Victor Moiles Interview

Company B, 317th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Michael Mihalus)

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

00:00:11 Speaker 1

We'll start with an easy one. Tell me your name.

00:00:13 Speaker 2

My name is Victor Moyles. You spelled MOILES.

00:00:15 Speaker 1

Would.

00:00:16 Speaker 1

Spell the last name for him.

00:00:19 Speaker 1

And what's your birth date?

00:00:20 Speaker 2

6718.

00:00:22 Speaker 1

All right. Were you drafted or did you enlist?

00:00:27 Speaker 2

I was drafted.

00:00:28 Speaker 1

And where were you living then?

00:00:30 Speaker 1

In Karna, OK, just tell me briefly about your training.

00:00:38 Speaker 2

Well, you mean our my basic training.

00:00:41 Speaker 1

Just basically where'd you go and?

00:00:43 Speaker 2

We went to Fort Benning, GA.

00:00:46 Speaker 2 And. 00:00:48 Speaker 2 We took infantry training. 00:00:51 Speaker 2 And right after that, we went overseas. 00:00:54 Speaker 1 How do you get over? 00:00:56 Speaker 2 On a old English tub that had been sunk. 00:01:02 Speaker 2 And risen, they patched it up and it was a maiden void and. 00:01:10 Speaker 2 It was not very fun. Not a very good trip. 00:01:14 Speaker 1 It wasn't a good trip over. 00:01:18 Speaker 1 Yeah. 00:01:20 Speaker 1 OK, so where did you go when you went overseas? 00:01:24 Speaker 2 We went to England first. 00:01:27 Speaker 2 And we stayed there just a few days and then we boarded ship. 00:01:33 Speaker 2 And we went to. 00:01:35 Speaker 2 France.

00:01:37 Speaker 2

We landed on Omaha Beach. 00:01:39 Speaker 2 Tell me about that. Well, it was about 60 days after D-Day. 00:01:46 Speaker 2 And. 00:01:49 Speaker 2 The. 00:01:50 Speaker 2 They had to dock out about. 00:01:53 Speaker 2 Two city blocks from shore and landed. 00:01:57 Speaker 2 Will. 00:01:59 Speaker 2 Got on ALTZ or whatever they call it landing craft. 00:02:04 Speaker 2 And took us to shore. 00:02:08 Speaker 2 We went in one about 3 or 4 miles and. 00:02:13 Speaker 2 And they had a camp set up. 00:02:17 Speaker 2 And then we went from there. 00:02:22 Speaker 2 It took about 3 days to get through. 00:02:26 Speaker 2 Where the company that I was going to join was. 00:02:31 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:34 Speaker 2

And they just taken a river crossing.

00:02:38 Speaker 2

And they suffered a lot of casualties. Of course we were replacements.

00:02:44 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:47 Speaker 2

It was. It was confusing.

00:02:50 Speaker 2

It was dark, it just turned dark and.

00:02:55 Speaker 2

They.

00:02:59 Speaker 2

Till this dig a hole.

00:03:01 Speaker 2

And.

00:03:02 Speaker 2

We had that loose, so we weren't very.

00:03:05 Speaker 2

Anxious to dig a hole and it was just a small hole.

00:03:11 Speaker 2

And 1st Sergeant came up and he said you see that hole right there? And we said, yeah, he said, well, I told her, Joanne is there and and we lost a couple of our men, he says. And and unless you.

00:03:27 Speaker 2

I want to stay above ground and another artillery shell lands, he says.

00:03:33 Speaker 2

You're going to be in big trouble. You better dig that hole. And boy, we dug a hole.

00:03:39 Speaker 2

And that was our introduction to.

00:03:42 Speaker 2 Combat. 00:03:44 Speaker 1 Where were you when you first heard? 00:03:47 Speaker 1 Guns going on? 00:03:50 Speaker 2 Uh. 00:03:53 Speaker 2 Well, we were in France. 00:03:55 Speaker 2 And. 00:03:58 Speaker 2 II really don't remember when, but. 00:04:04 Speaker 2 The a couple of nights after we landed, we were moving inland, away from the river and. 00:04:15 Speaker 2 We. 00:04:16 Speaker 2 Or told to dig in. 00:04:19 Speaker 2 And that was my first introduction by artillery shells. 00:04:24 Speaker 2 I dug my hole. 00:04:26 Speaker 2 And was just standing around outside his beautiful night and. 00:04:33 Speaker 2 And the shell went over our head and landed about, oh, couple, 100 yards away. 00:04:43 Speaker 2

And I piled in my hole.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

And somebody jumped in on top of me and I didn't know until afterwards. But he said every time an artillery shell went over, I kept hitting him in the stomach with my elbow. And I wasn't very happy about it. You know, it was a.

