Series of Green Books about the.

00:05:40 Speaker 2

History of World War.

00:05:42 Speaker 2

It's in the breakout of France to key this for you. A couple of the.

00:05:46 Speaker 2

Were hoveringch.

00:05:48 Speaker 2

At the juncture of the Norman and the Bretton Peninsula, a little town there is to see, and that was a Roman Garrison town, and we went through it for the same.

00:05:59 Speaker 2

That the Romans Garrison.

00:06:01 Speaker 2

That it's the only Rd. going up.

00:06:02 Speaker 2

Saltdemon valley.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

We then made the break out across France at places like.

00:06:10 Speaker 2

Argentine will show up in the military history, for instance.

00:06:14 Speaker 2

We went through all the.

00:06:17 Speaker 2

Or Leon Barley DUP and that ended up in the family, the Moselle river. And I was at the World War One battle ground when my people had been my division had been in World War, World War One.

00:06:32 Speaker 2

On the 1st of September. So on the 1st of September and the second we were opposite the town of and attacking the town of Samuel, which was a famous battle in the First World War.

00:06:43 Speaker 2

That was my first experience of something that's very common, I think for.

00:06:47 Speaker 2

Soldiers and infantry units.

00:06:49 Speaker 2

That is.

00:06:51 Speaker 2

Very badly by your own airplanes.

00:06:54 Speaker 2

And when you think about?

00:06:57

The.

00:06:57 Speaker 2

The requirements of flying combat fighter aircraft.

00:07:02 Speaker 2

I probably curse them at the time, but I hope I understood what their problems were and this happened two or three times. We've been both strafed and bombed by our own forces.

00:07:13 Speaker 2

Usually we were well served by the supporting aircraft that something in terms of the military history involved here, 19th Tactical Air Force and I think they backed us up very well. Especially they had the big, very heavy P-47.

00:07:28 Speaker 2

Fighter aircraft, which were essentially a large engine.

00:07:33 Speaker 2

A nice machine gun platform and 3:38.

00:07:35 Speaker 2

They did a good job for us.

00:07:39 Speaker 2

The fighting slowed down in terms of movement after a very rapid advance across France between the middle of August and the 1st of September, so I spent the rest of the autumn of 1944 in eastern France in the Moselle valley, and probably within a radius of.

00:07:56 Speaker 2

Miles, I would say near Null Sea and north of Null Sea.

00:08:00 Speaker 2

Nearest big town on the river that could be seen on a map would be probably plum.

00:08:07 Speaker 2

Near the town of.

00:08:09 Speaker 2

But I never went anywhere near Mets in terms of infantry fight.

00:08:14

Uh.

00:08:16 Speaker 2

We then moved on.

00:08:19 Speaker 2

To.

00:08:22 Speaker 2

An enormous attack on the day after Election Day in 1944, and I think that must have been right around the 6th or 7th of.

00:08:29 Speaker 2

November and there was a violent rainstorm, and there was a thought that that attack might go in and even Pat and I guess thought about not putting that attack in, but we went up a hill there, which is very famous one in terms of even the Romans, when.

00:08:46 Speaker 2

Romans fought there.

00:08:47 Speaker 2

And Gauls applauded on that hill. And so on.

00:08:50 Speaker 2

It was a very deadly.

00:08:50 Speaker 2

We lost a lot of men and it's at that time, amongst other things, I think you could see the advantage of serving with an anti tank unit.

00:08:59 Speaker 2

Those guns we had, after all, couldn't go on this bounce around the battlefield like someone carrying a mortar and machine gunner or rifle.

00:09:06 Speaker 2

So we spent that under terrific artillery fire as a matter of fact, we were dug in right near a crossroads and in front of the crossroads, so to speak.

00:09:15 Speaker 2

Where the German artillery was coming from.

00:09:17 Speaker 2

It whistled over.

00:09:19 Speaker 2

You feel that they were aiming at you, but they actually probably didn't even know there.

00:09:25 Speaker 2

Were just firing blind, I think on the crossroads.

00:09:29 Speaker 2

Pre registered firing.

00:09:32

Well.

00:09:32 Speaker 1

Talk about these guns, these anti tank guns were these were on chassis.

00:09:37 Speaker 2

Yes, Sir. They were towed by. I suppose you might remember more than I I imagined. Something like a three quarter ton.

00:09:45 Speaker 2

I'm not sure it would take the 10 or 12 of us in the squad. All of the equipment was issued to us and more importantly, all the equipment we stole.

00:09:54 Speaker 2

Ammunition for the gun, that sort of thing.

00:09:57 Speaker 2

The gun was big enough, memorably for me.

00:10:03 Speaker 2

I saw it measured this way.

00:10:04 Speaker 2

Just about as big enough? 57 millimeters.

00:10:09 Speaker 2

Well, just the barrel would contain an orange.

00:10:13 Speaker 2

Might sound strange.

00:10:15 Speaker 2

We turned in our guns before we went overseas.

00:10:18 Speaker 2

Turned them into Fort Dix.

00:10:22 Speaker 2

Someone, I think.

00:10:25 Speaker 2

Had it in for our company commander.

00:10:29 Speaker 2

Who was removed from the company and sent up the division to do another?

00:10:33 Speaker 2

Short when he.

00:10:34 Speaker 2

Removed from command and I think he.

00:10:36 Speaker 2

Have been one of.

00:10:37 Speaker 2

Who was a good trainer, but they figured might not be a combat officer. I'm not sure.

00:10:44 Speaker 2

But someone.

00:10:47 Speaker 2

When we were turning those guns in, put an orange in the barrel and when you do that, it's a very turning gun.

00:10:52 Speaker 2

Very pro forma because they're all cleaned up and nobody cares what's going to happen with them anyway as well.

00:10:58 Speaker 2

And you're just very briskly and sharply in the nice ways they show you.

00:11:02 Speaker 2

That breach block.

00:11:03 Speaker 2

Open that up.

00:11:04 Speaker 2

Say something to the Sergeant and the officers. When we did this, I'll roll an orange and I thought.

00:11:13 Speaker 2

Something wrong here that I don't understand that it's got something to do with this pleasure and that it wasn't long after that we lost our company commander Niva on something.

00:11:23 Speaker 2

Had deliberately done this.

00:11:24 Speaker 2

Wouldn't be.

00:11:25 Speaker 2

What one of the sergeants, the 57 millimeter gun by the way, was a very nice idea, but it was too late in the war.

00:11:33 Speaker 2

They did destroy a lot of tanks.

00:11:36 Speaker 2

They were very useful for shooting up the stone buildings in Europe because we had three different kinds of ammunition, one of which was a solid slug by the size of a length of a football, I suppose, and 57 millimeter diameter.

00:11:50 Speaker 2

And it would send rocks.

00:11:52 Speaker 2

So it was a deadly thing for that and it would destroy German tanks. But every report and use of those guns, I think is always followed by a comment to the effect that counter battery fire then killed the entire crew or kill or injured the entire crew.

00:12:10 Speaker 2

Simple place to see that would be in Kenneth Cole's very fine book on the.

00:12:15 Speaker 2

Battle of the Bolts.

00:12:16 Speaker 2

And he refers to specifically there in a couple of 57 crews who did good work.

00:12:22 Speaker 2

But it was not.

00:12:24 Speaker 2

It wasn't a 75, wasn't a 76 caliber and it certainly wasn't a 90mm gun.

