

Richard L. Land Interview

Company G, 319th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Gary W. Swanson)

Interview with Richard L. Land [9/15/2003]

Gary Swanson

This is Gary Swanson with Americans Remembered, interviewing Richard L. Land, at his home in Raytown, Missouri. Mr. Land served in the Army, in the 80th Infantry Division, the 319th Regiment, the 2nd Battalion during WWII in Europe. He served in the Army from March 1943 to the day after Christmas, December 26, 1945. He holds a number of medals. His final rank was a PFC.

Richard L. Land

{Laughing} -- My final rank.

Gary Swanson

Dick, where did you grow up as -- as a kid?

Richard L. Land

Where -- what?

Gary Swanson

Where did you grow up as a kid?

Richard L. Land

Winslow, Arkansas.

Gary Swanson

Winslow, Arkansas. Were you on the farm?

Richard L. Land

Yes. Part of the time.

Gary Swanson

Part of the time -- mom, dad?

Richard L. Land

One brother.

Gary Swanson

One brother. Was he older or younger than you?

Richard L. Land

No, older.

Gary Swanson

Was he older?

Richard L. Land

He was in the Air Corp.

Gary Swanson

And he was in the Air Corp. So there were two of you in the service at the same time?

Richard L. Land

Yes.

Gary Swanson

The two sons?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

So did he go before you went?

Richard L. Land

No. He didn't never had to go over.

Gary Swanson

He didn't have to go over. Okay. So you both came back safely though --

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

-- you did get injured?

Richard L. Land

Couple times. But just that one self-inflicted deal was the worse one of the bunch.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Then you got hit by shrapnel, I think?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Yeah. Booby traps.

Gary Swanson

Booby traps?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So your dad was a farmer part-time and worked in town part-time?

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So how did you happen to get in the Army? Did you get drafted?

Richard L. Land

I got drafted.

Gary Swanson

And that was in 1943 in March?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh. Where did you get sworn in?

Richard L. Land

I believe at the court house in Federal, Arkansas.

Gary Swanson

Okay.

Richard L. Land

They swore us in there before we went to Little Rock.

Gary Swanson

Okay. How far was your -- Winslow from Federal?

Richard L. Land

22-miles.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you're close to Federal?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

So you went and got sworn in there and then where did you go for basic training?

Richard L. Land

Camp Phillips, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Gary Swanson

Okay. I think it was Camp Roberts.

Richard L. Land

Camp Roberts?

Gary Swanson

Camp Phillips was in Kansas, later.

Richard L. Land

That's right. I said Phillips, it was Roberts.

Gary Swanson

So you got your basic training there. And then where -- where did you go then?

Richard L. Land

We went to Tennessee -- Tullahoma, and joined the 80th Infantry Division.

Gary Swanson

Okay.

Richard L. Land

Moved out -- they just moved out to Camp Forest.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you joined the 80th Infantry Division in Tennessee where they were on maneuvers, I believe.

Richard L. Land

Just -- just out on the -- out on the ground getting ready to move out on maneuvers.

Gary Swanson

So you never even spent any time at the camp?

Richard L. Land

No.

Gary Swanson

Went right out to maneuvers?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

And where did you go from there?

Richard L. Land

Camp Phillips, Kansas.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you went to Salina, Kansas to Camp Phillips?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

You got more training and then you went to desert training. Where was that?

Richard L. Land

Camp Lejeune, Arizona.

Gary Swanson

Okay. Is that Yuma?

Richard L. Land

That is just out of Yuma.

Gary Swanson

Out of Yuma, and then where did you go?

Richard L. Land

Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Gary Swanson

Okay. And then -- then you were ready to be shipped out, weren't you?

Richard L. Land

We were getting ready to and they shipped us to Camp Kilmer to get fitted out with everything, shots and everything, then went -- went across.

Gary Swanson

Okay. Dick, were you a -- was the 80th -- was the 80th Infantry Division, was that a replacement division?

Richard L. Land

No.

Gary Swanson

You went over there as a --

Richard L. Land

As a unit.

Gary Swanson

-- as a fully staffed unit?

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh, so --

Richard L. Land

See, they -- see, they reenacted that since WWI. They reenacted it.

Gary Swanson

Oh, it was -- it was a WWI division, I believe you had mentioned.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

That your daddy was a WWI guy in the Rainbow Division, the 42nd --

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

-- division?

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

And he came home safely, did he?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Well, he got a little bit of gas but wasn't enough -- he never got nothing out of it.

Gary Swanson

He was from Arkansas and went back to Arkansas?

Richard L. Land

Right.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you shipped out then from Camp Kilmer, when was that do you know?

Richard L. Land

We landed in Scotland on the 7th of July.

Gary Swanson

On the 7th of July.

Richard L. Land

It took us five days to get over there.

Gary Swanson

Of '44, right after Normandy had been invaded in June of '44? So did you right away -- how long did you stay in England before you --

Richard L. Land

I'm not too sure. It was -- we got -- got out of there before August -- on the 24th of August is when I had that wedding anniversary -- we was in Le Mais, France.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So --

Richard L. Land

Close by anyway.

