

Jack Monninger Interview

Company B, 318th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Sarah Hypes) (MS Word Audio Transcript [NOT edited, just transcribed])

00:00:04 Speaker 1

Convert the country of Luxembourg and part of it up around Bastone in Belgium.

00:00:11 Speaker 1

And I was there.

00:00:14 Speaker 1

Less than 30 days before the Screaming Mimi shell hit and I was in.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

I was badly frozen was the main part. That was what was the most terrible part.

00:00:26 Speaker 1

And then I spent.

00:00:28 Speaker 1

The 04 months in England in the hospital 158 General Hospital near Salisbury, England.

00:00:40 Speaker 2

OK.

00:00:42 Speaker 2

You said you were drafted.

00:00:44 Speaker 1

Absolutely.

00:00:45 Speaker 2

Can you tell me the date please?

00:00:50 Speaker 1

Well, I went in on the.

00:00:53 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:00:55 Speaker 1

The.

00:00:58 Speaker 1

I've got a little problem on the date time there. Now again on the 4th of 4th of July.

00:01:06 Speaker 1

And.

00:01:08 Speaker 1

I was.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

That was in 1944.

00:01:12 Speaker 1

And I was released.

00:01:17 Speaker 1

Decoration Day of 1946.

00:01:28 Speaker 2

What was your first day serving like? Were you scared?

00:01:32 Speaker 1

You mean first day serving overseas or in?

00:01:38 Speaker 1

I took my training at the IRTC, which means infantry training replacement center in.

00:01:47 Speaker 1

Near.

00:01:49 Speaker 1

Anniston, AL.

00:01:52 Speaker 1

And then I was shipped overseas.

00:01:55 Speaker 2

What was the training?

00:01:57 Speaker 2

Can you tell me about that?

00:01:58 Speaker 1

The training.

00:02:01 Speaker 1

Very fast because it only lasted a few weeks and I think I fired the bazooka.

00:02:09 Speaker 1

One time.

00:02:11 Speaker 1

And that, I think, was the reason.

00:02:14 Speaker 1

For receiving the Bronze star because.

00:02:20 Speaker 1

The bazooka man had been killed.

00:02:23 Speaker 1

And they came up and told me since they had known, I fired the bazooka once or twice.

00:02:29 Speaker 1

And that's all in Alabama and.

00:02:34 Speaker 1

So that was my. So they said you are the bazooka.

00:02:38 Speaker 1

Well, I didn't want to be the bazooka man because you couldn't carry your rifle and you had to have an ammunition fellow.

00:02:46 Speaker 1

Crawling behind you and bringing the shells. And but I did.

00:02:50 Speaker 1

Did aim at a on the. I think it was called the Sewer River, SURE.

00:02:58 Speaker 1

Probably pronouncing that wrong, but that would have been in Luxembourg right at the edge of.

00:03:04 Speaker 1

And.

00:03:07 Speaker 1

I hit the tank.

00:03:09 Speaker 1

And it blew up and my buddy and I were out of there because it was night time.

00:03:15 Speaker 1

Tanks were coming across the river and that was what I was supposed to do.

00:03:21 Speaker 1

It was so cold.

00:03:22

This.

00:03:23 Speaker 1

Frozen even then? Really. And I think that's why.

00:03:29 Speaker 1

The Bronze Star was awarded, but I didn't get it until I was back.

00:03:37 Speaker 1

In the States, I think received the award, but I didn't.

00:03:42 Speaker 1

But I think it was that. But you couldn't know what, what captain, or what officer recommended that you get the Bronze star. Had to be someone who was in charge of you.

00:03:52 Speaker 1

But I never knew.

00:03:53 Speaker 1

Didn't know any of them so fast and cold.

00:03:57 Speaker 1

Didn't even know the fellas in the foxhole because they'd only be there a day or two.

00:04:01 Speaker 1

Then one of them either be dead or frozen and.

00:04:06 Speaker 1

I never really got to know anybody.

00:04:09 Speaker 1

Like buddy or something like that, you just. It was so bitter cold.

00:04:16 Speaker 1

We didn't have snow capes.

00:04:18 Speaker 1

That's one thing I just mentioned that.

00:04:21 Speaker 1

The Germans, most of them had snow capes where they blend in with the snow, but our outfit had those.

00:04:29 Speaker 1

GI uniforms. That boy, you just stood out like a sore thumb.

00:04:33 Speaker 1

But I never thought about that.

00:04:36 Speaker 1

Of.

00:04:36 Speaker 1

Just wanting to stay alive is what it was about, but that's.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

That's where I was and.

00:04:47 Speaker 1

But.

00:04:48 Speaker 1

The advance for being a carpool.

00:04:52 Speaker 1

I didn't even really know what a carpal.

00:04:54 Speaker 1

I hadn't been in the service very long that I was on the battlefield.

00:05:00 Speaker 1

Few weeks really.

00:05:00

Umm.

00:05:03 Speaker 2

What was it like seeing the combat and being a part?

00:05:07 Speaker 2

Her.

00:05:17 Speaker 1

There is nothing.

00:05:19 Speaker 1

It all depends on what combat you're seeing.

00:05:23 Speaker 1

Like if you're on a big ship and you're shooting guns at another ship and you don't get hit well.

00:05:32 Speaker 1

Or if you're a pilot and you come back.

00:05:35 Speaker 1

Would it have been scary to be a pilot? You know, up in that sky?

00:05:41 Speaker 1

Like one line in the poetry from where I stood, I saw them winging high, as if a multitude of vultures in the sky.

00:05:50 Speaker 1

Now this was written after the war and I was thinking about vultures, you know, waiting for the the dead.

00:05:57 Speaker 1

And that's what they were making. That's all. And and so.

00:06:01 Speaker 1

But anyhow, that's part of the point that's in the congressional record, but it's one that's in.

00:06:07 Speaker 1

Hand to hand combat.

00:06:09 Speaker 1

Well, if there wasn't so much hand to hand combat.

00:06:14 Speaker 1

Because the artillery shells that were just pouring in 24 hours a day, and where every well.

00:06:25 Speaker 1

The 1st morning.

00:06:26 Speaker 1

I was there to tell you what was like.

00:06:30 Speaker 1

The ground was covered with snow and it was cold.