00:12:30 Speaker 2

Which we needed, but it always plays me because I was assigned to those guns even when I went to regiment, they took they they broke up the anti tank company in December of 1944, just before the Battle of old.

00:12:43 Speaker 2

Most of the men went to rifle companies, which was a sentence to.

00:12:48 Speaker 2

All of the.

00:12:49 Speaker 2

Bad things that can happen to you in a rifle companies. It's almost.

00:12:53 Speaker 2

Like the wisecrack about, there are three things that can go wrong with a forward pass and football, and two of them are very bad.

00:12:59 Speaker 2

This is true in rifle activities and heavy weapons companies. Going to Regiment was a break for me, and there were about 30 or 35.

00:13:08 Speaker 2

Enlisted officers.

00:13:11 Speaker 2

Enlisted and there are noncoms and we were assigned to do regimental guard duty to mount those guns where they could theoretically protect the regimental headquarters. And, much to my relief, not assigned to the regular activities associated with mine companies.

00:13:26 Speaker 2

When it became obvious after a while, particularly after we cracked through the Siegfried Line, that they needed to.

00:13:34 Speaker 2

Bolster the efforts of the.

00:13:37 Speaker 2

By an art platoon.

00:13:39 Speaker 2

The Recon platoons. Then we were used for that too, so that the guns would be left at headquarters. But we would.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

Out. Either assign the battalions or assign to I and R activities of our own.

00:13:51 Speaker 2

I've always said typically I think I've been in many German towns when.

00:13:56 Speaker 2

Our regiment entered the town on the attack.

00:13:58 Speaker 2

Have been in there before him.

00:14:00 Speaker 2

Give you an example of what we were doing.

00:14:02 Speaker 2

Remember once very clearly.

00:14:04 Speaker 2

Must have been April 13th.

00:14:06 Speaker 2

1945.

00:14:09 Speaker 2

President Roosevelt had died on the 12th and we were out in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in Thuringia there, Weimar in Germany, and came back in through the lines and the first people we saw were tankers and tanks always carried flock of radios.

00:14:24 Speaker 2

And they had acquired somehow through a military channel, I suppose the knowledge of Mr. Rosa was.

00:14:31 Speaker 2

So they once they accepted the password from us, that's the next thing they told us was that this man had been president forever when we were little kids had dying, leaving us to wonder who in the world was going to be president.

00:14:43 Speaker 2

Because no one knew who Mr. Truman was.

00:14:46 Speaker 2

So anyway, the tanks were useful things, but excuse me, those anti tank guns were useful things, but mostly in my own life they served to keep me on a rifle companies and out of that continuous activity which accounts for the fact that many rifle companies.

00:15:03 Speaker 2

Decimated in any sort of attack.

00:15:07 Speaker 2

In preparation for this, as a matter of fact, I was just down at a reunion in my division at Fort Benning.

00:15:14 Speaker 2

I looked up a company Sergeant in the 318th Infantry Company, a Company 300 and 18th, and he's one of two from one of two battalions of the three 18th that was assigned to enter Bostonia with the 4th Armor.

00:15:30 Speaker 2

So when you see talk about some young infantry officers.

00:15:34 Speaker 2

Coming into the lines of Gastonia, they're out of the three 18th Infantry.

00:15:39 Speaker 2

Go to the point of the danger of this kind of thing.

00:15:42 Speaker 2

This Sergeant is one of.

00:15:47 Speaker 2

22 or 23 effectives out of the company, which would have been 150 or 60 when they went up there.

00:15:55 Speaker 2

By the time they got the vest on you and only one officer and it happened to be his platoon Lieutenant, so they immediately told the platoon Lieutenant that he was now accompanied to get on.

00:16:05 Speaker 2

The chore.

00:16:06 Speaker 2

But it illustrates the fact that rifle fighting is very dangerous, and I've always been.

00:16:10 Speaker 2

Lucky all my life and have been very grateful to. I had a lot of rifle fighting but I didn't have to do it every day and I very much appreciated of that.

00:16:19 Speaker 2

And the fact that I never got a scratch.

00:16:23 Speaker 2

I did get hepatitis.

00:16:24 Speaker 2

I don't know how.

00:16:27 Speaker 2

Hepatitis A and my weight went from 200 down to 160.

00:16:32 Speaker 2

Stayed that way for a long time after the war, but it wouldn't pull you out of the lines for that.

00:16:36 Speaker 2

Of thing.

00:16:38 Speaker 2

We went through the fighting in the marginal line right after Thanksgiving Day in 1944. One of our men.

00:16:47 Speaker 2

Received a.

00:16:48 Speaker 2

Star for being the 1st man down into one of.

00:16:50 Speaker 2

Major forts.

00:16:51 Speaker 2

Up near Falkirk.

00:16:54 Speaker 2

I think he was down 3 or 4 levels into the Fort, found a bunch of Germans down there, completely surprised them. They had no idea why. I don't know.

00:17:02 Speaker 2

Certainly must have been aware we were attacking the forts.

00:17:07 Speaker 2

Found a bunch of Germans.

00:17:09 Speaker 2

Got the drop on him, announced to them that they should be prisoners and they saw the wisdom of this right away.

00:17:14 Speaker 2

Most Germans, by the fall of 44, began to realize that they probably wouldn't win the war.

00:17:20 Speaker 2

And I must say, from a moral point of view, we were very confident we would.

00:17:24 Speaker 2

There wasn't any question about it.

00:17:26 Speaker 2

The question was, would you survive to?

00:17:28 Speaker 2

The.

00:17:28 Speaker 2

Would you get the the great \$1,000,000 wounds? Would you receive some deadly crippling loan?

00:17:37 Speaker 2

With a truck roll.

00:17:38 Speaker 2

You all those kinds of things.

00:17:40 Speaker 2

There was number question.

00:17:41 Speaker 2

We would that we would.

00:17:42 Speaker 2

We knew we would win and I think conversely the Germans knew they were going to.

00:17:48 Speaker 2

To give you an example that somewhere around.

00:17:52 Speaker 2

Nominee in the Mosel valley.

00:17:54 Speaker 2

And I would say probably October of 1944.

00:18:00 Speaker 2

Infantry companies jumped off an attack right through our gun positions, who were right on the edge of.

00:18:07 Speaker 2

Forest dug in right on the.

00:18:10 Speaker 2

And the Germans, of course, knew exactly where the gun.

00:18:12 Speaker 2

He just said bothered us very much with it, but when that infantry attack jumped off through there, they put in artillery fire and the simplest thing was to drop it right on the edge of the forest, right with the assembly units would be for the rifle companies as.

00:18:26 Speaker 2

Through us, so we spent the entire.

00:18:29 Speaker 2

Huddle didn't know foxhole there with tree burst going on all around me and.

00:18:36 Speaker 2

Our artillery was firing in front of our our infantry.

00:18:39 Speaker 2

You literally had a field full of artillery.

00:18:41 Speaker 2

Either German or American.

00:18:43 Speaker 2

Through that artillery fire came a German non commissioned man waving a surrender leaflets, one of the many, many thousands, maybe billions of surrender leaflets which were distributed.

00:18:55 Speaker 2

And of course, it was a death penalty offense for them to have one of those things.

00:18:59 Speaker 2

Could be shot out.

00:19:01 Speaker 2

Hand for carrying one of those.

00:19:03 Speaker 2

And he had probably picked it.

00:19:04 Speaker 2

Very carefully, but once he got beyond his lines and saw that we were waving him on him.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

Twitting this thing like crazy.