Gary Swanson

-- so you were over there probably in July of '44?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

You probably came into France?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

At Normandy?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

And how quickly -- did they quickly get you to the front?

Richard L. Land

I don't remember how long it was. We had sniper fire -- fire and stuff all around us. But before we got up there where is Riville -- Riville was a couple weeks or so.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So anyway, so you got up there.

Richard L. Land

'Cause see in Normandy, B Camp they had the Normandy Peninsula down there. We was in there about six weeks all together.

Gary Swanson

I see.

Richard L. Land

we couldn't move.

Gary Swanson

So you were there, right -- I mean about a month after D-Day you went in there and your job with the 80th was to take care of the Normandy Peninsula?

Richard L. Land

Help on it.

Gary Swanson

Clean that out.

Richard L. Land

Because they couldn't get out until ol' Patton come up there.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you went into combat there, I assume?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Yeah.

Gary Swanson

And what was your job, were you a rifleman?

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

So you were a front line --

Richard L. Land

Frontline rifleman.

Gary Swanson

-- infantry rifleman.

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

How many days in total if you remember, were you in combat during the time that you were in Europe, a year?

Richard L. Land

About a -- we were on the front lines about a year if I remember, because we didn't have many breaks. There was one time I was in the hospital with my self-inflicted wound. That's the only time I was off. That's all.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you went -- you started moving out in the Normandy Peninsula. Tell me just about what happened over there.

Richard L. Land

Oh, boy, it's so mixed up for a while we didn't know exactly what was happening, but we was always moving. We didn't stay in one place very long. I think in Le Mais -- when we got to Le Mais there, we stayed there about four or five days. We was -- we was under artillery ____ and stuff all the time we were there. So we -- we was under fire about all the time.

Gary Swanson

Were you taking heavy casualties all the time?

Richard L. Land

Huh?

Gary Swanson

Were you taking heavy casualties most of the time?

Richard L. Land

No. No. Just several times like that. I think it was October 24 that we lost so many. We did lose some now and then, but it was nothing like that there.

Gary Swanson

What happened in October of '44?

Richard L. Land

That's when we got split up with a bunch of attacks -- counterattacks and our Battalion 702. We -- we call them our tank battalion because they had that new 90-millimeters -- 90-millimeters on them. When they had the 75s, they just made the German tanks mad. But when that battalion come along, they could knock that turn off of them.

Gary Swanson

Mm-Hmm.

Richard L. Land

And of course we had that Swiss Army just ahead of us, we were following it. That 702 was protecting us and we was -- we was mopping up right behind the _____.

Gary Swanson

And then what -- what happened? Did you say you run out of gas -- the tanks had run out of gas?

Richard L. Land

We run out of supplies and had to sit -- sit for a couple of weeks, yeah.

Gary Swanson

So did the Germans counterattack?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. They would counterattack now and then. But we -- we -- between our P47s and 51s in the daytime knocking the nest -- machine gun nest down -- 'cause they could come in there and pick them out pretty good. The 47s were the best. They'd knock those tanks out pretty easy and they -- they didn't know. We thought a lot of them got shot, but they was just putting on an act like they was hit. Before they hit the ground they took off.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

They pulled some fast ones on them.

Gary Swanson

Well, you were glad to see those planes, weren't you?

Richard L. Land

Oh man, we liked the 47s better than any of them because they were right down there. They could knock them off just ahead of us.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Real close fire, yeah.

Gary Swanson

So how about -- tell us about the time where you got stranded because the tanks couldn't move because of gas.

Richard L. Land

St. Mihiel, France.

Gary Swanson

Where was it?

Richard L. Land

St. Milhiel, France.

Gary Swanson

St. Milhiel, France. So tell me about what happened there.

Richard L. Land

Well, we were sitting there -- just had the -- I think the 318s got knocked off of what we call Pork Chop Hill. We had to take their place. That's the first time I ever saw a guy sitting there without a head on. I tell you that was a moonlit night. You talk about -- about a creepy feeling, you got it. 'Cause your going right up there where they got it. Because we got there before the medics could move 'em.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Do you remember the -- were you afraid all during the time that you were in combat or did you not think about it very much?

Gary Swanson

All you thought about was surviving. That's right.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

We had a -- because it didn't matter where you was you -- you could get it.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

We had one sergeant, Sergeant Lee. He was from West Virginia, a nice guy. We appointed him to be our sergeant 'cause no one wanted it. We let him have it.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

And when -- he was such a good guy that after when we sent out scouts, if he didn't -- he'd ask for volunteers. If he didn't get volunteers he would volunteer himself for one of them. And that one time after -- after I got back from the hospital, I thought, well, I -- I hated it because of what happened. He asked for scouts and one guy, he said, "I'll take second scout." No one answered -- I said, "I'll take first," and he let me take first and he was the third guy on line. I went first, this other guy went in -- him, me and the other guy made it. They waited on the rest of the bunch and got him. He was the first one. If I hadn't a went, I'd been -- I'd been like him. 'Cause you never know -- you know, you'd be right in front and be safe 'cause they'd let -- let the first ones through then they'd get the main body is what they was doing.

