

Robert Pfladderer Interview

Cannon Company, 319th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Patrick H. Fletcher)

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

00:00:00 Speaker 1

This afternoon I'm going to be interviewing Bob Fletcher, and Bob is a veteran of World War 2.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

And I think we get started here, Bob. When were you born?

00:00:17 Speaker 1

1921.

00:00:19 Speaker 1

1921 and where? Yeah, West of Francesville IN West of Francisville. So you're born on a farm, correct?

00:00:30 Speaker 1

And now and you were born at home, right? Yeah.

00:00:36 Speaker 1

How many members in your family?

00:00:37 Speaker 1

15 I'm the 10th 1:15 and the seven girls and eight boys.

00:00:44 Speaker 1

OK. And all right. Well, what was that like growing up with a big family like?

00:00:51 Speaker 1

That, well, that's wonderful. We had our own ball team with been a TV back in the day. So we had our own entertainment. And Chris, the neighbors had a large family too. And so we'd get together.

00:01:04 Speaker 1

Evenings and.

00:01:06 Speaker 1

Weekends and have picnics together.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

So probably have a lot of chores too, right? Oh, yeah. Everybody had a job. OK, now your mother needed some help. The the bigger kids help around well.

00:01:20 Speaker 1

Yeah, some of the older sisters and and then of course.

00:01:29 Speaker 1

Being 1 of 15 while my older brothers and sisters didn't seem like Brother Sisters because they just come home and visit they we didn't really grow up with.

00:01:38 Speaker 1

Them. OK. Yeah, right.

00:01:41

Alright.

00:01:43 Speaker 1

So where'd you go to school?

00:01:45 Speaker 1

That's a little country school went the eighth grade there and then went into town to high school.

00:01:54 Speaker 1

And.

00:01:57 Speaker 1

So.

00:01:58 Speaker 1

You went to, went to high school and did you graduate there?

00:02:01 Speaker 1

No, I coming from a large family and and we had to stay home and work a lot. So I just had nine years I had one year of high school.

00:02:14 Speaker 1

But that helped me. I was in the top of the class on algebra that was math was my fit study my subject. Alright, so you went home and worked? Yeah. You worked at home on the farm, right? It helped your dad on the farm. Yeah. OK, any any older brothers also stay back.

00:02:35 Speaker 1

Yeah, there's only two sisters older than me that got to finish high school and and then the the five younger than me all got to finish high school.

00:02:36 Speaker 1

At that time.

00:02:50 Speaker 1

Well, this is about the time of the Great Depression. How did you weather that on the farm? Well, we we really didn't know there was a depression. We.

00:03:01 Speaker 1

We didn't have a garden. We had a truck patch about two acres and we would raise enough waste to go there. I remember my wife, my mother's aunt.

00:03:10 Speaker 1

From Chicago would come out and fill their trunk full of stuff to take back, and then then we'd raise stuff for people living in town that didn't have a garden and.

00:03:23 Speaker 1

OK, so so as far as you're concerned and this happened, you know, they talked about the Great Depression and some people were just really slammed by it and others. Well, I think the city where they not lose their jobs in that, but it was rough. But on a farm like we had, we had the chickens, cows.

00:03:25

Andy Cooper from the operator and Cooper call the outlier.

00:03:42 Speaker 1

And and vegetables and and we we're pretty well fared. I think we're pretty lucky that way.

00:03:52 Speaker 1

What are your?

00:03:53 Speaker 1

First recollections. Do you remember the war in Europe? You know, before we got into it, or what was going on in the Pacific? Did you pay much attention to that or you're much? Yeah. We watch the because I was about 19 years old when it started. And and the the draft would start at 21. And and I knew I was.

00:04:13 Speaker 1

Going to go.

00:04:14 Speaker 1

And so we naturally was interested in listening to the news.

00:04:20 Speaker 1

Remember Pearl Harbor? Yeah, definitely. You remember the day what you were doing? Yeah, December 7th. I worked in the filling station at that time. And I remember when it hit. Why we knew after that. Why? Because I was born in 1921. So I wasn't 21 yet.