00:06:34 Speaker 1

And I looked out.

00:06:36 Speaker 1

And if you didn't keep your head down, you could be in a bit.

00:06:39 Speaker 1

Had to be on the front side of a hill in order to.

00:06:41 Speaker 1

The Germans.

00:06:42 Speaker 1

You couldn't be on the other side and haven't come over and not know where they were coming and so.

00:06:46 Speaker 2

Right.

00:06:49 Speaker 1

That that when when I looked out.

00:06:55 Speaker 1

There were foxholes because that's what they were aiming at with those artillery shells.

00:07:01 Speaker 1

Where it would hit and and literally blow.

00:07:05 Speaker 1

Two soldiers to pieces.

00:07:07 Speaker 1

That shell, if it came in with them.

00:07:11 Speaker 1

Burst above your heads and other shelves would hit the ground before they explode.

00:07:16 Speaker 1

And these are the ones.

00:07:17 Speaker 1

And I looked out and I have a poem about that.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

That I looked out and I saw something that appeared to be like.

00:07:27 Speaker 1

Huge flower.

00:07:30 Speaker 1

Shell German shell.

00:07:34 Speaker 1

Had come right in with them and exploded.

00:07:37 Speaker 1

And.

00:07:37 Speaker 1

Blew everything.

00:07:38 Speaker 1

The blood went every direction.

00:07:42 Speaker 1

See you see how that would happen with two men blowing to pieces.

00:07:46 Speaker 1

There's the red blood.

00:07:49 Speaker 1

Against the snow like a huge flower.

00:07:55 Speaker 1

And I have another poem about that.

00:07:59 Speaker 1

Of only I put myself in the place of the ones who were blowing the pieces.

00:08:06 Speaker 1

And I'm saying that I go back and.

00:08:09 Speaker 1

Flower is growing.

00:08:13 Speaker 1

Poppies grew wild in Europe.

00:08:16 Speaker 1

In that part of Europe, red poppies just.

00:08:20 Speaker 1

By the billions.

00:08:22 Speaker 1

I didn't know that at the time, but later on writing the poem, I thought of the soldiers that had been blown to pieces and symbolized myself being the one going back and looking, and I see a flower.

00:08:35 Speaker 1

A red flower and in the petals of a flower.

00:08:40 Speaker 1

Again, I see the globe, my Crimson spots of death that faded with the snow.

00:08:47 Speaker 1

When the snow melted.

00:08:49 Speaker 1

It's gone.

00:08:50 Speaker 1

It's.

00:08:50 Speaker 1

So I was coming back as a as a soldier who died and.

00:08:58 Speaker 1

Was just thinking of.

00:09:01 Speaker 1

Of the flower that was there would be a symbol of my my blood. See. Only at mine was in a different way, 'cause. I wasn't going to pieces, but.

00:09:11 Speaker 1

Thousands of them were in that infantry man.

00:09:16 Speaker 1

So.

00:09:17 Speaker 2

Do you know like how many casualties were actually in the infantry?

00:09:20 Speaker 2

Were in.

00:09:20 Speaker 1

Pardon.

00:09:21 Speaker 2

Do you know how many?

00:09:23 Speaker 2

Were in the infantry you were in.

00:09:27 Speaker 1

I had heard.

00:09:30 Speaker 1

That 70%?

00:09:34 Speaker 1

Of all our casualties now, this meant the ones who were frozen.

00:09:39 Speaker 1

Mean just frozen because you were out in that terrible weather.

00:09:44 Speaker 1

Oh, there were hundreds of thousands who were frozen.

00:09:46 Speaker 1

Was frozen too, because they didn't.

00:09:49 Speaker 1

Well, I don't know 'cause I.

00:09:52 Speaker 1

Couldn't know about it 'cause they when they took me, I didn't.

00:09:56 Speaker 1

Didn't know, but I came to in the in the in the hospital tent behind the lines, shells were still falling and.

00:10:07 Speaker 1

I.

00:10:11 Speaker 1

I couldn't know except the tent was full.

00:10:14

And.

00:10:15 Speaker 1

As it was all in the battle above all those places, but.

00:10:19 Speaker 1

They said that 70% of all casualties that meant frozen at all.

00:10:27 Speaker 1

In World War 2, S Pacific and all came in the Battle of the Bulge and there was 30 days.

00:10:36 Speaker 1

To show how the dimension of it saved.

00:10:38 Speaker 1

Because if you weren't fighting all the time, the chance of dying is kind of remote. See.

00:10:45 Speaker 1

That would just continue just.

00:10:48 Speaker 1

Like like now they're.

00:10:50 Speaker 1

Well, it's a different story, but no one tell it.

00:10:53 Speaker 1

The boys that are dying now.

00:10:58 Speaker 1

They can't replace him.

00:10:59

They're.

00:11:00 Speaker 1

Going to have to do something.

00:11:03 Speaker 1

Have more men because they said regular army now and no description but anyhow.

00:11:10

Replay.

00:11:10 Speaker 2

Did you stay in contact with your family when you were away?

00:11:16 Speaker 1

When I was in the hospital.

00:11:19 Speaker 1

As with all wounded.

00:11:21 Speaker 1

As they're doing even now.

00:11:24 Speaker 1

The Army or Navy or Air Force, whatever branch it was, they would notify.

00:11:32 Speaker 1

The wives or mothers? Dads. Whatever.

00:11:36 Speaker 1

If you were wounded, or if you died in action, they'd send a person out.

00:11:42 Speaker 1

To from the army, like right here in town camp at a bar.

00:11:47 Speaker 1

Places like that.

00:11:49 Speaker 1

So they would notify directly if.

00:11:53 Speaker 1

Were killed.

00:11:56 Speaker 1

But in the newspaper every night like mine, I have a copy of it. Mom kept it of the they put the wounded and the dead.

00:12:06 Speaker 1

Every day of the battle in Europe.

00:12:10 Speaker 1

And my name which goes with this right here.

00:12:15 Speaker 1

January 15th.

00:12:19

Yeah.

00:12:20 Speaker 1

That's when the shell.

00:12:23 Speaker 1

Hit near me.

00:12:28 Speaker 1

They thought for a good while that both my legs were fractured.