Gary Swanson

So they took care of the whole platoon or the company?

Richard L. Land

Huh?

Gary Swanson

Did they wiped out your whole company that day?

Richard L. Land

No. It was about a day after that. About a day after that is when -- when the tanks moved in on us.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So your tanks had not -- weren't there to give you support?

Gary Swanson

No. No.

Gary Swanson

But the German tanks came?

Richard L. Land

That's right, counterattacked us. Yeah. Scattered us out, moved us up on the hill, surrounded us and we stayed there five to seven days so our other outfit could come back and our tanks could get down there to help them.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. So you were surrounded there for several days?

Richard L. Land

Five to seven days. I don't remember which.

Gary Swanson

And you finally got tank support to come up and bust you out?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Yeah.

Gary Swanson

What you do during that five to seven days?

Richard L. Land

Well, I done first aid work. None of it went on record 'cause no one knew about it, except us. We had -- we had a sergeant. I don't know whether he made it or not. Slavoski -- he was to be up here in Michigan. I don't know whether he made it or not. I got -- I got a bunch of papers here.

Gary Swanson

So were you doing medic work at that time?

Richard L. Land

No. I'm not supposed to be, but shoot, there wasn't no one there. Someone had to do it and I was the most qualified, so I did it and we -- every day we would slip down to the edge to try to see what was going on. But every time we would stick our nose out we started getting mortar fire, 'cause they -- they seen us -- they knew where we was at. They'd watched for us trying to get out there and they'd throw mortar on us. And I had this sergeant down there, I wanted to get him connected to some medic somewhere, because I didn't know all that stuff. And while we was down there he got it in the stomach. While we was down there, they started throwing it in again, so we started moving back. Moved it back and one hid in the tree up there above us, and -- and it went through his leg and hit me right there, just enough to burn it. Didn't go in, just hot and so I -- he wasn't able to go down there with me anymore, and I'd go down there -- got down there one -- one morning there was two guys, I think, they was from a 318 and they were replacement -- they were about 17, 18 years old. There was replacements coming in and one of them got hit with shrapnel and his buddy was asking me if I could help him. I said, "Well, I'll do what I can." I go over there, I cut his britches legs off around his knees, because blood was filling his boots. And it was higher than that so I cut it off a little higher. I said, "It's still higher than that." He said, "Oh, I hope it didn't get my penis." So I unzipped -- I got his britches open here and slid 'em out and he got piece shrapnel right there. I said, "No, it didn't get it," and boy, he was tickled to death.

Gary Swanson

Did he make it okay?

Richard L. Land

Well, he was -- he -- 'till we got of out of there I don't know where he went but I'm sure that they got - they took care of him.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Because it wasn't -- you know, it was mostly flesh.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

In the groin there area.

Gary Swanson

So how many days did you have like that?

Richard L. Land

About seven -- five or seven of them like that. We was always trying to get out of there. We -- they knew they had us in there. And then throw those 88s in there and we -- the ground was such, it didn't make any difference whether you had a fox hole or not. It's like ol' Patton said, "you're not supposed to dig fox holes, your supposed to be moving." Don't take time to dig fox holes. Well, we was in there and there was timber all around us and that -- all they had to do was hide atop those trees and they would just spread everywhere. But they had some 88s just shooting right straight through there. There was a tree about that big. There was a little hole there -- a little trench. It wasn't a fox hole. Just get down, just about even with the ground and one of those 88s hit that thing and cut that thing off. That's why I'm kind of hard of hearing. I blame that 'cause since then, well, my hearing was worse.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

I didn't have nothing to complain about. I was lucky to get back.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

So you got -- you got relieved by the tanks that -- that -- they came through and broke you out, right?
But then you kept on going, you kept on advancing didn't you?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Went to the Rhine River -- crossed the Rhine River _____,

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

On the Roosevelt Bridge -- Pontoon Bridge they put across.

Gary Swanson

Where were you when the Battle of the Bulge was happening, beginning in December of '44?

Richard L. Land

I was in the hospital.

Gary Swanson

How did you happen to get injured?

Richard L. Land

Well, I told you, self-inflicted wound.

Gary Swanson

Okay.

Richard L. Land

After we got --

Gary Swanson

Tell me on camera.

Richard L. Land

Huh?

Gary Swanson

Tell me on camera what happened.

Richard L. Land

I got injured in a self-inflicted wound on my left foot the day that -- 'bout 30 minutes after they got us off the mountain where we had been surrounded for so long. Cleaning my rifle, trying to get ready because we were going on the attack and the thing misfired and I hit myself and I thought, "Boy, this is an -- this is an awful time to get injured like this." 'Cause if those Germans were a little stronger than us, they'd have me captured. But so happened they got me out of there. I was lucky.