00:04:24

Right.

00:04:40 Speaker 1

But back then, the draft would.

00:04:42 Speaker 1

Start at 21.

00:04:46 Speaker 1

Yeah, before the wars. Then they dropped it down to 18.

00:04:51 Speaker 1

OK, so you got a greetings when you get your greetings.

00:04:57 Speaker 1

About the.

00:04:59 Speaker 1

1st to 42, first to 42. Yeah, yeah, I left in July of 42. I turned 21. May the 5th. And then in by July in July, then I was gone drafted.

00:05:13 Speaker 1

All right, so you're drafted. Where'd you go to boot camp? Well, I went to Tahoma Tennessee. But induction center was in Indianapolis, you know.

00:05:25 Speaker 1

Now this had to be the first. Was this the first time you were away from home? For anytime. Well, yeah, but but the farthest distance, yeah.

00:05:32 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:05:34 Speaker 1

We never just, never traveled too much in them days.

00:05:37 Speaker 1

Had to be a little bit harder on you.

00:05:38 Speaker 1

Wasn't it? Or maybe?

00:05:40 Speaker 1

Not really. Coming from a large family, I think too. And then already had two brothers in.

00:05:41

Certain.

00:05:47 Speaker 1

OK, so you have two.

00:05:49 Speaker 1

Already in the service, yeah.

00:05:51 Speaker 1

I really want to.

00:05:54 Speaker 1

Down to enlist in the air core before I was drafted, but the the office was closed and then my mom and my brother that got killed in in Europe where I they talked me out of going because they thought maybe it would be over and I wouldn't have to go. But then later on I got drafted then into the army.

00:06:15 Speaker 1

All right.

00:06:18 Speaker 1

OK. You you mentioned that your brother had.

00:06:21 Speaker 1

Been killed? Yeah. My brother John. And he was in a armored 32nd armored in year.

00:06:28 Speaker 1

And.

00:06:30 Speaker 1

And I so this is later on. Yeah, this one's.

00:06:34 Speaker 1

About 44 during the Battle of the Bulge.

00:06:39 Speaker 1

OK, so you're in Oklahoma and then no Tennessee, OK, Tennessee, then Kansas, Kansas, and then Yuma, AZ.

00:06:52 Speaker 1

On desert maneuvers.

00:06:55 Speaker 1

Training all this time? Yeah. Training. Yeah. Right. OK. Yeah. So what were you training to be? Regular infantry or?

00:06:57

Schools.

00:07:02 Speaker 1

Basic training that was infantry fired all the.

00:07:07 Speaker 1

Weapons, the bar and machine guns, and.

00:07:13 Speaker 1

M1 rifles and and then when we got they decided to start a cannon company that the 105 hollisters was too far back to get quick firepower to the entry. And so they started this cannon company and we fired the same shell, but they made a smaller gun.

00:07:33 Speaker 1

And we could move it around.

00:07:36 Speaker 1

And so that's when we started training out in Kansas and open spaces and that.

00:07:42 Speaker 1

So the carriage and everything is the same as the regular 105, no, it was smaller, smaller, right 105 shot could fire A7 powder charge. OK, well, 5-6 and seven powder charge with more than half of the powder charge in the case. Then you'd have to take out them three.

00:08:02 Speaker 1

So we didn't have too much left and usually about the three Potter charges, the highest we had ever do, just lob it over the empty's head and then that's that was what gives us accuracy.

00:08:16 Speaker 1

All right. So somewhere along the line, you were trained in artillery. Yeah, right after basic training, we basic training. We pulled out of the rifle company.

00:08:25 Speaker 1

And that probably is my lucky day because the the company I was in the first battle they hit, there was only about 20 of them left.

00:08:33 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:08:35 Speaker 1

OK. So were you trained in range finding or anything anything like that? Well, I I was lucky enough to have an IQ high enough and they put me as I was known as a crew chief and they.

00:08:41

And maintenance.

00:08:50 Speaker 1

Sign. Give me a aiming. What they call an aiming circle. And then I'd have to Orient it with north and then lay the guns on certain asmas. And our company had the two guns per platoon and three platoons. So we had six guns and I had the two little guns. So therefore I.