00:12:31 Speaker 1

Couldn't.

00:12:32 Speaker 1

You know, they didn't have techniques like they have now or just they fly them out of. If they're wounded, they fly them right to Germany, to the big hospital. And the next day, that's where they are in the hospital. But over there it.

00:12:46 Speaker 1

Took.

00:12:46 Speaker 1

It took days for me to eventually get to.

00:12:51 Speaker 1

To England, but I was first in the hospital in the big hospital in the middle of Paris.

00:12:58 Speaker 1

Paris was not bombed during the war at all.

00:13:01 Speaker 1

It was what they called an open city and the Germans agreed that if we let them leave.

00:13:07 Speaker 1

They would not blow up the city or do anything. They wouldn't have to bomb or so.

00:13:14 Speaker 1

But that's where I went first from the battlefield.

00:13:18 Speaker 1

Which took.

00:13:18 Speaker 1

About a day and 1/2.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

But they didn't bomb hospital ships.

00:13:23 Speaker 1

Germans did not do it.

00:13:27 Speaker 1

Planes or trains that had the red mark on them.

00:13:30 Speaker 1

The Germans obeyed as much as they thought.

00:13:33 Speaker 1

Evil they were.

00:13:35 Speaker 1

They didn't do it to us and we didn't do it to them.

00:13:40 Speaker 1

But sometimes with the ammunition, with ambulances coming to the front to pick up the wounded.

00:13:48 Speaker 1

The cry was that they're bringing ammunition up hidden in the ambulances and then they unload it and then they that way there they can come up without being hits. They bring in ammunition.

00:14:00 Speaker 1

That would be something that both sides would want to destroy.

00:14:04 Speaker 1

And boy, did they have ammunition.

00:14:06 Speaker 1

Oh man.

00:14:09 Speaker 1

Roads were lined just like in Iraq today, lined with weapons.

00:14:14 Speaker 1

And but anyhow.

00:14:17 Speaker 2

Was your injury severe?

00:14:20 Speaker 1

I had.

00:14:23 Speaker 1

The one doctor come and tell me.

00:14:27 Speaker 1

That I had gangrene.

00:14:30 Speaker 1

In both my mainly my feet.

00:14:34 Speaker 1

Because that's the part that was always wet and sweaty. And then when you that you stop eating down the fox or it would freeze and the gloves where you dig a foxhole in that hard ground. And I only dug about four altogether. But.

00:14:49 Speaker 1

But it was.

00:14:52

A.

00:14:53 Speaker 1

Very.

00:14:54 Speaker 1

And you had to cover once you dug the foxhole. If you got through the frozen ground.

00:14:59 Speaker 1

You had to cover every bit of the snow.

00:15:02 Speaker 1

I mean every bit of the dirt with snow so that when it became daylight, the Germans with their binoculars and we did the same with them, that if you could look.

00:15:14 Speaker 1

And see the all that fresh dirt boy. It would just be like a eyesore, you know?

00:15:20 Speaker 1

And then all you have to do is call back and send the artillery or martyrs in and just blow it to pieces.

00:15:28 Speaker 1

So you know, there were a couple of.

00:15:29 Speaker 1

In there see.

00:15:30 Speaker 1

So it was always a battle between you had to dig in the dark.

00:15:35 Speaker 1

And have it covered over before daylight. If you were moving where you had gotten to a new place, you had to now have a foxhole again.

00:15:43 Speaker 1

Sometimes we'd use the foxholes.

00:15:49 Speaker 1

That the Germans were driven out of.

00:15:52 Speaker 1

And they always kind of warmed that. They might have booby trapped. So when you.

00:16:04 Speaker 1

And I had.

00:16:07 Speaker 1

I.

00:16:10 Speaker 1

I had one thing happen.

00:16:21 Speaker 1

When you were asking what it was like or something.

00:16:29 Speaker 1

In Addll brook, Luxembourg.

00:16:34 Speaker 1

We've gotten that far.

00:16:38 Speaker 1

And we were ordered.

00:16:40 Speaker 1

Because we were in a town.

00:16:43 Speaker 1

The Germans had just been driven out.

00:16:52 Speaker 1

And by the way.

00:16:57 Speaker 1

Ten years ago, I went back over this one incident.

00:17:04 Speaker 1

That we were in Luxembourg, where people they were not German, they were not against us.

00:17:12 Speaker 1

Little place, little but a very famous little country.

00:17:16 Speaker 1

Between France and Germany.

00:17:20 Speaker 1

And I.

00:17:21 Speaker 1

We were told by the 1st Sergeant with our group. Now we could get in the basement of a house even though the shelling was still coming in.

00:17:29 Speaker 1

Least you felt a little better.

00:17:32 Speaker 1

Because they all had basements where you could get to them from the outside, like the old farm houses here, the Germans that came and you built the door to the outside where you could walk down without going in the house to get to the basement.

00:17:49 Speaker 1

And I, well, what is well.

00:17:54 Speaker 2

Of.

00:17:56 Speaker 1

But these people were not Germans, but they had been occupied by the German soldiers.

00:18:03 Speaker 1

And before they were driven out.

00:18:06 Speaker 1

And I.

00:18:08 Speaker 1

Our job was to search every basement to make sure there weren't any German stragglers.

00:18:16 Speaker 1

In there where maybe?

00:18:18 Speaker 1

And then they warned that you have to be careful, because if you open those out those doors to walk down off, this would be like in a city not they didn't have farm houses like here, never all cities. They farm in the city.

00:18:32 Speaker 1

Or they lived in the city and they farmed out the countryside.

00:18:37 Speaker 1

And I went along and they said, I'll tell you one thing.

00:18:39 Speaker 1

What the Sergeant said.

00:18:42 Speaker 1

Before you go in, you better just throw a hand grenade, because if they have booby traps and things set up, it'll set them off.

00:18:52 Speaker 1

Then you can go in.

00:18:55 Speaker 1

But these people now that were hiding, which I never thought about it at the time, didn't have never dreamed where the people would go when a city is being shot.

00:19:07 Speaker 1

Like we burned Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed them all just from one bomb.

00:19:13 Speaker 1

Children, everybody.

00:19:16 Speaker 1

Few soldiers, but some were there.