Gary Swanson

So how long were you in the hospital?

Richard L. Land

Five months, I think.

Gary Swanson

That long, and then they put you back with the unit?

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

By then where was the unit then by?

Richard L. Land

Germany, still in Germany.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah. I forget the name of the town but it was down in the southern part of Germany. Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. So was your outfit -- was it not in the battle of the Bulge?

Richard L. Land

Yeah, it was. Yeah.

Gary Swanson

It was?

Richard L. Land

So the ol' boy I went down to Texas to see, he got injured -- the Battle of the Bulge.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh. You were -- you were in the hospital when that happened?

Richard L. Land

That's right. Yeah. Uh-huh.

Gary Swanson

Was it -- but you came back to your unit when -- when did you come back to your unit?

Richard L. Land

I don't remember when. I don't -- I can't -- I don't remember where they was at, but I think it was Southern Germany.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Pretty bad in the country down in there where we was at.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah. That was military stuff, ____ + no people was no population there, no hotels or nothing.

Gary Swanson

Yeah, I see.

Richard L. Land

Pretty isolated.

Gary Swanson

So you had come back to combat then after the first of the year, sometime in '45. But if you're in the hospital three or four or five months --

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

-- it probably was March or April. Was it -- had it started to warm up when you joined your outfit, do you know?

Richard L. Land

Well, we still had got a hat of snow afterwards, I know.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Okay.

Richard L. Land

I know we had one snow.

Gary Swanson

Okay. What was the -- looking back at all those things -- all those experiences you had from July to May or so of '45, what was the worst day you spent in the Infantry?

Richard L. Land

Oh, we had a bunch of them, I couldn't tell you. I would have no idea. We had to be worried about something, all the time, just doing the best we could.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Did you make a lot of good buddies?

Richard L. Land

Oh, we had - we was a good -- we was -- we was happier after we got overseas than we was here in the states, because we thought this was a bunch of bull over here. But we -- they had us toughened up for before we head over there.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

And that was easy work, 'cause compared to what we had over here.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Did you happened to get trench foot or anything?

Richard L. Land

No.

Gary Swanson

Did many of your buddies get trench foot?

Richard L. Land

No. The only thing we got was the scabies when we was coming back from Austria back to Camp Lucky Strike on those troop trains.

Gary Swanson

Oh.

Richard L. Land

There was displaced persons trains going East and --

Gary Swanson

Troops were going West?

Richard L. Land

-- and a lot of them guys bringing them West to Camp Lucky Strike.

Gary Swanson

And so you came to Lucky Strike from Austria. Where -- where were you when the Germans said, "I give up," do you remember?

Richard L. Land

We -- well, we was in Czechoslovakia and Austria and I don't remember which side we might be on because just -- you know, it ain't very far cross those countries. You know, we can cross all those countries over there in half a days time. Like right here you got to go half a day -- it takes you to get across the state.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

They were big countries like Luxemburg up there about the size -- size of Kansas City area. That's how bigger they was.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. So you caught scabies going from -- from Czechoslovakia?

Richard L. Land

Austria.

Gary Swanson

Austria -- Austria, back to Camp Lucky Strike on your way to come home?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Yeah. We was _____ Germany before we -- before we got to -- after we got out of Austria we got from Germany, then we went to Camp Lucky Strike.

Gary Swanson

So did they quarantine you then or anything?

Richard L. Land

There at Camp Lucky Strike they quarantined us for six weeks.

Gary Swanson

For six weeks, and you were anxious to come home?

Richard L. Land

Oh, yeah.

Gary Swanson

And they say, "No, your staying here."

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

But you got a chance to get showers and get fattened up a little bit.

Richard L. Land

Well -- well, we didn't get fattened up but we got showers 'cause they run up to a long tent. The showers were going all the time. You pull your clothes off -- you got three minutes to get to the other end and get new clothes. You got three minutes in there. That's all you got to take a shower. That's not very long is it?

Gary Swanson

No, it isn't.

Richard L. Land

Oh, no. Well, that was the more -- best we had than while we was over there.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. When you were used to not having any shower at all --

Richard L. Land

Yeah. That's right.

Gary Swanson

-- that's probably pretty good.

Richard L. Land

That ol' -- that ol' helmet just hold about three or four quarts of water. You know, that's what you call a spit bath.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

How is it when you were in combat and under fire, what did you have to eat, just K rations?

Richard L. Land

K rations.

Gary Swanson

You never got a mess kitchen or anything?

Richard L. Land

No. K rations, we didn't get C rations, very seldom.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

Very seldom we got C rations. We like C ration a lot better than those Ks. But when we could, we -- we had a farmers chicken or a dozen eggs for breakfast and those people fed us -- those German people fed us. They sure did.

Gary Swanson

Oh, they would?

Richard L. Land

Huh?