00:09:09 Speaker 1

They'd string their telephone.

00:09:12 Speaker 1

And I'd lay the six guns on certain asthma oriented with north and then give a firing command to them. And our Lieutenant was a Ford observer. Sometimes he would get on the walkie-talkie or something and and talk to me. Right. Direct at the guns for in emergencies.

00:09:28 Speaker 1

That's how close we was. We could hear the machine gun and rifle fire up there.

00:09:35 Speaker 1

So that you're trained as an artilleryman and how long before you went across the ocean?

00:09:42 Speaker 1

Well.

00:09:44 Speaker 1

I was drafted in 42 well in in the spring of 44 we shipped over.

00:09:54 Speaker 1

From.

00:09:56 Speaker 1

Atlantic City, NJ right no. From Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. We we went out and slipped out of New York. And you know, on.

00:10:08 Speaker 1

The queen.

00:10:09 Speaker 1

On the Queen Mary.

00:10:10 Speaker 1

Yeah. And they made it into a troop ship. There was about 20 thousand of us on it. That was.

00:10:16 Speaker 1

Kind of thrilled when we got out in the middle of the ocean. Why the guys that were the sailors, they was doing target practice on the balloons, but they didn't tell us when machine guns open 50 calibers on the.

00:10:32 Speaker 1

Was wondering what was going on. Yeah, right. So you had a you had a good passage.

00:10:38 Speaker 1

Over to England?

00:10:39 Speaker 1

Yeah, we had. We did see the fighter planes following this over. They was protecting us on the way over.

00:10:50 Speaker 1

It was on both sides. We could see them out in the.

00:10:52 Speaker 1

Here the P50 ones and the P40 sevens following us across the Atlantic Ocean took us about 7 days.

00:11:00 Speaker 1

So they they have to follow and come back some other pick pick you up.

00:11:05 Speaker 1

Afterwards, when you come back on the Argentina anyhow.

00:11:11 Speaker 1

All right, so you're on the over on the Queen Mary. Alright, let's retired now. Yes, it is.

00:11:18 Speaker 1

Umm.

00:11:20 Speaker 1

Now, as I remember, it was a pretty fast ship.

00:11:22 Speaker 1

Yeah, it's a big ship, big ship.

00:11:25 Speaker 1

Yeah, have a have a lot of lot of horses in that ship.

00:11:29 Speaker 1

Yeah, made made it in troopship. You clear down in the hole. Whatever you have to clear down in the bottom. And they had bed stack 7 high. And I remember the one of my men on this was up on the 7th bed up on the top and he got.

00:11:43 Speaker 1

First day out, they never got off the bed. We were handing plastic bags. Yeah.

00:11:45

Oh wow.

00:11:53 Speaker 1

OK, so you went across this and the Queen Mary, any concern about you boats at that time or?

00:12:00 Speaker 1

No, we know your boats are.

00:12:02 Speaker 1

Probably pretty well.

00:12:03 Speaker 1

Well, yeah, we never paid much attention that or never thought of it. Anyhow, they probably didn't tell you because they didn't want you to worry. OK, so you got over to to England and we landed in Scotland, Ireland and got on truck.

00:12:21 Speaker 1

And I often want to go back. I the Scotland had the bagpipes to holler us playing for us and yeah, we went up to Manchester, England and after we stayed until we shipped out of Southampton, England to go across the channel.

00:12:38 Speaker 1

Where did you go across the channel?

00:12:41 Speaker 1

About about 20 days after D-Day, 20 days after we landed on Utah Beach.

00:12:47 Speaker 1

OK, where things cleaned up yet or?

00:12:50 Speaker 1

Is it well, I thought maybe we'd land on Sam, but on the beach. But we had to wade in. I know it. It come up to my chest and then I had to hold my rifle over.

00:13:00 Speaker 1

My head and.

00:13:01 Speaker 1

And I had one guy there, pretty short, and I had two guys pretty tall. So I told told him to grab him by the arms because they was going to be over his head.