00:05:02 Speaker 2

Quite a broad and.

00:05:05 Speaker 2

Then finally it led up and then the our artillery started firing back.

00:05:11 Speaker 2

And.

00:05:13 Speaker 2

That was my first introduction to artillery fire.

00:05:18 Speaker 2

And.

00:05:19 Speaker 2

He.

00:05:21 Speaker 2

All while we were in that hole, he was talking to me.

00:05:26 Speaker 2

And he talked me out of ever being.

00:05:30 Speaker 2

Afraid of artillery? I never was afraid of artillery at that went through an awful lot of artillery barrages over the next.

00:05:40 Speaker 2

Five months or so, but.

00:05:44 Speaker 2

I was never afraid of artillery.

00:05:48 Speaker 1

What did he say that made you not afraid?

00:05:49 Speaker 2

Of artillery. Well, he just kept telling. He was telling me that if you hear it, it's gone over. You don't have to worry about it, he says in your hole, he says you don't have to worry about it unless we get a direct hit.

00:06:08 Speaker 2

He says so they can't hear you. I see you. They're uh miles away.

00:06:15 Speaker 2

And says says don't worry about artillery.

00:06:19 Speaker 2

And.

00:06:21 Speaker 2

I got over it. I didn't. From then on, I never was worried about our tour. I went through a lot of artillery barrages in the next six months, but.

00:06:34 Speaker 2

I never was afraid of artillery.

00:06:38 Speaker 1

Tell me about the first time you fired your gun.

00:06:42 Speaker 2

First time I fired my gun was.

00:06:47 Speaker 2

We're we've been moving up and we're in the woods.

00:06:52 Speaker 2

And.

00:06:56 Speaker 2

We.

00:06:58 Speaker 2

Got to the edge of the woods and and our first Sergeant had us get into the skirmish line, if you know what that is.

00:07:06 Speaker 2

And.

00:07:08 Speaker 2

We are going to take a town.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

And he said that now.

00:07:14 Speaker 2

He says.

00:07:16 Speaker 2

I want to keep a firepower up, he said. Fire at least 100 rounds of ammunition. He says that the enemy will keep their heads down.

00:07:27 Speaker 2

If this.

00:07:29 Speaker 2

Flying over and he says.

00:07:34 Speaker 2

We won't.

00:07:35 Speaker 2

Suffer any casualties?

00:07:38 Speaker 2

And and we did. We fired 100 rounds and we went into the town.

00:07:45 Speaker 2

And I was excited.

00:07:48 Speaker 2

I was enjoying myself, really excited and we started taking prisoners.

00:07:56 Speaker 2

And I started yelling at him and pushing him around. I was just private, you know, and.

00:08:04 Speaker 2

And I don't. I don't know what happened, but the next morning.

00:08:09 Speaker 2

My platoon Sergeant says.

00:08:13 Speaker 2

Miles, he says.

00:08:15 Speaker 2

You're a squad leader now, I says I am. Yeah. You're a squad leader.

00:08:21 Speaker 2

He says you're got your.

00:08:24

Girl.

00:08:26 Speaker 2

And he says the squad leader calls for staff Sergeant. He says you'll get that in another week or two. And so I became a squad leader in the staff Sergeant.

00:08:40 Speaker 2

And we moved on different things happened our our.

00:08:47 Speaker 2

And we moved on for a while.

00:08:50 Speaker 2

And.

00:08:53 Speaker 2

We were getting close to a town that we wanted to take.

00:08:57 Speaker 2

And there was a lot of shooting. We were receiving fire and.

00:09:03 Speaker 2

We are doing some firing ourselves.

00:09:06 Speaker 2

And my.

00:09:09 Speaker 2

Platoon Sergeant. He was my hero.

00:09:12 Speaker 2

Everything I would do anything, yet I really like them.

00:09:18 Speaker 2
And.
00:09:20 Speaker 2
A tank got hit.
00:09:22 Speaker 2
And he ran up there to help.
00:09:25 Speaker 2
Get the men out of the tank.
00:09:27 Speaker 2
And he got shot in the stomach.
00:09:31 Speaker 2
And he was running bent over for our Jeep that was parked far little ways away. And he said miles.
00:09:40 Speaker 2
He says that's your tune now, he says. And I got to be a platoon in in about two months time. From the time I went over, I was tune Sergeant.
00:09:54 Speaker 2
And.
00:09:56 Speaker 2
We.
00:09:58 Speaker 2
We had quite a took quite a few towns. There were small towns.
00:10:05 Speaker 2
And over period of next.
00:10:08 Speaker 2
Few months.
00:10:10 Speaker 2
And then.
00:10:12 Speaker 2
We.