00:19:13 Speaker 2

And he was just anxious.

00:19:14 Speaker 2

Get out of the war, and fortunately for him.

00:19:17 Speaker 2

He struck our.

00:19:19 Speaker 2

Which had a German speaking side.

00:19:22 Speaker 2

And he was able to talk.

00:19:23 Speaker 2

Him.

00:19:24 Speaker 2

To get the usual results of.

00:19:27 Speaker 2

Very good Intel interview, right?

00:19:29 Speaker 2

He was quite happy to tell us anything we really wanted to know and that's I think a typical.

00:19:36 Speaker 2

Sort of instruction from Intel people. If you can get them sort of hot off.

00:19:40 Speaker 2

The stove and talk to them. They'll probably talk to you then much more than they will back on a PW K.

00:19:46 Speaker 2

Well, he was ready to talk, and he was so delighted.

00:19:49 Speaker 2

Somebody probably gave him a cigarette just as they do in the movies.

00:19:52 Speaker 2

Probably got a piece of chocolate or something.

00:19:55 Speaker 2

And our Sergeant kept chatting with him.

00:19:57 Speaker 2

Colloquial German. Because our Sergeant had not known English until he went to grade school.

00:20:02 Speaker 2

And this is not uncommon in the United States of the 1930s. He was from.

00:20:09 Speaker 1

Saint.

00:20:10 Speaker 2

Francis, Kansas.

00:20:13 Speaker 2

Weak country.

00:20:14 Speaker 2

No reason for him to go into town, really.

00:20:16 Speaker 2

Much just really speaking German.

00:20:19 Speaker 2

He was also very good about starting to teach any of us who wanted to learn.

00:20:22 Speaker 2

Several did.

00:20:24 Speaker 2

Colloquial German, which I then use later on to a great advantage many, many times.

00:20:31 Speaker 2

Certainly he was not.

00:20:33 Speaker 2

We had people who spoke nothing except mud. Yar, some sort of Slavic language at home.

00:20:41 Speaker 2

We had Rudy Dugo.

00:20:43 Speaker 2

Typical Canadian Frenchman migrated to New England and spoke French at home.

00:20:51 Speaker 2

In an Italian who spoke nothing but Italian at.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

So it was fortunate for us because it meant that we could speak to everybody we ran into.

00:20:56

Replay.

00:21:01 Speaker 2

After we went through the magino.

00:21:04 Speaker 2

We were not at a loss for something to do, but the armies were gathering their strength then for what Patton was thinking of us. What would be a break across the Siegfried Line and hopefully a crack across the riding?

00:21:20 Speaker 2

So we were in the area of northern Lauren, Lorraine, if you will, in English.

00:21:27 Speaker 2

East of met, South of Theon.

00:21:30 Speaker 2

To place this.

00:21:33 Speaker 2

Near San Avo to place this.

00:21:37 Speaker 2

When the battle Vulce broke out or accompany the Yani Tank Company had been broken up and I was already in Scunthorpe headquarters, for which I can only be thankful, as I said.

00:21:47 Speaker 2

Then.

00:21:49 Speaker 2

Were assigned.

00:21:51 Speaker 2

To go South and east.

00:21:55 Speaker 2

And the nearest geography that would be available on on a big map would be the Sar River Valley, Sar Lauderdale Sar, Louis those towns and the rumour was that we were supposed to be a link between.

00:22:10 Speaker 2

3rd Army and 7th Army. Whether or not that's true, I have no idea.

00:22:14 Speaker 2

7th Army was already up at Saundy in places like that.

00:22:19 Speaker 2

And the palazzo's area.

00:22:22 Speaker 2

And when the Battle of Baltimore got, we were on that move on the.

00:22:26 Speaker 2

We moved all day on the 16th and a good part of the day on the 17th, and we kept hearing rumors on that late on the 17th especially that there had been a break in out in Luxembourg.

00:22:37 Speaker 2

And then.

00:22:40 Speaker 2

Must have stopped somewhere in the 18th and quit moving southeast.

00:22:45 Speaker 2

Excuse me.

00:22:49 Speaker 2

The night of the 19th and 20th of December of 44, we moved north.

00:22:56 Speaker 2

And Patton was in such.

00:22:57 Speaker 2

Rush that he had picked 4 divisions.

00:23:00 Speaker 2

The 4th armored, the 80th Infantry. I think the 28th and I believe the 6th Army.

00:23:06 Speaker 2

But I wouldn't assure that he has.

00:23:08 Speaker 2

Had a little list of.

00:23:11 Speaker 2

Something our division was always happy to quote.

00:23:13 Speaker 2

I'm sending my four best divisions N so being one of those four best divisions we got the privilege of going and freezing and looking.

00:23:23 Speaker 2

Anyway, we drove all night with the lights on.

00:23:26 Speaker 2

First time any of us had seen the lights on, probably since we left the states at night.

00:23:33 Speaker 2

Then we drove to up to Luxembourg City as a matter of fact and.

00:23:37 Speaker 2

Through a snow storm.

00:23:40 Speaker 2

We took the gun down off the heights of the the plateau, the Kershaw 'cause it's called, and Luxembourg City, and actually set it up in a gun position on one of the roads leading into Luxembourg City and pointing north.

00:23:54 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:23:56 Speaker 2

From there, then we.

00:23:57 Speaker 2

Further on up north moved into.

00:23:59 Speaker 2

Bed of the ball, such as it was.

00:24:02 Speaker 2

For us, that meant taking high ground on roads that ran essentially from east to West and ran from what would be eastern Luxembourg to Boston.

00:24:10 Speaker 2

A long, long series of ridges there that do that.

00:24:15 Speaker 2

We run that chest task, then for the next several weeks and.

00:24:22 Speaker 2

The weather began to clear, particularly around Christmas time in 45.

00:24:26 Speaker 2

Air Force could come in and really help us out.

00:24:29 Speaker 2

That was very good.

00:24:34 Speaker 2

Simply broke up the battle. The balls.

00:24:36 Speaker 2

Think we knew that?

00:24:38 Speaker 2

The Germans were losing, certainly by New Year's Day.

00:24:41

Excuse me.

00:24:43

Think.

00:24:45 Speaker 2

Well, by New Year's Day they were.

00:24:48 Speaker 2

They were certainly losing.

00:24:50 Speaker 2

Their biggest worry?

00:24:51 Speaker 2

Our biggest worry about them after that was either on artillery fire, of course, of one kind or another.

00:24:56 Speaker 2

Occasional counterattack, but also.

00:25:00 Speaker 2

Running.

00:25:02 Speaker 2

Heavily manned combat patrols, in some cases up to as many as 50 people at a time.

00:25:09 Speaker 2

They stop that I think by about two years they've probably lost too many people doing it.

00:25:14 Speaker 2

They probably are organized as combat patrols when they were.

00:25:19 Speaker 2

On the high move and doing well right after the 16th of December, but from Christmas time onwards, certainly by New Year's, they were on the losing end of this thing and we began to realize we were squeezing them out.

00:25:30 Speaker 2

Of course, the 101st Airborne did a beautiful job of holding on to Gastonia.

00:25:34 Speaker 2

Together with some other units, of course, but that's essentially a 101 show and they did very well.

00:25:40 Speaker 2

And we were always glad that we weren't.

00:25:43 Speaker 2

I spent a very comfortable battle of balls and I'll probably talk about that in any other interviews or lectures I ever give.