00:13:11 Speaker 1

Yeah, because you see pictures of those landing craft and it looked like they go right up on the.

00:13:18 Speaker 1

Sand and drop it down. That's what I thought it would be, but it was that they.

00:13:21 Speaker 1

Don't work clock.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

In the morning and all of a sudden.

00:13:24 Speaker 1

Yeah, right.

00:13:26 Speaker 1

I've heard about that.

00:13:28 Speaker 1

I seen pictures of it too, but I didn't.

00:13:30 Speaker 1

They gotta be part of it, yeah.

00:13:33 Speaker 1

OK, so you got out and and and did you pick up your?

00:13:37 Speaker 1

Guns right away.

00:13:38 Speaker 1

Or yeah, I was, I marveled how quick our guns reached the beach. Yeah, the army had it, really.

00:13:47 Speaker 1

In India, there and and and wasn't too long and and our whole division was assembled and we was facing the enemy. OK, so how far in do you have to go for you? I think it was only a couple miles, if I remember right. Because at that time we got my Charter about midnight in England.

00:14:08 Speaker 1

That the German sent about 10 Panzer divisions trying to push out bills that landed them on the 6th of June 44.

00:14:19 Speaker 1

They try to push them back in the channel and and that's when we was subbed in there.

00:14:27 Speaker 1

OK. What was?

00:14:29 Speaker 1

Do you remember your first combat? First time you rolled up with your artillery pieces? Yeah, yeah. That had to be kind of a scary feel, huh?

00:14:40 Speaker 1

Well, how did you feel? Well, I don't know. You just trained. You was trained by that time to then you was hard.

00:14:50 Speaker 1

And and of course you got telegrams or some of your.

00:14:56 Speaker 1

Neighbor Boys is killed and and you just felt like you're not. You're not alone. So you do your part.

00:15:05 Speaker 1

And you didn't hear too much complaining, and I just had two guys in my platoon that through the whole war that kind of went berserk and they had to send them back. They just couldn't take it.

00:15:18 Speaker 1

So you guys are right behind the lines. You're right behind the lines.

00:15:20 Speaker 1

Behind.

00:15:22 Speaker 1

8 was our biggest.

00:15:24 Speaker 1

When we fire at 4:00 in the morning, they could see the flash of our guns and they would pick us up. They knew their terrain, they knew right where we was at and the captain and I would usually go ahead and pick our gun position. And I had a.

00:15:39 Speaker 1

Captain Hodge from Texas. He was a real good captain. He'd come up through the ranks and and really go and would probably pick our gun position right behind the hill. So if the 88 cleared the top of the hill and cleared us and many times right behind us with nothing but shell craters, just missed us.

00:15:57 Speaker 1

Came right over you.

00:15:58

Yeah.

00:15:59 Speaker 1

But one time, one of them got one of my guns and I was lucky. I was just after we fired, right? I'd have to inspect the guns.

00:16:08 Speaker 1

To get the pottery out of the Bower out of the barrels and and I was just heading on #3 gun, I just inspected #2 was heading for number 3 and I heard this shell come in. My whole hollered at my man hit *** ****. This one's coming in and I hit the ground just as it hit my gun.

00:16:30 Speaker 1

The tire went flying, the mother dropped and a piece of the shop would come over. After hitting my gun and and hit hit my helmet knocked it off my head and up until that time I always had trouble keeping and getting my men to keep their helmet on. But after they seen the big dent in my helmet.

00:16:51 Speaker 1

I would have been here to tell about it and and after that I didn't have to tell him, but the helmet. The shrapnel hit my helmet and then grassed down, went in my leg and and if it wouldn't have, if it had been there, a direct hit on my leg, I thought he wouldn't be walking around like I am today.

00:17:09 Speaker 1

OK. So then it it went in but didn't hit the ball, right? And that shot will hit the run first. Yeah. So the momentum was there. OK.

00:17:18 Speaker 1

Right.

00:17:22 Speaker 1

But at that same did you?

00:17:23 Speaker 1

Have to go to the hospital or anything or happen right there.