Gary Swanson

So I think you mentioned off camera that you might come to a German farmhouse and displace the people at night and sleep in the farmhouse and then they would come back in the morning and feed you.

Richard L. Land

That's right. They would take you to the cellar and show you where the wine was. {Laughter}-- They was good people. We had -- we had a good -- German people was -- we liked them better than any of the French or either one. Didn't care too much about the Czechs, but Austrians was all right. Of course, we didn't have too much time with civilians down there.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Yeah.

Richard L. Land

But Germany -- we had a good chance to know them.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. You went through a lot of small towns, I expect.

Richard L. Land

Oh, yeah. Like I said, those kind of towns we went to -- we -- we loved those little ol' towns. But the only thing you didn't like about them was the smell of the barns and the animals burning. 'Cause

those towns down there -- there'd be battle going on and the old farmer be outside in his field. Artillery flying around and his cows laying out there in the field dying or already dead. He's up there plowing -- he had to plow. Couldn't slow him down.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Regardless, he'd just -- he'd rather get killed like that than starve to death.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

But he had to raise a family.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Oh, we had a little fun along the way. We'd take those little towns. We'd get on a convoy to move faster. Is you on tape? You might not want to tape this what I am going to say.

Gary Swanson

Well, that's up to you because you're going to get a copy of the tape.

Richard L. Land

Okay.

Gary Swanson

If you want to hear it go ahead and say it.

Richard L. Land

A lot of the guys at -- see there wasn't no men over there. There wasn't no young men. Might of been old men. But there's a few middle aged woman and they'd be hanging out the windows and everything and they'd be liberated. And some of the guys would do this to them and they would do it right back at them. Oh, yeah. They were glad to see us. Most of them were. I didn't know any of them that didn't like us. You can't say that now. Everybody hates us now.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Well, you guys did the job back then, you freed them. What was the -- looking back, Dick, what was the worst part of your military service do you think?

Richard L. Land

The worst part?

Gary Swanson

Yeah. The part you didn't like at all.

Richard L. Land

Oh, lot of training with it, a lot. That's for sure. Because we thought it -- it wouldn't do us any good but it toughened us up.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

And we knew how to do it.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. So when the chips were down and it was cold outside and you didn't have a foxhole and the Germans were shooting at you --

Richard L. Land

Cold didn't bother you, no. Cold didn't bother you. You just hoped your number wasn't up.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Because whether you were on the front or back a ways you -- you still got it.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Did you lose a lot of your friends from your company?

Richard L. Land

Oh, yeah. Well, I tell you what though, we had three -- we had three guys in our outfit that kept things alive. They were a crazy bunch, those three guys were. We went to Castle, when we took Castle. Castles' about the size of Kansas City at that time.

Gary Swanson

Castle, Germany?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Yes.

Richard L. Land

That's where they had a lot of big locomotives, made tanks, big heavy stuff. We went too far one night -- a bull horn and we started running into all artillery and we thought, "Oh, boy, we better stop," 'cause you know already it wasn't very good. Sometimes you couldn't even get nothing on them and we done lost radio contact and they should of known then that we were too far, but we didn't know it. So we stopped and got in bunkers down there. They had bunkers every block, one in each end. We got down in the bunkers and waited for them to tell us what to do and oh, about in 30, 45 minutes they said, "You got to get back where you come from about three or four miles, or you're going to get it." So we got out of there and went back. We had one guy named Bonzo, he was from Michigan. He died about three years ago 'cause ____ kept track with him and he -- he could -- we could take a ten minute break and he'd get nine minute nap out of it. And he went to sleep then. We got back to -- back where we was -- where we was going to stay all night. Got started counting, made everybody accountable -- Bonzo was gone. Where's he at? Said, "Well, he's up there sleeping in that bunker." No way go back up there. Next morning at 8 o'clock there was runners coming down the street. Told us there's a bunch of Germans up there who want to give up. About 300 of them, so that's the way we was going -- we was going up that way. Sure enough we got up there and it was like a big arena. 300 soldiers in there wanting to surrender. And out of that bunch, there's Bonzo. Then they got him and stripped everything off of him so he couldn't harm them.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

We -- we stripped them all -- all of them and sent them to the rear.

Gary Swanson

Did you take a lot of prisoners during the --

Richard L. Land

We got about 300 that day.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

They were -- they were ready.

Gary Swanson

And toward the end you probably took a lot of them, didn't you?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Why it got -- it got awful. Displaced persons trying to go one way and prisoners to go -- we were taking the prisoners the other way. It was quite a deal. You couldn't see the contraptions they were traveling on too. They had trucks and stuff but it -- they had -- looked like a hot-water tanks. Fires built in the bed of the trucks -- fire burning. you know, get up steam to make it, loaded down with displaced persons they did have to get off and push it -- help it up the hill.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

The old farm boy from Arkansas saw a lot, didn't he?

Richard L. Land

I sure did. I got an education. I saw a lot of country. I salute the flag in seven of them, too.

Gary Swanson

Seven different countries?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

I was pretty proud of it.