00:25:51 Speaker 2

The line companies very bad there because if they went out in the snow while they usually had to go out before dark or before dawn, rather than they'd be there all day.

00:26:01 Speaker 2

At that time, winter time in the northern climates was probably 6 1/2 to 7 hours, but.

00:26:07 Speaker 2

By the time they came out of those foxholes, at the end of the day like.

00:26:10 Speaker 2

They couldn't.

00:26:10 Speaker 2

Up straight for a.

00:26:12 Speaker 2

I spent the time garrisoning garrisoning.

00:26:15 Speaker 2

Towns one of them protected, called Kursdor.

00:26:18 Speaker 2

Which is on this high Ridge I mentioned.

00:26:21 Speaker 2

It's part of a small commune. The fighting there was difficult, and to make some sort of illustration of this, one of the sergeants in the regiment won the Medal of Honor.

00:26:33 Speaker 2

Defending a barn there.

00:26:35 Speaker 2

And the house.

00:26:37 Speaker 2

And he ended up using German rifles against Germans.

00:26:41 Speaker 2

German bayonets against Germans.

00:26:43 Speaker 2

Killed.

00:26:44 Speaker 2

Rifle killed him with a bayonet.

00:26:47 Speaker 2

He literally found a fuel oil can of some kind in this barn, set fire to it somehow and poured burning oil on various Germans.

00:26:59 Speaker 2

He's a real.

00:27:00 Speaker 2

So they were that close. The fighting was that vicious. And every morning in our little town, this is called.

00:27:08 Speaker 2

Well, then they would attack in the morning before dawn. And I think the mission was to simply keep us from coming down into the valleys where the Germans were because they were using the valleys below us as an escape route to try to get out of the V.

00:27:23 Speaker 2

To move eastward again.

00:27:25 Speaker 2

So I can just see their assignment was probably make sure the armies as they call it, stay up in that village and don't get down here.

00:27:33 Speaker 2

Would come up before.

00:27:34 Speaker 2

We would get up in the morning and it's almost like going to work and commuting. You didn't have to commute very far.

00:27:41 Speaker 2

And we would have probably something to eat.

00:27:44 Speaker 2

They would come up the hills in the snow.

00:27:49 Speaker 2

Borders would fire.

00:27:51 Speaker 2

Flares was bad enough for these poor rascals on the snow anyway.

00:27:55 Speaker 2

See them anyhow.

00:27:57 Speaker 2

They were targets and they knew it they would be.

00:28:01 Speaker 2

I would think up that hill with all sorts of threats from their sergeants.

00:28:07 Speaker 2

Maybe right. Ray Gregory?

00:28:08 Speaker 2

And they would get within 40, fifty 60-70 yards of us. And then their attack would break because there was such perfect targets and.

00:28:17 Speaker 2

My son is here watching.

00:28:19 Speaker 2

I have shown him one place where it can't be 50 yards from where I was defending a particular window.

00:28:27 Speaker 2

Or a sign windows in these houses and barns, of course.

00:28:31 Speaker 2

I had my window.

00:28:34 Speaker 2

I feel the fire one man I shot there.

00:28:37 Speaker 2

I would say within 50 yards of us.

00:28:41 Speaker 2

He died for the same reason they all are. The rest of them. They just made splendid targets.

00:28:46 Speaker 2

They're walking through that damn snow and uphill and into mortar fire machine gunfire.

00:28:54 Speaker 2

We had at least two or three tanks attached to that house in that farm where I was.

00:29:00 Speaker 2

I'll bet there were fifty men in those houses.

00:29:04 Speaker 2

Strong little Alamo, to say the least.

00:29:07 Speaker 2

And Germans, those buildings are stone built.

00:29:11 Speaker 2

You were.

00:29:13 Speaker 2

Quite safe of anything except direct.

00:29:15 Speaker 2

We did get one artillery shell in there one night.

00:29:19 Speaker 2

And it there wasn't any fighting going on. Then we're asleep. Except for those on guard.

00:29:26 Speaker 2

But whole squad 11 or 12 men were all injured by 1. Shell came through a roof and oddly enough for anybody who's been incompetent, nobody was killed.

00:29:36 Speaker 2

And so far as I know, all of.

00:29:38 Speaker 2

Men live.

00:29:40 Speaker 2

The worst injured was one of the corporals and I remember working on him.

00:29:45 Speaker 2

Had a stomach wound and you always worry about that, but.

00:29:50 Speaker 2

It wasn't a big terrible cut, so I have a hunch he had a piece of steel in it wasn't feeling good, but I have a hunch he made that I never heard of anybody in that crew dying back in the in the hospitals.

00:30:02 Speaker 2

Eventually, all of that broke up. The Germans simply retreated and got out of Luxembourg and went back on the other side of the border, which is a river there called the OR OUR, and that flows into the river sour, which is called the sure amongst other.

00:30:17 Speaker 2

And depending on who's eclunt.

00:30:20 Speaker 2

Or.

00:30:20 Speaker 2

Accent you're using.

00:30:24 Speaker 2

And the river order is the German Luxembourg border and on the east side of that is the Siegfried Line.

00:30:31 Speaker 2

Allies called it the W wall or this.

00:30:33

Wall is it?

00:30:34 Speaker 2

German it's called.

00:30:37 Speaker 2

On the concrete forts in that thing were.

00:30:39 Speaker 2

Famous of course.

00:30:43 Speaker 2

Varied in thickness depending anywhere from 4:00 to 6:00, sometimes 8 feet thick depending on where they were.

00:30:50 Speaker 2

They were about.

00:30:53 Speaker 2

6:00 or 8:00 to the I would say to the acre each one was provided with a.

00:30:57 Speaker 2

Field of fire.

00:30:59 Speaker 2

Each one was provided with what turned out to be death traps for them in a way.

00:31:03 Speaker 2

That's a nice little exit at the back.

00:31:07 Speaker 2

Terrible time trying to attack those things across the river, but eventually.

00:31:13 Speaker 2

The Americans rolled.

00:31:15 Speaker 2

I would say 2. It may have been.

00:31:18 Speaker 2

Self.

00:31:21 Speaker 2

Amounted 155mm guns. Mobile guns, which I think were French French model from the First World War.

00:31:28 Speaker 2

Not quite sure, but I think that 155 rifle is a is a French conception.

00:31:33 Speaker 2

It was highly accurate at the range is in there because that Valley's only about 800 yards wide.

00:31:41 Speaker 2

And those 5555?

00:31:43 Speaker 2

We're mounted to coaxial.

00:31:45 Speaker 2

With a 50 caliber machine gun.

00:31:49 Speaker 2

And the usual routine would be for the 50 caliber to open up on the German forts, and then that would force them to close their ports. The steel ports they had.

00:31:58 Speaker 2

So then when the.

00:32:01 Speaker 2

Tracer round start bouncing off the steel.

00:32:03 Speaker 2

They knew where they were and for them that was literally point blank range. And that gun would fire usually only once.

00:32:09 Speaker 2

And the shell would ordinarily go right through that steel course on the inside, there would be about a dozen men.

00:32:14 Speaker 2

Will all die.

00:32:15 Speaker 2

That would be the end of that.

00:32:17 Speaker 2

And then they I said that those escape routes at the bat at the back were rather.

00:32:22 Speaker 2

You could see some of them and those little Piper Cubs that we had flying around could see where they were and they would walk in heavy mortar fire on them. And we, of course had our own 81 millimeter waters, but they also brought in some 4 point.