00:17:25 Speaker 1

No. In fact, I didn't even know I had it in there until after it was all over was sat around and one of my men says sorry. You got blood coming out of your pant leg. I looked down there. Here, here. There was a piece of shrapnel. And then the medic pulled it out and he put some stuff on it, but being pretty.

00:17:44 Speaker 1

They and anyone know if I want to go back? And I said Nah, we'll just stay here, get some penicillin. I don't know what he put in there, but it it it took care of it. Yeah, yeah.

00:17:58 Speaker 1

OK.

00:18:00 Speaker 1

Now I've often wondered about artillery pieces that you you put the projectile in and you put a casing right behind it with the powder in it. The powder bags? No. They go in together. They go in together. When you're when it comes in a wooden case, the projectile and the and the casing is separate.

00:18:19 Speaker 1

And so you take the case out and then you the powder charges are tied together with the string, right. And then you cut off whatever you want and then then you pick up the projector and set it in the casing. And then you take it and RAM it home into the breach.

00:18:38

OK.

00:18:40 Speaker 1

And so the powder just you know how far you want to send it. That's how much, right, right. That's in the elevation and right, right.

00:18:49 Speaker 1

So so you used your math right? Yeah. And and setting that up because artillery people are usually pretty good math people. Yeah, I guess maybe that my IQ was high enough that they thought I could figure out the data and this stuff.

00:19:05 Speaker 1

And then born and raised on the farm, you take a recoil on a gun like that. That's kind of high.

00:19:12 Speaker 1

Like. Yeah, and that's right. Curse the because you get a lot of your own mechanics on.

00:19:17 Speaker 1

The farm so.

00:19:18 Speaker 1

Right.

00:19:20 Speaker 1

When you pull the the artillery pieces around, well, I think it was made by Dodge. It was called. There was one ton truck.

00:19:28 Speaker 1

Before, before they called it, there was panda single axle tandems with the.

00:19:33 Speaker 1

Because we didn't need a big truck cause our gun wasn't that big, right? And it held our crew in the back.

00:19:41 Speaker 1

OK, but once you.

00:19:44 Speaker 1

Take the gun off the truck. You can move it around with the food. Yeah, we just move it around where we want it. Yeah. Yeah. OK. So you're going across fence and with your artillery piece. And that was one of the most scary times. One of your scarier times had to be when that.

00:20:03 Speaker 1

We had 88.

00:20:04 Speaker 1

Got you. Yeah, that well, we had, I had several close calls like that, but but I think that was about another few seconds I'd have been right there at that gun with that shell. Yeah. At that same time, we had one of the guys in the 3rd between very leg.

00:20:19 Speaker 1

Off and he was already limping on the good leg, one leg and and he got the good leg glowed off. And so yeah.

00:20:28 Speaker 1

OK. So do you remember playing your battles? Any any battles? Stick out in your mind when you went across fans.

00:20:37 Speaker 1

Well, I remember we got orders that we was going to liberate Paris.

00:20:44 Speaker 1

And but we've already passed. Where is that sin? France when the?

00:20:50 Speaker 1

And when when they said we're going to send this.

00:20:54 Speaker 1

To Paris and liberate that. But they send another division in there then.

00:21:00 Speaker 1

So you guys went on, did you? Were you up near the gardens or anything?

00:21:05 Speaker 1

Like, Oh yeah, we went through all the Arden force. We got four major bottles and.

00:21:11 Speaker 1

Across France and the head Ridge was something else too. There. Yeah.

00:21:17 Speaker 1

That's right, by 20 days they were still having hedge rope. It's.

00:21:22 Speaker 1

Just off the beach.

00:21:24 Speaker 1

OK, now our dance did.

00:21:28 Speaker 1

How about the battle of the bulge? Well, we went out here. We was lucky, right? And but we got more charger.

00:21:39 Speaker 1

Ended very quickly, right? I thought two weeks, but I think we had four days and then we got March order and we go all day and all night.

00:21:50 Speaker 1

And I remember going right through Luxembourg, and it seemed funny to see young guys walking down the street because they was a neutral country and.