00:10:15 Speaker 2 We're getting close to. 00:10:19 Speaker 2 River. 00:10:20 Speaker 2 And. 00:10:22 Speaker 2 And we were told that we're going to have to take the river. 00:10:27 Speaker 2 And they said they were going to send us back. 00:10:31 Speaker 2 For some, hire for a couple of weeks and then. 00:10:37 Speaker 2 We take the river. 00:10:42 Speaker 2 And. 00:10:44 Speaker 2 And we went back. 00:10:47 Speaker 2 And they issued this. 00:10:52 Speaker 2 Two pair of long handles 2. 00:10:58 Speaker 2 Wool uniform. 00:11:01 Speaker 2 They're all high. 00:11:03 Speaker 2 Now, where are we putting all this stuff on? He says you're going to need it. 00:11:10 Speaker 2

And we. 00:11:12 Speaker 2 Boarded the truck the next morning. 00:11:15 Speaker 2 And. 00:11:18 Speaker 2 I bought the. 00:11:19 Speaker 2 By late that evening. 00:11:23 Speaker 2 We got off the trucks and started working inland. 00:11:29 Speaker 2 And they that we got to a place that had us dig in. 00:11:33 Speaker 2 And we dug in and the next morning. 00:11:37 Speaker 2 Everything broke loose. 00:11:39 Speaker 2 The Germans up on the hills around us. 00:11:42 Speaker 2 And were introduced to the Battle of Bugs. 00:11:47 Speaker 2 And bitter cold. And it was nasty. We tried to dig a foxhole, couldn't even cut through the. 00:11:56 Speaker 2 Ah. 00:11:58 Speaker 2 Side you know and everything. 00:12:01 Speaker 2 And.

00:12:04 Speaker 2

That's that's the our introduction to the battle of bodes.

00:12:10 Speaker 1

I want you to tell me about the battle. But first tell me what was worse of the Battle of Oz?

00:12:14 Speaker 1

The Germans or the weather?

00:12:15 Speaker 2

The weather.

00:12:17 Speaker 2

Whether I mean, we had a lot of casualty.

00:12:22 Speaker 2

I.

00:12:24 Speaker 2

My brother, he was in the Air Force.

00:12:28 Speaker 2

The the owner older 1, he was in the Air Force and he said to me one day he said Vic, he says you've seen a lot of combat. Why don't you sit down and write a story about it?

00:12:41 Speaker 2

And I wrote a story about the battle that bodes, and you've got it here.

00:12:47 Speaker 2

And.

00:12:50 Speaker 2

The weather was terrible.

00:12:53 Speaker 2

Cold. We weren't dressed for it. The Germans were dressed for it. We weren't and.

00:13:02 Speaker 2

And we, we lost a lot of men.

00:13:06 Speaker 2

And I had lost a good chair of my platoon.

00:13:12 Speaker 2

And.

00:13:13 Speaker 2

One day, the company commander says miles, he says.

00:13:21 Speaker 2

We need officers, he says. I'm going to send you to.

00:13:26 Speaker 2

Paris, he said for a couple of weeks and he said you'll come back as second Lieutenant.

00:13:34 Speaker 2

I asked him how about my men? What's going to happen to them?

00:13:39 Speaker 2

And he said, well, he says somebody will take care of him.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

I said no way. I'm not going. I'm staying here.

00:13:49 Speaker 2

So I did.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

And.

00:13:53 Speaker 2

We there was a lot of stories about the Battle of the bones.

00:13:59 Speaker 2

In my.

00:14:02 Speaker 2

Story that I wrote and.

00:14:07 Speaker 2

And the last day of the Battle of the BOGS.

00:14:12 Speaker 2

I didn't realize it, though. 50 years later, we were in Germany. We'd taken over a little town.

00:14:20 Speaker 2

And we got we got out of town and we crossed the river.

00:14:26 Speaker 2

And the river was about four or five inches deep.

00:14:31 Speaker 2

In the middle.

00:14:33 Speaker 2

But the water was swift, and most of it was froze over.

00:14:39 Speaker 2

And I still had no combat boots I had. Or when I went over and all the US men had snow packs.