Gary Swanson

Well, you should be.

Richard L. Land

But these guys today, they don't like us. We were trying to help them. They don't like us.

Gary Swanson

Well, people don't always understand that they're -- 'till sometime later that our motives were to help them.

Richard L. Land

That's right.

Gary Swanson

Well, you got back to Camp Lucky Strike. They had you quarantined there for awhile and then they sent you home on a victory ship or --

Richard L. Land

Well, it was -- it was a converted cargo ship that a -- South -- Marseilles, France. That's the French Riviera down there. December they was -- they was swimming -- jumping off the boats swimming. We got to New York. We -- we was froze to death, day or two before Christmas. And there was one guy on that boat -- we went right pass the Statue of Liberty, going out and coming back. When we was coming back he said, I -- redheaded guy. He wasn't from my outfit but he was on the boat. Been on the boat with me for 18 days. I knew him -- half way knew him. And he said, "I'll show you about where I live." We got up there early in the morning. Everybody -- you see the lights coming on. And he pointed out just about where he was. He said, "My mom and dad is right over there waiting for me."

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Gary Swanson

Did your wife know that you were coming home?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. But she didn't know when. I walked in on her. She didn't know I was there until I walked in on her. Because you didn't have telephones -- didn't --

Gary Swanson

Oh, no.

Richard L. Land

-- have communications like you got now.

Gary Swanson

So -- so you hopped the train from Camp Kilmer probably and went to Jefferson Barracks and got discharged?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. I'll tell you what, something else happened too. We got discharged December the 26th. Took us into Saint Louis to catch the bus -- the train with -- what ever we want to do, and I had that boy at home and I thought, "Well, shoot, I need to get my wife and him something before I get home." I went over to the drugstore and asked the lady in there if they had some after Christmas sales. I picked up a little old stuffed animal. I asked, "How much for this"? It was more than ten dollars. She says, "We're marking them off half price." And I was getting ready to pay her that five bucks for it. And she said, "Wait a minute, let me go see the manger." She went back to see the manger -- come back and says, "That will be ten cents." I said, "Boy, I got it made now." I'm a civilian and I'm in -- I'm in the door. If this -- if this is what civilian life is like now, I'm all for it -- I'm all for it.

Gary Swanson

They gave you a good price, didn't they?

Richard L. Land

They sure did.

Gary Swanson

And -- and sold you something for your wife I'm sure.

Richard L. Land

Yeah. I forget what. I got her something. I forget what it was, but that dog, that dog surprised me. I didn't remember much else.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Now was your wife -- when did you get married?

Richard L. Land

Got married in '42.

Gary Swanson

'42?

Richard L. Land

Beaumont -- Beaumont, Texas.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you were married for quite a while before you went in?

Richard L. Land

A year.

Gary Swanson

About a year?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. About a year.

Gary Swanson

Was she -- and was she pregnant when you left, or did she have the --

Richard L. Land

No. No.

Gary Swanson

You had the son when you were still --

Richard L. Land

Well, just we got off ____ maneuvers.

Gary Swanson

I see. Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Okay. So you knew you had a son at home and you had a lot of incentive to -- to make it if you possibly could, because you had a wife and son?

Richard L. Land

That's right. I -- I told the good Lord, "Get me back home," and He did.

Gary Swanson

Amen. So did you catch a train or bus to come to Kansas City or did you come to Kansas City -- where did you go?

Richard L. Land

No. We went back to Arkansas.

Gary Swanson

Back to Arkansas?

Richard L. Land

Yeah, I went to -- took a bus.

Gary Swanson

And where were they living at that time, Fayetteville?

Richard L. Land

No. My wife was living in her hometown in Dyer, that's about 40-miles southeast.

Gary Swanson

So did you catch the bus all the way into Dyer?

Richard L. Land

I took the bus all the way in and transferred. Yeah. Santa Fe Greyhound to --

Gary Swanson

Santa Fe Trailways?

Richard L. Land

Santa Fe, yeah.

Gary Swanson

And so you --

Richard L. Land

Greyhound Bus Lines and _____ + then to -- to -- _____ to Little Rock.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Back then they used to have buses in all those little towns.

Richard L. Land

Trailways.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. Trailways.

Richard L. Land

Trailways. Yeah, those too.

Gary Swanson

So you got home. What time a day did you get home, do you remember?

Richard L. Land

About 8 o'clock in the morning.

Gary Swanson

8 o'clock in the morning? What did you do?

Richard L. Land

Well, I rubbed that little gal and gave her a big hug.

Gary Swanson

You just walked up to the house?

Richard L. Land

I said, I think she knew before I got there, 'cause they -- telephone started ringing. They knew who it was.

Gary Swanson

Oh.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

That was quite an emotional --

Richard L. Land

See, it's just a little old town about 300 population. Everybody knows everybody.

Gary Swanson

Boy, that was quite a homecoming, wasn't it?

Richard L. Land

Oh, yeah.