00:19:18 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:19:20 Speaker 1

And I threw the hand grenade in and I'm just really wouldn't have any place here.

00:19:25 Speaker 1

It won us.

00:19:28 Speaker 1

And.

00:19:30 Speaker 1

When I got in there.

00:19:33 Speaker 1

They had a dirt floor.

00:19:37 Speaker 1

Concrete like we have over here, you know, today in the House and.

00:19:45 Speaker 1

I saw that what appeared to be.

00:19:50 Speaker 1

Parts of a man and a woman.

00:19:57 Speaker 1

And I knew see like even now I get a little emotional about it.

00:20:03 Speaker 1

I knew what I had done.

00:20:05 Speaker 1

But I wasn't thinking about everybody's the enemy.

00:20:10 Speaker 1

I didn't know.

00:20:11 Speaker 1

These people were wonderful and they were. They were caught up in the war.

00:20:16 Speaker 1

They didn't want to fight anybody, but that's where the big battle was going on.

00:20:23 Speaker 1

And I.

00:20:30 Speaker 1

I saw it and I thought, Oh my.

00:20:34 Speaker 1

I thought you could be court martialed for.

00:20:39 Speaker 1

Something like, you know, killing just the man and a woman.

00:20:50 Speaker 1

Since, though there was a big hole there where the where the hand grenade had gone off maybe 2 1/2 feet deep.

00:20:58 Speaker 1

Dirt.

00:21:00 Speaker 1

So I very quickly.

00:21:04 Speaker 1

The mad and it was.

00:21:05 Speaker 1

Oh, it was so cold even in that.

00:21:08 Speaker 1

But anyhow I I put them.

00:21:14 Speaker 1

I guess you'd say I buried them.

00:21:17 Speaker 1

Thinking because I had my shovel with.

00:21:20 Speaker 1

All we had to carry from **** Foxhole and.

00:21:25 Speaker 1

This is something that no one would want to be telling.

00:21:29 Speaker 1

On on you know, on the veteran's day, no way.

00:21:34 Speaker 1

But anyhow.

00:21:37 Speaker 1

If that had been the end of it, that would have been pretty nice.

00:21:41 Speaker 1

No, not pretty.

00:21:41 Speaker 1

It would have been horrible, but.

00:21:45 Speaker 1

So I get back to the basement where I was to meet back with to turn in what I found or hadn't found. Or we had found any Germans.

00:21:56 Speaker 1

They would have been picked up.

00:21:59 Speaker 1

And when I went.

00:22:02 Speaker 1

Sitting there because we were going to be.

00:22:04 Speaker 1

Most of the night to rest your head, to rest some way after all that in the box holes. Now 'cause, we're going to go back there.

00:22:15 Speaker 1

And I go.

00:22:17 Speaker 1

With just up the same street where we were all this group.

00:22:23 Speaker 1

A.

00:22:25 Speaker 1

12 fellas in each each group.

00:22:29 Speaker 1

Squad was 12.

00:22:32 Speaker 1

Soldiers.

00:22:34 Speaker 1

And I went.

00:22:35 Speaker 1

And so I was sitting there and I knew we're going to be there a while and I got to thinking.

00:22:40 Speaker 1

Man, what have I done?

00:22:43 Speaker 1

But it really.

00:22:47 Speaker 1

Not not that much.

00:22:49 Speaker 1

I I just. I went back.

00:22:52 Speaker 1

Because it.

00:22:53 Speaker 1

Just up the street, snowing all man in the wind.

00:22:59 Speaker 1

And.

00:23:01 Speaker 1

In those houses.

00:23:04 Speaker 1

They didn't have furnaces and things, but they would start the big chimney in the basement.

00:23:12 Speaker 1

A lot of times the fireplace in the in the basement.

00:23:17 Speaker 1

And then of course, it would go on up and then the.

00:23:19 Speaker 1

Fireplace or even some of them cooking.

00:23:24 Speaker 1

In those houses at that time in history, old houses.

00:23:31 Speaker 1

And I I just go down.

00:23:34 Speaker 1

Look around.

00:23:36 Speaker 1

I don't know what I.

00:23:38 Speaker 1

I guess I had a maybe I had a flashlight.

00:23:40 Speaker 1

Don't remember.

00:23:44 Speaker 1

And I.

00:23:47 Speaker 1

Well, I just going back and I won't even.

00:23:52 Speaker 1

Tell anything about, you know why.

00:23:55 Speaker 1

Pellet.

00:23:57 Speaker 1

And just as I got to the ups up to start to go up the steps to go out on the street.

00:24:08 Speaker 1

I've heard.

00:24:11 Speaker 1

A little cry.

00:24:17 Speaker 1

And I go back down.

00:24:23 Speaker 1

And behind this huge chimney, like it's 4 feet across, in order to give.

00:24:28 Speaker 1

Enough stuff to put another one up above.

00:24:35 Speaker 1

Baby buggy with big.

00:24:37 Speaker 1

That's kind of head with it then.

00:24:45 Speaker 1

And then I really knew.

00:24:48 Speaker 1

What I had done, a man and a woman hiding to get away from the shelling and all that stuff.

00:24:57 Speaker 1

And here was the baby.

00:25:01 Speaker 1

Which I took.

00:25:06 Speaker 1

I knew the medic was now coming along because they were getting a lot of.

00:25:14 Speaker 1

You know, and they're going blowing up the basements and all, but the hand grenade.

00:25:21 Speaker 1

End.

00:25:23 Speaker 1

I it's snowing.

00:25:25 Speaker 1

Like I said, it's so cold and I took the baby and I the medics were coming.

00:25:29 Speaker 1

They had little lights that went to the ground so that you couldn't see it, like from airplanes up above.

00:25:36 Speaker 1

And I just.

00:25:39 Speaker 1

I had wrapped the baby up and.

00:25:42 Speaker 1

Didn't know whether the girl or a boy.

00:25:46 Speaker 1

And I just told them because they would want to had something like that unit anybody's alive, they would have gotten to the hospital or back to the hospital.

00:25:57 Speaker 1

And so I went back.

00:26:02 Speaker 1

Times I went back to Europe.

00:26:05 Speaker 1

And I went nine times.

00:26:10 Speaker 1

Every time I went.