00:14:48 Speaker 2

And they didn't get their feet wet. I got mine wet and.

00:14:55 Speaker 2

We were.

00:14:57 Speaker 2

We were walking, which was fine.

00:15:00 Speaker 2

And we got to a place where?

00:15:05 Speaker 2

There is a roll of trees about as far as you could see about the old 10/15.

00:15:12 Speaker 2

Yards deep.

00:15:15 Speaker 2

And.

00:15:17 Speaker 2

We hadn't seen any enemy at all.

00:15:20 Speaker 2

But our company commander had us get in the skirmish line at the edge of the woods.

00:15:27 Speaker 2

And then we started out across the woods.

00:15:31 Speaker 2

And I'm in through the woods, out in the open. And we got out there. Oh, 50 or 100 yards.

00:15:40 Speaker 2

And.

00:15:43 Speaker 2

The Germans opened up on us. They were in the woods about half mile away.

00:15:50 Speaker 2

And we scammed back into the trees.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

And.

00:15:56 Speaker 2

The tune next to me.

00:15:58 Speaker 2

One of their men were shot was shot, you know, half a mile. You know everything you shoot at and.

00:16:10 Speaker 2

The aid man went down to help him.

00:16:13 Speaker 2

And by then we were all in the trees and they were the only ones out in the open. And the Germans opened up on them and.

00:16:25 Speaker 2

They were both killed.

00:16:28 Speaker 2

And I took inventory and I found I had one man.

00:16:32 Speaker 2

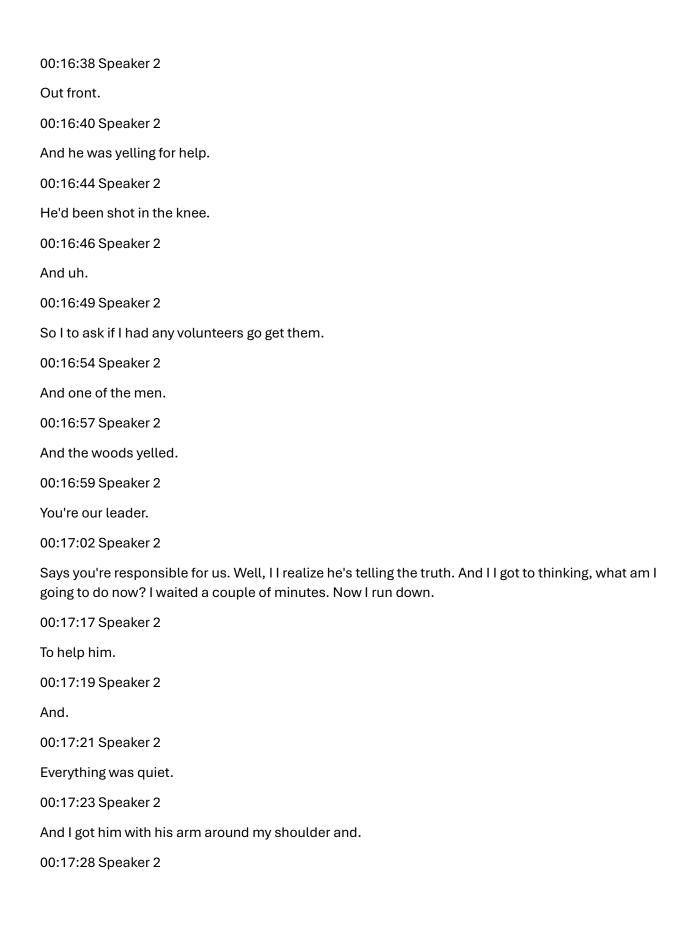
Down.

00:16:34 Speaker 2

About oh.

00:16:36 Speaker 2

50 yards or so.



He was hopping and I was walking and then it felt like the whole German army had opened fire on us. Bullets were whizzing around the head and into the ground and.

00:17:40 Speaker 2

We weren't making any time at all up the hill.

00:17:45 Speaker 2

But finally we got up there. I was sure we were going to get wounded, but I never. All the while I was in the service, I never figured I would ever get killed.

00:17:56 Speaker 2

I knew sooner or later I get one bit.

00:17:59 Speaker 2

But I would never get killed.

00:18:02 Speaker 2

And and we made it back in the woods.

00:18:06 Speaker 2

And that night.

00:18:12 Speaker 2

He he was still there.

00:18:14 Speaker 2

And I went to the company commander and he says I said I can't hardly walk.