00:32:35 Speaker 2

Chemical guys and they had explosive rounds.

00:32:39 Speaker 2

And they would drop mortar fire right under those little escape routes in the back and in the trenches that the Germans had.

00:32:44 Speaker 2

So there was no place to go and on top of that, I suppose the noncoms or officers in there who didn't want to surrender anyway because they knew they'd be shot for the Germans and the other Germans for doing.

00:32:56 Speaker 2

So.

00:32:57 Speaker 2

It was pretty deadly and we'd spent.

00:32:59 Speaker 2

I'll bet we spent 10 days up there fooling around, attacking those forts, and then suddenly they were all cleared in one morning by those 15 fives.

00:33:07 Speaker 2

And we began to cross the river.

00:33:10

Uh.

00:33:11 Speaker 2

As far as the Germans are concerned, I think one of the most poignant stories of the war for me took place at that very place. We were in a little village called.

00:33:24 Speaker 2

It was right on the.

00:33:26 Speaker 2

And across from us was a German physicians, and the Germans probably put out several.

00:33:34 Speaker 2

People on some kind of outpost duty at night to make sure that we didn't cross the river, but we were crossing.

00:33:43 Speaker 2

And one morning, some young German soldier.

00:33:47 Speaker 2

Stood up.

00:33:47 Speaker 2

Right out in the middle of a field where everybody for a half a mile around in any direction could see him, including his own people.

00:33:54 Speaker 2

But certainly we could and I cannot do anything except think he.

00:33:58 Speaker 2

Have fallen asleep.

00:34:01 Speaker 2

He stood up and he was obviously bewildered.

00:34:04 Speaker 2

And then eventually, he started toward us. That is down toward the river.

00:34:09 Speaker 2

And I think that had he?

00:34:10 Speaker 2

That up.

00:34:11 Speaker 2

The Germans would have shot him for desertion or attempting what looked like desertion.

00:34:16 Speaker 2

Instead of that, everybody for miles around who could see him, started shooting at him.

00:34:20 Speaker 2

Then I drove to beat on and I thought.

00:34:23 Speaker 2

Somebody is going to kill this guy anyway I.

00:34:26 Speaker 2

I just can't do this, so I watched him but I didn't shoot at it.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

But eventually a machine gun caught.

00:34:32 Speaker 2

Just literally rolled him down the hill so.

00:34:34 Speaker 2

Probably cut him in pieces.

00:34:37 Speaker 2

I've often wondered.

00:34:38 Speaker 2

Know.

00:34:39 Speaker 2

What was he doing out there at dawn in February around the 10th of 15th of February 1945, standing up against that snow?

00:34:48

With the whole.

00:34:49 Speaker 2

319th Infantry, Second Battalion looking at it.

00:34:53 Speaker 2

He never had a chance.

00:34:57 Speaker 2

After we got through the line, the Siegfried Line there was.

00:35:02 Speaker 2

One incident that I'm pleased with we.

00:35:05 Speaker 2

One final.

00:35:07 Speaker 2

Fortress to take that was on top of one.

00:35:09 Speaker 2

The hills and had a nice view of fire and somehow or other patrol I was with got behind.

00:35:16 Speaker 2

And two of us who could by this time speak.

00:35:19 Speaker 2

Enough German to be useful in this situation.

00:35:22 Speaker 2

Got up on top of the Fort because they're quite vulnerable, of course, from the back.

00:35:27 Speaker 2

And they really couldn't protect themselves very well. And we dug a little foxholes about.

00:35:32 Speaker 2

25 yards or so from this.

00:35:34 Speaker 2

Most of the dug in around it somewhere, but the two of us who can speak German but some German got up on top of this and I was particularly involved in this.

00:35:45 Speaker 2

And you'd lie up on top of the Fort and you could talk to the guys underneath you, and they're little firing squad.

00:35:50

Social Security.

00:35:51 Speaker 2

Little firing ports and talk to them and explain to them that the war was lost.

00:35:55 Speaker 2

Then we talked to them all afternoon.

00:35:57 Speaker 2

I couldn't tell you how long, and of course, in combat, 15 minutes seems like hours, so I don't.

00:36:01 Speaker 2

Won't even try to say how long we talked to them.

00:36:04 Speaker 2

Make a Long story short. Eventually they surrendered and for a while I thought.

00:36:10 Speaker 2

Boy, my German is really.

00:36:11 Speaker 2

I tucked these guys into surrender, but later on we found out that they were.

00:36:18 Speaker 2

Aware that these 155 rifles were running around and they had the impression that one was coming up their hill or they might not have been afraid of me, but they were certainly afraid that self-propelled 155. This job was complicated in a way which.

00:36:33 Speaker 2

Difficult, I think for infantry fighting.

00:36:36 Speaker 2

In the accounts in a way for the high casualty rate because so much of casualties and rifle fighting are just simply bizarre. Chance you have no reason to think that something will.

00:36:48 Speaker 2

Go wrong.

00:36:50 Speaker 2

Somewhere in a little cove of wood, not too far from us was a German mortar crew.

00:36:55 Speaker 2

And when a mortar is fired, it makes a particular sound as that sort of clunking sound.

00:36:59 Speaker 2

Suppose is the round goes down to 2, and then there's a sort of funny cough.

00:37:05 Speaker 2

Must be typical I.

00:37:06 Speaker 2

The most mortars all over the world.

00:37:08 Speaker 2

And you'd hear that thing fire.

00:37:10 Speaker 2

And then a few seconds later the round would explode near.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

And then they knew what we were doing when we heard that thing fire the first time we sculped back these little holes we scraped out, and sure enough, it was a mortar.

00:37:24 Speaker 2

Sure enough, he was pretty good, but I have a hunch he didn't have much ammunition.

00:37:28 Speaker 2

And so you'd only fire once in a.

00:37:30 Speaker 2

Or he may have had some other fire missions and didn't have time to it to pay.

00:37:34 Speaker 2

To that aspect.

00:37:37 Speaker 2

I think.

00:37:39 Speaker 2

That ratio of hearing the sound go down the tube, then go off and Brown's landing your eyes.

00:37:45 Speaker 2

Think we were his chief target.

00:37:47 Speaker 2

He fired off and honed us all afternoon.

00:37:51 Speaker 2

We were always lucky we got off of that thing and got down to our holes in the round would go off and then pretty soon we get our courage back up and sneak up again and start talking to them and the German I was.

00:38:03 Speaker 2

Was very clear.

00:38:04 Speaker 2

In its.

00:38:05 Speaker 2

And it wasn't anything that I would have been.

00:38:07 Speaker 2

To compose.

00:38:08 Speaker 2

But the Air Force had dropped millions of leaflets, as I mentioned earlier, telling the Germans the war is lost and these were masterly pieces of.

00:38:19 Speaker 2

Propaganda, and this one particularly was really well done.

00:38:22 Speaker 2

Had a little.

00:38:23 Speaker 2

They were about as big as.

00:38:25 Speaker 2

Half fold in that you had a little bit of text in it about 25 long years as.

00:38:31 Speaker 2

Understand. Recall.

00:38:33 Speaker 2

Well, the war has gone on and on, and the allies have been rolling toward your country, and they're unstoppable.

00:38:40 Speaker 2

And you can see this now and all that sort of thing. But the top line was.

00:38:45 Speaker 2

Just simply there couldn't get spare on the.

00:38:47 Speaker 2

'S loss.