00:26:14 Speaker 1

I always went back to Edelbrock.

00:26:18 Speaker 1

And there's more to the story.

00:26:22 Speaker 1

In some ways makes it worse.

00:26:25 Speaker 1

But.

00:26:27 Speaker 1

And the last time I went, I went for that reason.

00:26:31 Speaker 1

Only this time I was going to.

00:26:35

Play.

00:26:35 Speaker 1

Because the girl still lived, I knew that.

00:26:39 Speaker 1

On those other times that I went.

00:26:44 Speaker 1

I was able to.

00:26:49 Speaker 1

And as I recall.

00:26:52 Speaker 1

He was a deaf mute.

00:26:55 Speaker 1

Because of the blast. But in that basin would have been just great.

00:27:00

Yeah.

00:27:01 Speaker 1

So.

00:27:05 Speaker 1

That's why I wrote the poem again. Another would you dare to convict me for my crime?

00:27:12 Speaker 1

Perhaps it would be well if just to ease my mind.

00:27:16 Speaker 1

For any gruesome nights, I still can find those fragments near the crater's edge.

00:27:24 Speaker 1

And in the poem I lie, I say, and I am mere observer, passing by.

00:27:31 Speaker 1

Stopped long enough to vomit, which I did, and then to cry.

00:27:37 Speaker 1

See, I'm saying I was just an observer and I said, but I was not observer.

00:27:44 Speaker 1

Why do I lie?

00:27:47 Speaker 1

I am.

00:27:48 Speaker 1

Your rules. Your codes have set me free.

00:27:53 Speaker 1

If you're in war, you're not a murderer.

00:27:57 Speaker 1

But then I know this cannot be for through the many misty miles of sea.

00:28:03 Speaker 1

Remains for me that is.

00:28:09 Speaker 1

That's what the poem is called, the Trader's Edge about.

00:28:12 Speaker 1

Got off on that again, but.

00:28:14 Speaker 1

Something to hear at least.

00:28:18

Now, what was your physical wound?

00:28:20 Speaker 1

Pardon I had I had.

00:28:20

Your physical wound.

00:28:23 Speaker 1

My legs were fractured and then I had the gangrene and in fact they put me in cast.

00:28:32 Speaker 1

Because in those days.

00:28:36 Speaker 1

They didn't have the instant X-ray and stuff to go by, see, and even on a hospital plant train that brought me from from the from like around Ether Brook.

00:28:38

Mm.

00:28:51 Speaker 1

To France, Paris, where the 1st hospital I was in.

00:28:55 Speaker 1

It was until I got there that they knew that putting.

00:29:01 Speaker 1

Cast and things on legs that were.

00:29:04 Speaker 1

That would be the most terrible thing you could do with the swelling, and that's where the gangrene like in your toes mainly.

00:29:12 Speaker 1

Would start turning dark.

00:29:14 Speaker 1

And then it had to end. Which lot of them they had just cut the toes off, but I didn't. It didn't happen.

00:29:23 Speaker 1

So I'm numb today.

00:29:25 Speaker 1

That's why I have the disability thing even all these years and.

00:29:32 Speaker 1

But that was all that.

00:29:43 Speaker 2

Did they feed you like when you were at war?

00:29:45

I.

00:29:49 Speaker 1

Rations.

00:29:53 Speaker 1

Just canned food and if you kept them even in that terrible, terrible weather, if you could get them in close to your body.

00:30:02 Speaker 1

Like in the foxholes, then?

00:30:06 Speaker 1

It would be sea ration but.

00:30:09 Speaker 1

Once in a while, one morning.

00:30:12 Speaker 1

Which?

00:30:13 Speaker 1

Very good description of the little problem that you and I have actually cried.

00:30:22 Speaker 1

Sergeant crawled up and he said.

00:30:25 Speaker 1

To he didn't even know me because you couldn't tell anybody who they were with her except you check them when your squad if you ever got back like we were in edelbrook where you could have a moment to look at each other.

00:30:38 Speaker 1

Sometimes the boy be dead sitting with you, hit by a fragment during the night and he'd be frozen stiff sitting right there with you.

00:30:47 Speaker 1

That happened once with me. John was he?

00:30:50 Speaker 1

I do and.

00:30:53 Speaker 1

I thought it was asleep.

00:30:56 Speaker 1

In fact, I wrote a poem about that.

00:30:58 Speaker 1

I.

00:30:58 Speaker 1

He cried himself to.

00:31:00 Speaker 1

Well, he did cry and pray.

00:31:03 Speaker 1

But and.

00:31:04

Repl.

00:31:10 Speaker 1

The Sergeant said.

00:31:12 Speaker 1

Well, they're going to bring a Jeep up with some hot coffee and and some oatmeal.

00:31:20 Speaker 1

And said one of you go at a time sits in the darkness. Cross shelter falling.

00:31:28 Speaker 1

All around.

00:31:31 Speaker 1

And so I thought well.

00:31:35 Speaker 1

It really didn't matter whether you ate or.

00:31:37 Speaker 1

It was so horrible and terrible and just, I don't know. I can't describe it.

00:31:45 Speaker 1

And then.

00:31:48 Speaker 1

When I went back.

00:31:50 Speaker 1

They had a Jeep.

00:31:51 Speaker 1

That had in the dark had this big thing with the coffee on the back from the mess hall that came from maybe a mile away or whatever, and had some oatmeal that they dabbled in here. My canteen thing that every soldier had to.

00:32:08 Speaker 1

And he put that and before I got back.

00:32:12 Speaker 1

To the foxhole.

00:32:15 Speaker 1

Oatmeal was frozen.

00:32:18 Speaker 1

And I'm telling you.

00:32:22 Speaker 1

That was like nothing really, but.

00:32:26 Speaker 1

I thought, man, you get 3 meals a day.

00:32:32 Speaker 1

Depend no you.

00:32:33 Speaker 1

You had the city rations, but there was relief that would come like you couldn't.

00:32:40 Speaker 1

Know you, especially during that time you'd be. I don't.

00:32:45 Speaker 1

Don't know how often.

00:32:49 Speaker 1

Now, but I wasn't there all that long.

00:32:51 Speaker 1

Mean it?

00:32:52 Speaker 1

Just less than 30 days and and.