00:18:20 Speaker 2

I says I got it.

00:18:23 Speaker 2

Get back and see if I can't get a pair of dry shoes or dry socks or something.

00:18:30 Speaker 2

And.

00:18:32 Speaker 2

He.

00:18:34 Speaker 2

Sent me back. Well, I had to go across the water again.

00:18:38 Speaker 2 And. 00:18:40 Speaker 2 I got in there and. 00:18:42 Speaker 2 And then. 00:18:43 Speaker 2 Took my boots on and stuff and I said hey, I gotta have him back. I gotta go back to my outfit. 00:18:50 Speaker 2 He checked my feet and he said you're not going anywhere. 00:18:53 Speaker 2 He said you fold your feet. 00:18:57 Speaker 2 And. 00:18:58 Speaker 2 I ended up spending. 00:19:01 Speaker 2 About 5 or 6 months in a hospital in England. 00:19:06 Speaker 2 And that that was the end of the. 00:19:10 Speaker 2 Fighting, as far as I was concerned. 00:19:15 Speaker 1 What was the yeah. 00:19:19 Speaker 2 Fidgeting with the chair there a little bit, we're picking that up, OK. 00:19:20 Speaker 1 Oh, OK. We're picking up a little bit of your hands on the chair. What? 00:19:28 Speaker 1

What was the scariest time for you?

00:19:31 Speaker 2

While you were over there, the scariest sign well.

00:19:42 Speaker 2

We've been swapping shots.

00:19:45 Speaker 2

With the Germans.

00:19:48 Speaker 2

And we're far away from the the town that we were going to take.

00:19:53 Speaker 2

And as soon as it was dark, we moved in and the high ground overlooking the town we dug. We were digging in.

00:20:06 Speaker 2

And a couple of our tanks had pulled off behind us and they were down the hill and they were going to assist us in taking the town.

00:20:18 Speaker 2

Well.

00:20:22 Speaker 2

The shells that were used were little shells, you know.

00:20:26 Speaker 2

But on the back of the tanks, they have a.

00:20:30 Speaker 2

Several and a Peck.

00:20:32 Speaker 2

So we used to once in a while, borrow their shovel, big hole and it was a black knight as black as coal and wearing moving around.

00:20:43 Speaker 2

And.

00:20:45 Speaker 2

So like the the fellow that that was going to show it share the hole with that, I'd run down and get the shovel.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

And I ran down the hill.

00:20:57 Speaker 2

And I ran around back behind the tank and I stumbled over something. I looked down.

00:21:03 Speaker 2

And there was a dead German laying on his back and his right was like this, pointing right at me. He didn't realize he's dead at that time.

00:21:13 Speaker 2

And I looked at the tank and I'd run run down the wrong hill.

00:21:18 Speaker 2

And tank had a swastika on the side.

00:21:23 Speaker 2

Well.

00:21:24 Speaker 2

My first thought was get back to my hole and I started up the hill.

00:21:31 Speaker 2

And.

00:21:32 Speaker 2

Several voices said. Stop. Who's there? Stop. Who's there? I said don't shoot. It's me. It's me. I couldn't remember my name. I was so scared.

00:21:43 Speaker 2

And.

00:21:45 Speaker 2

And they started. They kept yelling. Who's there? So by then I'm on my belly, crawling on me belly going up the hill. And then I heard a snicker here and a snicker there.

00:22:01 Speaker 2

They they recognized my voice.

00:22:03 Speaker 2

And they were giving me a hard time. 00:22:06 Speaker 2 And well, I finally made it the whole. 00:22:11 Speaker 2 I stayed there the rest the night. 00:22:13 Speaker 2 Bought. 00:22:15 Speaker 2 Every once in a while, I'd hear a snickering, somebody whispering back and forth. 00:22:20 Speaker 2 But I was well, I got over the stairs. 00:22:25 Speaker 2 But that that was scared as I ever was at any time. 00:22:33 Speaker 1 Is there another time you can think of as this most memorable time most memorable event? 00:22:41 Speaker 2 Well, the most memorable event was. 00:22:46 Speaker 2 The first time we ever took a town. 00:22:51 Speaker 2 And. 00:22:52 Speaker 2 It was exciting. 00:22:55 Speaker 2 And. 00:22:57 Speaker 2 We taken the town and we got 06 or 7 be prisoners. 00:23:04 Speaker 2 And.

00:23:06 Speaker 2

And I know I I was. I was. I was excited. I run around yelling ordered and and I was private.