00:38:48 Speaker 2

The bottom line was the hardline leg laden.

00:38:53 Speaker 2

Labor you've owned.

00:38:54 Speaker 2

You have a life to win. I think that's very good PR indeed.

00:38:58 Speaker 2

That's what we were telling these.

00:39:00 Speaker 2

You.

00:39:00 Speaker 2

We chat with them about other things, but they're courting us for a lot.

00:39:04 Speaker 2

Know if you're going to.

00:39:07 Speaker 2

Save your lab and you'd better do it right now before the 15 fives or somebody else gets here or somebody gets lucky with the satchel charge and drops it in on you.

00:39:15 Speaker 2

So out they came at dusk and they had an officer with him, which was probably why they wouldn't surrender.

00:39:21 Speaker 2

And the other chap and I, who done most of the talking, immediately grabbed these as our Pows because.

00:39:28 Speaker 2

We would take them down to regimen and the object of that, of course is to get a hot meal.

00:39:33 Speaker 2

If you were lucky at all, some Lieutenant would say it's too late to go back out.

00:39:38 Speaker 2

Don't you just sleep here?

00:39:39 Speaker 2

I don't know if we made it too late to go back up routine, but we did get a hot meal.

00:39:44 Speaker 2

Turned in our guys.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

I was glad that they did and.

00:39:47 Speaker 2

I also be willing the the young officer, the German officer we captured because the German words for.

00:39:54 Speaker 2

Church and cherries and cherry trees sound vaguely alike to somebody with bad language skills such as my.

00:40:01 Speaker 2

So two or three times I issue an order these people, but where we're going. And I essentially told them to go to the Cherry Tree.

00:40:10 Speaker 2

Less than wondering what these crazy youngsters wanted later on I began to realize no, that I'm using the wrong.

00:40:17 Speaker 2

I want to church that that helped them out and I imagine it cheered them up quite a bit when they finally figured that one out.

00:40:25 Speaker 2

Now we went anyway and we got the hot meal.

00:40:29 Speaker 2

From there, we went over to faint. What became a famous town, and Mr. Reagan's administration presidency bit. Burg took the time to Pitbird.

00:40:38 Speaker 2

And by that time.

00:40:41 Speaker 2

The cooperation with the air.

00:40:43 Speaker 2

Was tremendous.

00:40:45 Speaker 2

And the bombing forces had probably used up most of their.

00:40:50 Speaker 2

Calling card list of I think some 60 major German cities that you wanted to just take the centers out of and they've done that. So you could get the Air Force to do almost any kind of little chart for you one time fighting through the.

00:41:02 Speaker 2

Freedom.

00:41:03 Speaker 2

In the hills right behind it.

00:41:05 Speaker 2

We were pulled up on the edge of a town.

00:41:08 Speaker 2

Was surrounded.

00:41:09 Speaker 2

Germans would attack once in a while and a.

00:41:12 Speaker 2

Yards. What?

00:41:13 Speaker 2

200 yards from us was a German tank hiding behind a barn.

00:41:17 Speaker 2

Couldn't see.

00:41:17 Speaker 2

Once in a while, he'd get a crazier to come out and see us.

00:41:21 Speaker 2

And he'd fire around around.

00:41:23 Speaker 2

I was upstairs with a captain and four other men. One time we were shooting out of this upstairs.

00:41:29 Speaker 2

This guy poked his nose around the corner of his barn and fired around in the building below us.

00:41:35 Speaker 2

We certainly caught our.

00:41:37 Speaker 2

We got out of there right away.

00:41:40 Speaker 2

And went someplace else and resumed us. But our captain got on a radio. And pretty soon he talked to somebody.

00:41:48 Speaker 2

I don't think we could talk to.

00:41:50 Speaker 2

And pretty soon some airplanes showed up and strafed this this tank.

00:41:55 Speaker 2

I don't recall that they destroyed it, but he went away as I.

00:41:58 Speaker 2

And it was sort of room service that you could offer later on there. And I would say late February and certainly in March and April and early May of 1945.

00:42:10 Speaker 2

Just to have airplane will travel was pretty much what those kids were doing up there.

00:42:13 Speaker 2

We really appreciate it.

00:42:15 Speaker 2

Also, I didn't get strafed again by them as I had in the fall.

00:42:20 Speaker 2

Air superiority is.

00:42:22 Speaker 2

Ly important in any kind of.

00:42:24 Speaker 2

Particularly important to the infantry, and I was always very grateful to our Air Force and to the the skills that they showed in supporting us because they did a lot of dangerous things.

00:42:35 Speaker 2

By bringing those P47P30 eights down as close to the ground as they did, and answering our calls for please destroy this or please write that and.

00:42:46

Hi.

00:42:46 Speaker 2

That was nice to be on the good end of that and not have to worry about German aircraft.

00:42:53 Speaker 2

Purposes of history, we only saw German aircraft ordinarily in retreat.

00:42:58 Speaker 2

That is, if you saw a German airplane, he was doing hell for leather, trying to get home before somebody caught up with him. So he may have done some dangerous thing and gone off the photograph behind the lines and never quite knew the height of which they F.

00:43:11 Speaker 2

You're lucky to know what they were.

00:43:14 Speaker 2

But they were always going the other way and always a bunch of our planes behind them.

00:43:19 Speaker 2

I was straight one time in in.

00:43:21 Speaker 2

No.

00:43:23 Speaker 2

Column somewhere near Weimar Germany by German fighter aircraft and he bounced us as the saying would have been from all the right perspectives.

00:43:35 Speaker 2

Didn't see him the first time he came over until he was right on us.

00:43:38 Speaker 2

He missed everybody around me.

00:43:41 Speaker 2

I don't think anything was hurt either, but the machine guns were flung.

00:43:46 Speaker 2

Then he came back again, which was a mistake because every one of those vehicles we had had either A50 or 30 caliber machine gun mounted on a ring on it and you probably couldn't hit a damn thing with those most of the time, unless it was other.

00:43:59 Speaker 2

But with everybody in that column firing at it, somebody had smoked and went down.

00:44:05 Speaker 2

We saw the crash.

00:44:07 Speaker 2

The only time I ever saw anything like that.

00:44:10 Speaker 2

Problem was, of course he did something that you should never do in combat, and that's do the same thing twice.

00:44:17 Speaker 2

I have a story about that and.

00:44:21 Speaker 2

Glacier of Germany, which is over thriving.

00:44:25 Speaker 2

Was on a combat patrol beyond our lines and three or four of us had been sent out because somebody, somewhere had thrown grenades at, or maybe even only a single grenade that somebody else was patrolling from our guns. And they came back in and reported this.

00:44:41 Speaker 2

And wanted people to know that there was some Germans out there, so we were sent out to try to hunt them down.

00:44:47 Speaker 2

We were patrolling through a park into a street.

00:44:51 Speaker 2

We saw this young group of young people in uniform, obviously 4-5 or six of them.

00:44:58 Speaker 2

And they were being led by somebody, didn't know what it was at the.

00:45:03 Speaker 2

It generally be a young officer and he turned away and I shot him and he fell.

00:45:12 Speaker 2

Intended to say that of course I shot him at 500 yards. But when you hear all these stories about how accurate rifle fire is, that's OK for marine structures or teams. I think that most of us probably should.

00:45:24 Speaker 2

50 to 150 yards and if you don't think that's true, I used to do is just take a rifle.

00:45:25

Alright.

00:45:29 Speaker 2

Go out and stand somewhere.