00:32:59 Speaker 1

But it was in that terrible cold and I.

00:33:06 Speaker 1

But we had to see rations.

00:33:11 Speaker 1

To see rations, but it was just all with no snow capes and things like.

00:33:18 Speaker 1

It really someone should have been prosecuted for not having snow cakes cooked for us to walk around.

00:33:26 Speaker 1

Or be seen even a little bit in the foxhole with those uniforms against that white snow.

00:33:33 Speaker 1

Germans did have.

00:33:37 Speaker 1

Snow cakes, which meant that they were tough to distinguish. Even their helmets were covered.

00:33:44 Speaker 1

With a white liner.

00:33:48

Run.

00:33:48 Speaker 1

But now there were maybe some snow capes with some soldiers item, but not not where I was at that moment.

00:33:54

We.

00:33:56 Speaker 1

Everything was just bedlam.

00:33:59 Speaker 1

Wounded coming.

00:34:02 Speaker 1

If you made it two or three days, you were lucky in those foxholes.

00:34:10 Speaker 2

But do you remember the day that you got to leave the service?

00:34:15 Speaker 1

Pardon.

00:34:15 Speaker 2

Do you remember the day you got to leave the service when they told you to go home or?

00:34:20 Speaker 2

Just went to the hospital.

00:34:23 Speaker 1

Do you mean?

00:34:26 Speaker 1

Oh well now.

00:34:28 Speaker 1

Now we get to another part.

00:34:35

He.

00:34:36 Speaker 1

Kicked the bucket.

00:34:37

Oh yeah.

00:34:39 Speaker 1

It is.

00:34:39 Speaker 1

Because I was only in the service.

00:34:42 Speaker 1

Well, I was put from the hospital.

00:34:44 Speaker 1

Was put on limited duty.

00:34:47 Speaker 1

That meant there's no going to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese or anything like that.

00:34:55 Speaker 1

But since I had and I was not while I was limited to duty, I was I could walk around.

00:35:02 Speaker 1

I lived around for a while but it but it was like a miracle with my legs.

00:35:07 Speaker 1

I I just.

00:35:10 Speaker 1

I can remember 11 buddy coming.

00:35:12 Speaker 1

He saw my name on the list. He'd been in Alabama with me and.

00:35:19 Speaker 1

And I'll tell you just what he said.

00:35:22 Speaker 1

He's from Indianapolis.

00:35:23 Speaker 1

I didn't know him before, but I knew him in training.

00:35:28 Speaker 1

And he had had gangrene in his legs and his feet.

00:35:32 Speaker 1

Usually that's where it was, because that's where you froze.

00:35:36 Speaker 1

Mainly.

00:35:39 Speaker 1

He came in, he saw my name on the list there at that hospital in England.

00:35:45 Speaker 1

Came in, he said.

00:35:48 Speaker 1

Army talk too.

00:35:50 Speaker 1

Well, my you're lucky.

00:35:52 Speaker 1

But he was walking around, had both legs bandaged up in his Walker and he said they cut my two big son of ***** toes off.

00:36:01 Speaker 1

Which they did the same because they had gangrene.

00:36:03 Speaker 1

See, there was just in his toe his big toe.

00:36:09 Speaker 1

And.

00:36:12 Speaker 1

Stay on a ***** was his name.

00:36:16 Speaker 1

Polish his folks were from Poland.

00:36:21 Speaker 1

And.

00:36:25 Speaker 1

But that's what.

00:36:28 Speaker 1

I remember.

00:36:30 Speaker 1

On that, so the so the disability I received didn't doesn't have anything to do with it.

00:36:38 Speaker 1

That the capillaries in my legs.

00:36:44 Speaker 1

Well, to a degree we're.

00:36:46 Speaker 1

You don't grow them back once they're frozen.

00:36:48 Speaker 1

United first part that would freeze.

00:36:51 Speaker 1

And.

00:36:57 Speaker 1

So I.

00:36:59 Speaker 1

Some get much more like where they lost legs and arms and like this.

00:37:06 Speaker 1

Like maybe a thousand \$1500 a month. Forever.

00:37:10

Replay.

00:37:10 Speaker 1

Kids going through college for free. If you had children.

00:37:15 Speaker 1

And so boy, that's going to be costly.

00:37:17 Speaker 1

Man, what's going on over there now?

00:37:19 Speaker 1

Cost.

00:37:20 Speaker 1

They fly you back, or do you go back by ship?

00:37:25 Speaker 1

To the states.

00:37:25 Speaker 1

Well, not well.

00:37:27 Speaker 1

Didn't tell.

00:37:28 Speaker 1

I was reassigned.

00:37:30 Speaker 1

See, I was on limited duty and they were just having at that time.

00:37:37 Speaker 1

Ironically.

00:37:40 Speaker 1

The branches of the service.

00:37:44 Speaker 1

In those days.

00:37:47 Speaker 1

Segregated.

00:37:50 Speaker 1

Japanese Americans from.

00:37:54 Speaker 1

They won the state then but.

00:37:57 Speaker 1

I remember being OSA Tanaka and he was wounded and he was there with me. Not on the battlefield with me, but he was wounded and I met him later in his headquarters where we were sent unlimited duty.

00:38:10 Speaker 1

Which boy? What a?

00:38:12 Speaker 1

That was, you know, to go from that to a place in Belgium, a Liege, Belgium, a big city with lots of girls. And we had lots of money and we were alive and we really didn't have to do anything.

00:38:27 Speaker 1

Much at all, because we were unlimited duty.

00:38:31 Speaker 1

And.

00:38:34 Speaker 1

Limited.

00:38:35 Speaker 1

Just give you an example of limited duty.

00:38:40 Speaker 1

I was classified as Sergeant of the Guard for this trucking big Trucking company where all the men were black, but they were just now funneling funneling for the first time white.

00:38:54 Speaker 1

Officers.

00:38:56 Speaker 1

Into this.

00:38:59 Speaker 1

Or white soda, just the regular soldiers because there were white officers who were always in charge of the black at the top of the trucking companies.

00:39:10 Speaker 1

That was a bit red ball and yellow diamond. It was called in Europe.

00:39:14 Speaker 1

And the black American.