00:23:16 Speaker 2

And the people were listening to me. And then next day I got promoted to a purple I'm into.

00:23:28 Speaker 2

Squatter leader.

00:23:33 Speaker 1

Tell me about when you came back to the states.

00:23:36 Speaker 1

How did you get back?

00:23:39 Speaker 2

Well, we.

00:23:45 Speaker 2

We were.

00:23:49 Speaker 2

I was in the hospital in England.

00:23:52 Speaker 2

And.

00:23:54 Speaker 2

Then I went back to France.

00:23:57 Speaker 2

And I was in the.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

Limited duty.

00:24:03 Speaker 2

And as in the ordinance socket?

00:24:06 Speaker 2

And then.

00:24:08 Speaker 2

We move from there up into Belgium. 00:24:12 Speaker 2 And then the point system come up and and I moved down the the higher. 00:24:21 Speaker 2 And we boarded the ship and. 00:24:26 Speaker 2 Came back to the states. 00:24:29 Speaker 2 And it was sure good to see that. 00:24:33 Speaker 2 Gal on the post. 00:24:39 Speaker 2 And I was next day I got my discharge and came home. 00:24:48 Speaker 1 OK. 00:24:56 Speaker 1 Who is your best friend over there? 00:24:59 Speaker 2 OK. 00:25:03 Speaker 2 It's hard to say. 00:25:05 Speaker 2 ١. 00:25:07 Speaker 2 I the platoons are just. I can't remember his name now, but he. 00:25:13 Speaker 2 I just thought he was the most wonderful thing there, was he, he. He was the one that talked me out

of being afraid of artillery.

00:25:24 Speaker 2

Uh.

00:25:25 Speaker 2

And.

00:25:27 Speaker 2

I always hung as close to him as I could when we were.

00:25:32 Speaker 2

In combat but.

00:25:35 Speaker 2

He got shot in the stomach and that's when I took over the tune.

00:25:41 Speaker 2

But I would say he was my best friend. But you didn't have friends.

00:25:49 Speaker 2

They weren't grown long enough.

00:25:52 Speaker 2

In our outfit, I was told we had 250% replacement while we were while we were over there.

00:26:03 Speaker 2

And you just didn't get a chance to.

00:26:07 Speaker 2

Learn the first name you call them by their last name. You never knew their first name.

00:26:15 Speaker 2

And.

00:26:17 Speaker 2

And they were. They'd be here one day and they'd be gone the next day.

00:26:22 Speaker 1

Remember when Germany surrendered? Do you remember where you were?

00:26:27 Speaker 2

Yeah, it's only better I was.

00:26:32 Speaker 2

I had just gotten out of the hospital.

00:26:35 Speaker 2

And was shipped over the.

00:26:39 Speaker 2

France.

00:26:41 Speaker 2

And I was in a a ripple depot there.

00:26:44 Speaker 2

And waiting to be.

00:26:48 Speaker 2

Ship back to my unit, I thought.

00:26:52 Speaker 2

But I had taken the physical and they said no way. Are you going back?

00:26:58 Speaker 2

And they sent me.

00:27:02 Speaker 2

I left from there to go to the ordinance of it, but we were there at the depot.

00:27:09 Speaker 2

And.

00:27:11 Speaker 2

When we got word that the Germans surrendered.

00:27:16 Speaker 1

Was there a party or was there?

00:27:17 Speaker 2

No, no, no, we didn't do nothing.

00:27:21 Speaker 2

We're just happy to hear it.

00:27:27 Speaker 2

There was.

00:27:28 Speaker 2

Nobody to party with. The people were coming and going on a daily basis right there. 00:27:41 Speaker 1 Are we doing on time? 00:27:43 2018. 00:27:44 Speaker 1 OK. We're just about done. It's just let me ask you about Vijay Day then. Do you remember where you were when? 00:27:52 Speaker 1 When Vijay day happened. 00:27:55 Speaker 2 I was at in this ordinance outfit. 00:28:00 Speaker 2 In Marseille, France. 00:28:04 Speaker 2 And. 00:28:07 Speaker 2 Then there was quite a bit of noise going. 00:28:12 Speaker 2 The. 00:28:15 Speaker 2 The French people. 00:28:17 Speaker 2 We're supposed to have any weapons of any kind. They're all shooting guns all over the place and. 00:28:24 Speaker 2 And. 00:28:27 Speaker 2 We were we were quite tickled about it, but as far as having a party or. 00:28:33 Speaker 2

Anything like that, we didn't.

00:28:36 Speaker 2

Or just in our unit.