00:45:30 Speaker 2

Play that on a target 7 or 800.

00:45:32 Speaker 2

Away from.

00:45:33 Speaker 2

See if you can see.

00:45:34 Speaker 2

Person on top of that front side.

00:45:36 Speaker 2

It's not easy to do.

00:45:38 Speaker 2

I have a hunch most of the shooting.

00:45:39 Speaker 2

We did was close range.

00:45:40 Speaker 2

Anyway, I dropped this Lieutenant. He didn't.

00:45:43 Speaker 2

Didn't die as.

00:45:43 Speaker 2

Matter of fact, he captured it.

00:45:45 Speaker 2

I was talking about the idea you don't want to do the same thing twice.

00:45:50 Speaker 2

Hitler Youth gets giving the kids picked him up.

00:45:54 Speaker 2

Were with picked him up, picked him up.

00:45:56 Speaker 2

And they carry them into a.

00:45:57

You have.

00:45:58 Speaker 2

Well, we went storming up to the house and we zoomed into the house.

00:46:01 Speaker 2

There they were, and they were.

00:46:04 Speaker 2

They were caught.

00:46:05 Speaker 2

As we came up to the yard of the House before actually we got into it.

00:46:09 Speaker 2

They dropped the Lieutenant and then these kids were so.

00:46:13 Speaker 2

Uninformed, literally about what they were doing.

00:46:16 Speaker 2

Very.

00:46:16 Speaker 2

I imagine they came boiling out the front toilet saying you are they know about the time I got there and I threw up my rifle and they all surrendered.

00:46:27 Speaker 2

And I think it speaks to the notions of several things, but one of them should be commented on is you get the impression that the Hitler youth kids were good fighters.

00:46:35 Speaker 2

Well, a.

00:46:36 Speaker 2

Lot of those 16.

00:46:37 Speaker 2

Olds were, but they weren't all.

00:46:39 Speaker 2

And the ones we ran into that morning and several of them we ran into had absolutely no idea what they were doing.

00:46:46 Speaker 2

When you even when you read old 1930s life magazines, you think these kids were a bunch of 101 airborne, if you will.

00:46:53 Speaker 2

But they weren't.

00:46:55 Speaker 2

Not all of them.

00:46:56 Speaker 2

And certainly not that group that morning.

00:46:59 Speaker 2

And they were. They were shocked to find that the school teacher showed.

00:47:03 Speaker 2

And her front yard with a rifling down.

00:47:06 Speaker 2

So they dropped their weapons and we went.

00:47:07 Speaker 2

We found the Lieutenant and we heard the kids and the Lieutenant back down into the town. And by this time, our regiment.

00:47:15 Speaker 2

Battalion probably had jumped off an attack and we had some American tanks coming up. We could hear them.

00:47:21 Speaker 2

Saw the infantry.

00:47:22 Speaker 2

We were doing the usual patrol thing where you you walk down the street and hurting these Nazi enemies along at the same time and.

00:47:33 Speaker 2

Rarely look like you do in the movies, especially if you're in town fighting and never watch over your head because you can't for one reason. You watch the windows on the other side of the street. The guy on the other side of the street watches your windows and.

00:47:44 Speaker 2

Hope that you just protect one another, so we these people on. Eventually we found our own people.

00:47:49 Speaker 2

Turn them over and turned our officer over.

00:47:52 Speaker 2

And just by chance, I'd shot him right through the back.

00:47:57 Speaker 2

Just by chance, years later, I.

00:47:59 Speaker 2

Talking with him.

00:48:00 Speaker 2

My friends who was army that fought in the Pacific and he had a wound in the same place and James McGovern, I said Jim, I got to talk to you about your wounds scars.

00:48:11 Speaker 2

They're exactly where I put some on some young German officer one time in April of 45.

00:48:16 Speaker 2

Tell me about the wound.

00:48:17 Speaker 2

Was the.

00:48:18 Speaker 2

Where'd that bullet?

00:48:19 Speaker 2

That you survived, and apparently you can get some wounds in the thorax.

00:48:24 Speaker 2

Got to.

00:48:25 Speaker 2

I feel God, you think well should avoid Jim McGuire, survive into old age. And I hope that Lieutenant did.

00:48:32 Speaker 2

That same afternoon, we went out on another patrol and the thought was that there's Germans in a.

00:48:39 Speaker 2

In a warehouse somewhere, which could be good news or bad.

00:48:41 Speaker 2

You didn't know what it was, but anyway, it's part of what you do when you're 57mm. Guns aren't really any used to anyway. In the INR patrols are busy. So.

00:48:50 Speaker 2

They sent out many of us, but.

00:48:54 Speaker 2

At the moment on that patrol, I opted to carry a 45 Thompson.

00:49:01 Speaker 2

Which I had acquired and it's again the blessing of the anti tank company was that you had this truck that nanny pulled everything. But as I see carried everything you'd stolen. I don't know where I acquired the 45.

00:49:14 Speaker 2

I did.

00:49:16 Speaker 2

When we got to the warehouse, we poked around as you ordinarily would, trying to protect yourselves.

00:49:20 Speaker 2

Finally, we figured out these guys must be upstairs.

00:49:23 Speaker 2

So it won't harm.

00:49:24 Speaker 2

You've got the 45, so you get the privilege of being thrust up the stairs.

00:49:29 Speaker 2

Anybody who's in a rifle fighting has ordinarily done.

00:49:33 Speaker 2

Some of the crazy stuff you see in movies, the only way to do.

00:49:36 Speaker 2

So I'm the first up the stairs, and of course I put the helmet on something. Maybe the barrel, the machine gun? I don't know.

00:49:42 Speaker 2

It up.

00:49:42 Speaker 2

See if anybody shoots nobody.

00:49:45 Speaker 2

And very electively because it's a wet band place to be finally peeked over the stairs.

00:49:51 Speaker 2

Well, there's nothing but a big room.

00:49:53 Speaker 2

Up there and it's got.

00:49:56 Speaker 2

I would say 2 tier bunks in it, maybe 3.

00:49:59 Speaker 2

Don't know.

00:49:59 Speaker 2

And it's loaded with people who are.

00:50:01 Speaker 2

They've been in the army on active duty and they're all sick and they've got stomach trouble or they're lonely for mom.

00:50:08 Speaker 2

Only been gone a few days, but they were the after the women and children reserved.

00:50:13 Speaker 2

Somewhere between 45 and 60, I suppose.

00:50:15 Speaker 2

Don't know.

00:50:17 Speaker 2

None of them wanted to be in the.

00:50:18 Speaker 2

And finish the story.

00:50:19 Speaker 2

I apologize, in German this 2 middle-aged and of course they're looking at me like all these stories they've heard about GIS, you know?

00:50:28 Speaker 2

He was this guy with this machine gun.

00:50:30 Speaker 2

God, you know, gentleman played the most cricket farmer.

00:50:36 Speaker 2

Totter out of there and.

00:50:37 Speaker 2

Your stuff.

00:50:41 Speaker 2

Anyway, that's my war.

00:50:42 Speaker 1

Well, we've got 10 minutes of of tape left.

00:50:48 Speaker 1

The I've.

00:50:49 Speaker 1

Some questions for you based on what you told me.

00:50:51 Speaker 2

Is that what's going to be OK?

00:50:52 Speaker 2

Be worse about.

00:50:55 Speaker 2

What are the questions?

00:50:56 Speaker 1

Bob, my first question is.