00:39:15 Speaker 1

Boy, they sure did drive those trucks and they were good at that and.

00:39:22 Speaker 1

But then they had to desegregate. That's why, O Tanaka, the Japanese.

00:39:27 Speaker 1

Was in Japanese battalions.

00:39:30 Speaker 1

In his.

00:39:31 Speaker 1

He wasn't training with the rest of us because they were separate.

00:39:35 Speaker 1

And that was a big and important time in history.

00:39:40 Speaker 1

And.

00:39:43 Speaker 1

So I had the first taste of desegregation in the United States.

00:39:47

Begin.

00:39:48 Speaker 1

Which happened to be for one part in this head high headquarters for a trucking company.

00:39:54 Speaker 1

And there were a lot of. There was a lot of friction in many ways because.

00:39:59 Speaker 1

Schwarzenegger, you know what that means in English? What's?

00:40:03

That.

00:40:05 Speaker 1

You know, the Governor of California, Schwarzenegger.

00:40:06 Speaker 2

Yeah. OK.

00:40:10 Speaker 1

He was.

00:40:13 Speaker 1

It means.

00:40:18 Speaker 1

Black.

00:40:20 Speaker 1

*****. That's that's the German Schwarzenegger means black *****.

00:40:27 Speaker 1

And the German.

00:40:29 Speaker 1

And the French girls and all that because the black soldiers in the trucking companies had all kinds of goodies like food and cigarettes and things that some of those kids over there never seen chocolate bars and.

00:40:44 Speaker 1

And the German word.

00:40:47 Speaker 1

***** uh.

00:40:50 Speaker 1

Is.

00:40:53 Speaker 1

And it for a while cause a little friction because.

00:40:58 Speaker 1

They would want to be friendly with black soldiers too, because they didn't have segregation like we had here.

00:41:04 Speaker 1

Running Black Germans never at that time. And but when they would say.

00:41:13 Speaker 1

They would kind of associate it being called here and there was a little confusion, you know, about their feelings would be hurt, but.

00:41:24 Speaker 1

So that's an interesting time in time.

00:41:30 Speaker 2

What did you do after you served? When you came home from the service?

00:41:32 Speaker 1

Pardon.

00:41:34 Speaker 2

Did you do?

00:41:37

Yeah.

00:41:39 Speaker 1

Well.

00:41:41 Speaker 1

There was a dear John letter.

00:41:46 Speaker 1

You don't know what a dear John letter is.

00:41:49 Speaker 1

Break it, but a breakup, male and female.

00:41:54 Speaker 2

Oh.

00:41:55 Speaker 1

And boy, that's happening a lot. In the first Persian Gulf War, and it's going to happen a lot this time around.

00:42:02

Yeah.

00:42:03 Speaker 1

And but anyhow.

00:42:06 Speaker 1

Coming back, thinking I'm going to find.

00:42:10 Speaker 1

The girl I left.

00:42:13 Speaker 1

But not so.

00:42:14

Yes.

00:42:15 Speaker 1

And boy, am I glad today.

00:42:19 Speaker 1

Let that be a lesson to you.

00:42:22 Speaker 1

And.

00:42:25 Speaker 1

I was hurt by that.

00:42:29 Speaker 1

But then what did I do?

00:42:31 Speaker 1

I'm back in the truck garden, you know. I told you my dad was a gardener.

00:42:37 Speaker 1

This is sort of a love mother story really.

00:42:41 Speaker 1

I'll get it out quickly because I went.

00:42:44 Speaker 1

It was summertime, you know, 4th of.

00:42:49 Speaker 1

Memorial Day is getting warm and I was out in the field two days later working.

00:42:56 Speaker 1

Pulling tomatoes or something.

00:42:58 Speaker 1

We had a lot of tomatoes, truck, big truck garden over there, Lafayette Square, and my mom had called Butler University and.

00:43:09 Speaker 1

Couple that.

00:43:12 Speaker 1

Honchos over there and said that she wanted her boy to go to college and.

00:43:18 Speaker 1

He knew I could be under the GI Bill and here I am down the field, barefoot in the mud and hoeing and mom comes down through the field.

00:43:32 Speaker 1

And, says Jack, there's a couple men up there from Butler who wants to talk to you.

00:43:38 Speaker 1

I said what? Why would?

00:43:41 Speaker 1

And she had called him.

00:43:43 Speaker 1

Show you how mothers she was the one that called my poem to be in a congressional record today.

00:43:49 Speaker 1

Let us begin afresh, which I'll send a copy of that to one of you, because that's the one that's that's a biggie for me.

00:43:56 Speaker 1

Be there forever.

00:43:57

Yeah.

00:43:58 Speaker 1

In the congressional record, as long as this nation lives, that poem, and it was read before the Congress.

00:44:05 Speaker 1

And then put in the library congressional library.

00:44:10

None.

00:44:12 Speaker 1

And.

00:44:14 Speaker 1

But anyhow, Mom started crying because I said I'm not going.

00:44:18 Speaker 1

I was different.

00:44:19 Speaker 1

I was.

00:44:19 Speaker 1

I've been some places, you know.

00:44:23 Speaker 1

She started to cry.

00:44:27 Speaker 1

He.

00:44:28 Speaker 1

Well, I tried this.

00:44:30 Speaker 1

I said.

00:44:31 Speaker 1

But here I'm going to walk up there barefoot, muddy.

00:44:35 Speaker 1

I'm going to talk to two of the bigger guys from Butler University.

00:44:39 Speaker 1

Call.

00:44:41 Speaker 1

And I thank her.

00:44:44 Speaker 1

For that.

00:44:46 Speaker 1

I did go on and talk school up here. Pipe 30 years in case you didn't know.

00:44:54 Speaker 1

Four years of Decatur central.

00:44:57 Speaker 1

So if mothers could live on forever, what a wonderful world this would be.

00:45:04 Speaker 1

That's the song of reason.

00:45:06 Speaker 1

That is, if you.

00:45:11 Speaker 1

Think about it.

00:45:13 Speaker 2

I'm gonna go back.

00:45:15 Speaker 2

What were you doing before war?

00:45:17 Speaker 2

Were you helping your dad in?

00:45:18 Speaker 2

Garden.