Gary Swanson

You and the wife -- what was the wife's name?

Richard L. Land

Wanda.

Gary Swanson

Wanda.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

She was a good gal. When we went to Camp Phillips down here -- Kansas.

Gary Swanson

Yes.

Richard L. Land

Salina, Kansas.

Gary Swanson

Yes.

Richard L. Land

There was some people out there named Weaver and this____ May from Texas heard Wanda -- always stayed together when ever they could. We had a place out there and the people's name was Weaver. She just turned the place over to them. On weekends they'd go out of town -- make yourselves at home -- we did.

Gary Swanson

That was wonderful.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

That was wonderful.

Richard L. Land

Really wonderful people out there. They welcomed us. They were one of the ones that didn't have signs on the yard, "No sailors or soldiers." Why, they didn't care. They were part of us.

Gary Swanson

That's wonderful.

Richard L. Land

It's kind of funny when we -- when we left there. The woman had to go back home because you couldn't go _____ with us. So they had one of those little old Studebakers -- Lark. First Studebaker '47 or '48. First ones they made. Had a _____ + and shoot, I never drove a car like that. I told her, I says, "I don't know how we're going to get these woman to bus -- to train station," 'cause they had to take the train at 4 o'clock in the morning. She says, "Well, take my car." And I said, "Shoot, I ain't going to take your car, I don't know how to drive and besides, what if something happens." She said, "Ah, nothing's going to happen." So she sets the keys on the kitchen table. She said, "when you guys leave in the morning, get 'em up and go take 'em up there." Well, old Ken, he didn't know how to drive, period. I drove a Model T and a Model A and a '36 Oldsmobile once. Well, I got in that thing. We got it and got it back down and got them to the train station and load them off and got back all right. I tell you that -- we call her Ms. Weaver, she was a jewel. If all the woman around those camps were like her, those boys would be happy because we was. She just turned it over to us.

Gary Swanson

That's wonderful. So you got out of the service then, soon after?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Or maybe you were out before you came home?

Richard L. Land

I was out and went -- went to St. Louis.

Gary Swanson

So what -- so what have you been doing the last almost 60 years? So what you do once you got out of the army?

Richard L. Land

I -- I tried to find a job, but there wasn't any. So I come to Kansas City. I took a little schooling, and as soon as the benefits run out I had to do something else and I went to work in a garage. I worked several garages.

Gary Swanson

Here in town?

Richard L. Land

Kansas City and out here, both. In 1970 I went to work for myself right out there, where that -- that was a double car garage.

Gary Swanson

Yeah.

Richard L. Land

I went out -- went to work out there. I thought I owned a _____ + at the end of the year '51, '52 coming -- started -- we had an ice storm here in '52. You was -- was you around here? Remember the ice storm? I laid here for two weeks, didn't do nothing. For there was so iced in. Finally, they called up -- people started calling up -- wanting to -- to know if I'd -- would work on their cars. Yeah. If I never get things straightened out around here, I'll work on it. She said, "Well, until you can do that, come on and clean my yard out from the limbs and trees and stuff." I done that for about two weeks.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

First thing I know they was bringing them in. One of my customers bringing the Chiefs Dodge car down there. That's when they used Dodges down there -- Chiefs did.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

He'd bring -- he'd go down pick one up down there bring it back for me to work on, get it done, he'd go back and get me another one. He fed me there for awhile. And I finally went up and told -- told the billing guy up there, old Dick Winters up here at City Hall. I said, that's after I'd been working out there a couple years. I told him, I said, "Say, I'm in business over there." And I said, "I'm in business and I didn't even know it," and he got to asking me 'cause I was going to buy a place down here and build a garage. And he said, "Well, you got good neighbors, it sounds like." I said, "I sure do. I got good customers." He said, "Well, why don't you just build a garage in your backyard"? He said, "I'll give you a permit." I said, "Well, if you say I can, that would save me from buying a place." He said, "Yeah, just get it, I give you a permit. You can build you a car garage. The only thing it ought to be 28 by 28." That's all I can build, but he says, "If you wait a little bit, we can add a little bit on to it." Because you think it's going to be -- footage is going to be extended a little higher. So I build that garage -- I retired from it. I had -- I had a good life here, too.

Gary Swanson

So you were a mechanic?

Richard L. Land

Yep.

Gary Swanson

For -- ever since you got out of the service?

Richard L. Land

That's all I ever done.

Gary Swanson

Yeah. You've been a mechanic one way or the other, either for somebody else or for yourself, yeah.

Richard L. Land

I started out on Model Ts before I even went into the service, when I was a teenager. Then Model As -
- made sawmills out of Model Ts.

Gary Swanson

Boy, you've got a lot of experience then.

Richard L. Land

I sure have.

Gary Swanson

Are you still -- are you doing any mechanicing yet?

Richard L. Land

I'm restoring a '65 Chevy Convertible. And I'm working on a '51 now. I'll show it to you when we go
out --

Gary Swanson

All right. That would be good.