00:51:00 Speaker 1

He come up with your most interesting assignment story.

00:51:04 Speaker 2

That's I think, no particular trouble.

00:51:07 Speaker 2

Certainly the most interesting, and in many ways one of the most valuable things that not only I, that I think other members of the army did at the end.

00:51:16 Speaker 2

The.

00:51:17 Speaker 2

World War was to secure the treasures which?

00:51:20 Speaker 2

The Nazis had literally stolen from all over.

00:51:23 Speaker 2

Europe, our treasures, libraries, scientific treasures, all of these were subject to seizure by the Nazis and they had several reasons for doing this.

00:51:36 Speaker 2

Was to decorate the new world capital of North Europe, which was to be, I think Austria.

00:51:45 Speaker 2

Another was to Curry favor with Hitler or with Gerry, or with anybody else who thought that he, or maybe even she was an art expert. And so people would literally steal wonderful by at gunpoint wonderfully valuable paintings.

00:52:01 Speaker 2

Those ended up in several.

00:52:03 Speaker 2

Salt mines, which were chosen because the climate and the humidity tends to be the same all the time.

00:52:07 Speaker 2

Good, safe place to store art.

00:52:12 Speaker 2

There was one monastery that I can think of, and there was.

00:52:16 Speaker 2

One castle I can think of, there's probably lots more. There are several good books on this for anybody who wants to look into it.

00:52:23 Speaker 2

Umm.

00:52:24 Speaker 2

Anyway, they they stole this stuff and the rumors of that began to become very rife, you might say. And back at Chief Headquarters, Eisenhower headquarters by March.

00:52:33 Speaker 2

Of 45.

00:52:34 Speaker 2

So we are.

00:52:36 Speaker 2

We're told to be on the lookout for this sort of thing, while the sister regiment ran across a mine in a place called Alt, I'll say.

00:52:44 Speaker 2

And it's up in the Alps, just behind just South of Salsberg in the old Salzburg in Austria, and 317th Infantry was only there for a little while.

00:52:54 Speaker 2

Then three 19th was assigned that my regiment was assigned at and here I belong to this literary surplus group.

00:53:02 Speaker 2

57mm Gunners we were ideal to go up there, so a whole platoon on probably 30 of us are sold up this winding mountain Rd. to what is now, by the way, very fine ski resort.

00:53:13 Speaker 2

And we went up to the and we were signed back.

00:53:16 Speaker 2

That mine.

00:53:18 Speaker 2

With I think 2 on and I don't know, maybe 6 off, maybe even longer every day.

00:53:25 Speaker 2

So that you you pull two or three shifts a day back into mine.

00:53:29 Speaker 2

But it was good duty.

00:53:31 Speaker 2

Were left.

00:53:32 Speaker 2

Practically nobody up there except one or two.

00:53:35 Speaker 2

That platoon, officer sergeants, and we had, we enjoyed it.

00:53:40 Speaker 2

There was some anxiety at first because people thought there might be Nazis running around there and our officers told us, look, you got to watch for this because this old mine is 600 years old.

00:53:49 Speaker 2

Even knows where all the entrances are.

00:53:51 Speaker 2

And they're supposed to be not assessors running around.

00:53:54 Speaker 2

Was always the great threat, was assass.

00:53:58 Speaker 2

And but they.

00:53:59 Speaker 2

The Nazis were very glad to surrender, and they were glad the war was over, so we have no trouble.

00:54:05 Speaker 2

All this art was stored back in there and you got a marvelous chance to learn.

00:54:09 Speaker 2

About it.

00:54:13 Speaker 2

The problem in some ways was.

00:54:16 Speaker 2

That the art was simply stored in its original frame set on wooden frameworks which are still there in one or two specially kept places and I'll say, and it was just like going into a bookstore and buying.

00:54:28 Speaker 2

Posters. You just thumb through these and it could be Rembrandt or it could be anybody who's famous and they were just there. And of course none of.

00:54:35 Speaker 2

Knew.

00:54:36 Speaker 2

Very much about any of this.

00:54:38 Speaker 2

This was further by something my son has heard me say before.

00:54:42

I.

00:54:42 Speaker 2

The only light we had was.

00:54:43 Speaker 2

Little miners wipes.

00:54:45 Speaker 2

Carbide lamps, which by definition is an open flame.

00:54:49 Speaker 2

So I couldn't tell you how often I've been over something from the the Flemish school, so it was probably worth millions of dollars with an open flame lamp.

00:54:58 Speaker 2

Fortunately, I never dropped any of this liquid stuff on the on the on the paint.

00:55:03 Speaker 2

Eventually.

00:55:06 Speaker 2

A man who became head of the very famous.

00:55:10 Speaker 2

Art Museum in San.

00:55:12 Speaker 2

That's right out there near the presidio.

00:55:17 Speaker 2

Young Navy officer and he had been combed out of the.

00:55:20 Speaker 2

Somehow somebody found out that he was really an art professional and he showed up in his Navy uniform in a Jeep on this little mountain ski Rd. that led to the mine.

00:55:30 Speaker 2

And he was being driven by and accompanied by his official photographer, who was a German Sergeant who had been a art photographer.

00:55:38 Speaker 2

And the two of them were the team to evaluate this and arrange for shipment with Stephan. There went down to Munich because I could type. I became the man who drew up the manifest.

00:55:48 Speaker 2

I drew up the manifest of these things and the first thing we sent out.

00:55:51 Speaker 2

The Ghent altarpiece.

00:55:53

People.

00:55:54 Speaker 2

Wanted it back.

00:55:55 Speaker 2

They wanted A Midsummer 45 celebration.

00:55:57 Speaker 2

Freeing freedom at the end.

00:56:00 Speaker 1

The war.

00:56:00 Speaker 2

So that's the first thing that went down.

00:56:04 Speaker 2

And there were mountain roads.

00:56:05 Speaker 2

It was dangerous.

00:56:08 Speaker 2

We were.

00:56:08 Speaker 2

We never lost a load over the side of one of those hills.

00:56:12 Speaker 2

Then we went down to.

00:56:13 Speaker 2

There was a big warehouse down there.

00:56:15 Speaker 2

The.

00:56:16 Speaker 2

Art specialist.

00:56:17 Speaker 2

From all over the country were teamed up, as was this guy from our Navy, looked up to look after this.

00:56:23 Speaker 2

Not all but went home because some of it could not be assigned.

00:56:27 Speaker 2

To the original owner, so we have no idea somewhere.

00:56:31 Speaker 2

We're.

00:56:31 Speaker 2

Some people never came forward to claim any of it, but we had. That was an interesting introduction to art.

00:56:36 Speaker 2

For me.

00:56:37 Speaker 2

You have some questions that you want to find.

00:56:39 Speaker 1

Well, we're we're really out of tape.

00:56:41 Speaker 1

I'm we've got about 3 minutes of tape left, then that's fine.

00:56:42

I'm sorry.

00:56:45 Speaker 1

I think that's fascinating, that I appreciate you very.

00:56:48 Speaker 1

You're sharing this with us and we'll this. This will history will be preserved, thank goodness.

00:56:55 Speaker 1

Because you were willing to to do this.

00:56:57 Speaker 1

Thanks very much, Bob.

00:56:58 Speaker 1

More than welcome.

00:56:59 Speaker 2

It's been my privilege.

00:57:00 Speaker 2

You.

00:57:01 Speaker 2

Sorry about the voice.