00:45:19 Speaker 1

Yeah, that's pulling tomatoes and getting things ready.

00:45:24 Speaker 1

We sold most of our produce or vegetables to a standard grocery company because at that time.

00:45:30 Speaker 1

That was one of.

00:45:31 Speaker 1

Big like, you know, stop and shop. They have. And they have Kroger's today and but standard, which I don't think exists, but maybe a run off from one of these others and they bought most of our vegetables, which was mainly in the.

00:45:45 Speaker 1

Summer time beans.

00:45:48 Speaker 1

And tomatoes.

00:45:52 Speaker 1

And onions, onions, green onions like peel. Everyone and all that.

00:45:59 Speaker 1

But that's what. That's what I did.

00:46:03 Speaker 1

When I went to school because I was out in the summertime.

00:46:07 Speaker 1

And then two years later.

00:46:11 Speaker 1

I.

00:46:17 Speaker 1

Married that gown in there.

00:46:21 Speaker 2

OK. Did you earn any medals or awards?

00:46:25 Speaker 2

Medals or awards?

00:46:27 Speaker 1

Well, yeah, that Ron Starr in a Purple Heart.

00:46:31 Speaker 1

And the infantry badge.

00:46:33 Speaker 1

That's what the general that you'll see that with the infantry badge.

00:46:37 Speaker 1

They have greater respect for the generals who have an infantry badge because.

00:46:42 Speaker 1

Unless their buddy was higher and gave it to them, they used to talk it well, one officer will.

00:46:48 Speaker 1

If he's in the place where he can recommend that you.

00:46:52 Speaker 1

A bigger metal they'll do.

00:46:53 Speaker 1

And then they fill their breasts up. You know, like the but. So the infantry badge and the silk, their silver star and the Purple Heart and the Bronze star.

00:47:04 Speaker 1

And the infantry badge.

00:47:06 Speaker 1

Were the only things that we would wear.

00:47:10 Speaker 1

But in this good conduct medal or overseas, if you were overseas for six months, you had a commendation.

00:47:19 Speaker 1

Just because you were there, that's why the girls over there used to say.

00:47:28 Speaker 1

And the British and Hyde Park that gives speeches and they'd say about the American soldier, they'd.

00:47:35 Speaker 1

The problem?

00:47:35 Speaker 1

And here I'm standing with a soldier after I'm out of the hospital.

00:47:40 Speaker 1

Trouble. Trouble with you guys?

00:47:43 Speaker 1

You Americans, you're over here.

00:47:45 Speaker 1

Was the trouble, see.

00:47:49 Speaker 1

You're oversexed.

00:47:53 Speaker 1

No, you're over here. You're oversexed.

00:47:57 Speaker 1

And you're over.

00:47:58 Speaker 1

There was another, and that's what they.

00:48:01 Speaker 1

Just in humor, but some of them kind of felt that way because they were stealing their wives.

00:48:07 Speaker 1

And girlfriends, because the British were scattered all over the world and they were gone. And when they're gone.

00:48:17 Speaker 1

When the caps away, the mice will play.

00:48:20 Speaker 1

You've heard that.

00:48:21 Speaker 1

But then you know, they had sorrow that show that sorrow.

00:48:26 Speaker 2

Did you have anything you want to show us or tell us about?

00:48:30 Speaker 2

We have an ask you about.

00:48:33

Umm.

00:48:35 Speaker 1

Only I would say, but it in a way it would be the most important thing of all for some.

00:48:46 Speaker 1

Umm.

00:48:50 Speaker 1

And and it would.

00:48:51 Speaker 1

It would have to do with.

00:48:55 Speaker 1

Finding out.

00:48:58 Speaker 1

That you might have.

00:49:05 Speaker 1

Umm.

00:49:06 Speaker 1

Might have killed your own relative.

00:49:10 Speaker 1

Mike.

00:49:12 Speaker 1

Like the maxers here in Pike Township.

00:49:17 Speaker 1

One of Mom's first cousins.

00:49:22 Speaker 1

At near the end of the war, in that same area where I was, I never knew anyone like that existed, but.

00:49:31 Speaker 1

He was only about 60 miles from home.

00:49:35 Speaker 1

In Germany, just over over the barter in Germany.

00:49:40 Speaker 1

Where I went many times.

00:49:43 Speaker 1

And when you go home, when you desert your army, even if you're the defeated enemy.

00:49:53 Speaker 1

You are considered to be a spy.

00:49:56 Speaker 1

Anyone wearing civilian clothes and trying to kill soldiers?

00:50:02 Speaker 1

Like spy? And that means instant firing squad usually.

00:50:08 Speaker 1

And he was arrested after the war was over, when they started checking all the roles that they had to get from the German people who had all the names 'cause, you know, the Nazis.

00:50:19 Speaker 1

Was they wanted to find every one of them like Schwarzenegger's dad.

00:50:23 Speaker 1

Was a Nazi, but the German just Austrian.

00:50:26 Speaker 1

Right, like a Hitler was not in Germany, was an Austrian.

00:50:31 Speaker 1

Too and.

00:50:33 Speaker 1

So.

00:50:37 Speaker 1

Felix Metzler. My mom's first cousin, whom she never knew existed on this earth, or even her grandmother. Grant any of it.

00:50:47 Speaker 1

Prisoner of war because they brought as a spy.

00:50:52 Speaker 1

They couldn't keep it had so many of them deserting and all that that they brought him, and he was a.

00:50:57 Speaker 1

Of.

00:50:58 Speaker 1

My mom's first.

00:50:59 Speaker 1

She never knew, and I never knew.

00:51:01 Speaker 1

Good.

00:51:03 Speaker 1

Until 1959, when I went back like looking for this girl or.

00:51:07 Speaker 1

That and finally wound up where my grandmother was born and I stayed in the house with them and.

00:51:16 Speaker 1

That were fought for Hitler and all that.

00:51:19 Speaker 1

That's where I understood that they were just as nice. Same way with the repass who fought on the other side. The same thing. Just.

00:51:30 Speaker 1

Because he moved up here to Brown, Zionsville. But anyhow.

00:51:35 Speaker 1

So did I.

00:51:37 Speaker 1

Did I got carried away again there?

00:51:41 Speaker 2

Well, thank you very much, Billy Messina.