Richard L. Land

-- before you leave. We ain't going to have chow for you for another three hours. You ain't got about a
three minute drive have you? Okay.

Gary Swanson

So tell me -- so you've had a good career then just working for yourself, mainly, how about your
family. Tell me about your family.

Richard L. Land

I've got seven of them.

Gary Swanson

Those are your kids?

Richard L. Land

Those six there and this one here.

Gary Swanson

Is that right.

Richard L. Land

We lost this boy here when he was nine.

Gary Swanson

Well, I tell you what, I am going to train my camera on those. Start up there on the left side and tell me who those kids are of yours.

Richard L. Land

All right. The one on the left there that is Johnny he got -- he get wounded in Vietnam. Next one -- he was in the Army. Next one is Wade, he's the oldest son. He was in the Navy for four years. Donny on the right there, he retired out of the Marine Corp -- twenty years served. Suzie there, she's a purchasing agent at Air Force Base down in Florida.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

I can't -- I can't think the name of the town -- place, and Donny there, I mean Mark, he's the youngest -- he's the one that is here now.

Gary Swanson

Okay.

Richard L. Land

He worked for Lafarge Concrete. He's getting ready to go to _____ Saint Charles down there.

Gary Swanson

Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Land

And the girl on the right, that's Marsha. She's a -- she works for the Spokane School District.

Gary Swanson

In Washington?

Richard L. Land

Yeah. She's a head of the computer program.

Gary Swanson

Uh-huh.

Richard L. Land

They both done good.

Gary Swanson

Well, that's wonderful. Let's -- and then we got a shot of -- whose this young fellow?

Richard L. Land

This is Bobby Stevens Land. He passed away when he was nine. He had a kidney infection.

Gary Swanson

That's too bad. And -- and there is Romeo and Juliet.

Richard L. Land

Whoa. What is that. {Laughter}.

Gary Swanson

Excuse me. Dick and Wanda on the occasion of their wedding, which was, what day?

Richard L. Land

The -- the day we got married was August of 24, 1942. Beaumont, Texas, First Baptist Church.

Gary Swanson

All right.

Richard L. Land

And I'm still a Baptist.

Gary Swanson

There you go, '42, and she -- she just passed away?

Richard L. Land

February 22nd.

Gary Swanson

February 22nd of this year?

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

So you -- boy, you had a long --

Richard L. Land

Little over 60 years.

Gary Swanson

Little over 60 years, Dick and Wanda were married. Now we're going take a shot of Dick and Wanda on their 50th wedding anniversary. So here are Dick and Wanda Land on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary and if you were born --

Richard L. Land

60th.

Gary Swanson

60th, I'm sorry. 60th in 2002. They were married in 1942. What a handsome looking couple. Looking great after all those years.

Richard L. Land

That's it.

Gary Swanson

Dick, just one last question. Do you have any thoughts on how Americans ought to respond when Uncle Sam calls and says, "I need you." He better go do his part. That's like I told that son of mine in Vietnam. I said, "I don't believe in all this stuff, but they call you, that's your duty, you better go and he did. He served his country.

Gary Swanson

So you -- you had -- three of your sons served in the military?

Richard L. Land

That's right. One of them retired.

Gary Swanson

One of them retired from the military.

Richard L. Land

Marine Corp.

Gary Swanson

Marine Corp. You had a Marine, and a Sailor and --

Richard L. Land

Army.

Gary Swanson

Army.

Richard L. Land

Yeah.

Gary Swanson

Your daddy was in the Army in World War I. You have quite a military legacy in your family.

Richard L. Land

Yep.

Gary Swanson

Well, Dick, I want to thank you very much for this interview and I want to thank you for what you did for our country.

Richard L. Land

Thank you.

Gary Swanson

Back there in the 2nd World War.

Richard L. Land

I appreciate it.

Gary Swanson

Your welcome.

Richard L. Land

It means a lot to me.

Gary Swanson

Dick, I meant to ask you, how about grandchildren. You've got six living children, how about grandchildren?

Richard L. Land

Well, Donny over there he's got three kids and he's got -- he -- he's - a grandpa himself about six times.

Gary Swanson

Oh, my word.

Richard L. Land

So that adds to me, don't it?

Gary Swanson

Yes, it does.

Richard L. Land

Yeah. Wade, there, he's got about five. All -- all girls.

Gary Swanson

All girls.

Richard L. Land

And Donnie, there, he's got two boys and a girl. They all grown away from home. Suzie, she don't have no kids. Mark, there, he got four and Marsha, she's got one.

Gary Swanson

You know, I didn't count them up but it's a bunch of them.

Richard L. Land

It's about 12 and 12. 12 great, 12 grandkids and about 12 great.

Gary Swanson

Oh, that is absolutely wonderful. So you have a very -- you have a great family. You have a proud legacy, you served your country well, and Dick, I thank you so much for the opportunity to chat with you.

Richard L. Land

Well, I appreciate the opportunity.