00:22:00 Speaker 1

The those 3 lucky Luxembourg to get there to relieve the ones that.

00:22:05 Speaker 1

Was in the Battle of the Bulge, so he was pretty lucky that we wasn't there because we there was about a foot of snow on the ground and and bodies laying all over and.

00:22:16 Speaker 1

And.

00:22:18 Speaker 1

We just felt like, why? Why? Why were we lucky enough not to be there? See.

00:22:29 Speaker 1

OK, so then you went up relieved the troops, OK?

00:22:33 Speaker 1

That was the big biggest battle and after we crossed the line, why?

00:22:37 Speaker 1

I have to get across the.

00:22:39 Speaker 1

Line we, well, they the engineers is pretty good. They they got a bridge across there. They kind of leaned a little bit when they drove truck to our trucks but they have kind of like rubber pontoons underneath of it but but it held and.

00:22:54 Speaker 1

In course, the paratroopers land over across the line and then made a beach head and and then some of our boys went across on rubber, asks and stuff, and the industry and.

00:23:07 Speaker 1

Yeah. So you went across the pontoon bridge. Yeah, right. I asked about maybe, might have gone across.

00:23:13 Speaker 1

Some some of the waterways that we floated across floated the truck across on smaller, yeah, yeah.

00:23:22 Speaker 1

Like a raft, right? Yeah.

00:23:27 Speaker 1

Now getting on on in.

00:23:28 Speaker 1

The winter here that had to.

00:23:30 Speaker 1

Be well, yeah, we.

00:23:33 Speaker 1

From Utah Beach all the way to meet the Russians and Austria 10 months.

00:23:41 Speaker 1

From June 20th 44 to may the 5th, my birthday in 1945, when we met the races. We've never seen a bed. We slept in fossils because we had stayed with our guns.

00:23:55 Speaker 1

Yeah. And the 12 below 0, I have two men that froze their feet. One guy on my truck driver had the amp. Teddy. Big toe? Yeah.

00:24:06 Speaker 1

OK. Did were you able to use your shelter halves at all or just get in a foxhole and come up best you can well.

00:24:14 Speaker 1

That boy, from Crown Point IN he was an outdoorsman and him and I we always we both got the same size. We'd dig a double.

00:24:22 Speaker 1

So and crawl in there 2 bodies land together. Could he? Yeah. Right. And then sometimes I know he's going to stay in an area very long. We dig it a little bigger and put some logs across and leaves over that and throw the dirt back on. And you slept down in there like little golfer. And then it'll be warm.

00:24:42 Speaker 1

And then you're down down below. If you get out below freezing, it's 55° well. If you got heavy underwear and coats on why it wasn't even that bad.

00:24:55

OK.

00:24:56 Speaker 1

Did you ever come face to face with me?

00:25:00

No.

00:25:02 Speaker 1

No, not really. I, when our Lieutenant I lost 3 lieutenants, they without observers and then I'd go out and take their place. I'd be with the industry.

00:25:19 Speaker 1

OK so.

00:25:21 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:25:22 Speaker 1

You're going across there and trying to survive the winter. I that just I think of those. Look back now. I just wonder how we've done it. How you did it. Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah. OK. So I was asking if you ever came face to face with.

00:25:42 Speaker 1

No, I well, I.

00:25:44 Speaker 1

With with the infantry, when I might have to take the lieutenants place and when when he got killed. Usually it was by 88 to shrapnel that Lieutenant got killed. Yeah, I lost three of them, and they would observers and to observe the enemy. They had to get to a high point.

00:26:00 Speaker 1

So they look.

00:26:04 Speaker 1

The enemy knew that, but they they are being observed because our accuracy was so good and it was only through our Lieutenant that we could do it. Yeah. And so so they would shell every high point trying to get.

00:26:12 Speaker 1

They.

00:26:20 Speaker 1

And that's yeah. And if they didn't get out there, so.

00:26:24 Speaker 1

Whenever I went up observing why I kept moving around and try to get.

00:26:30 Speaker 1

I figured after we.

00:26:33 Speaker 1

Had a volley of shells going out there, they knew that somebody was observing it and so I would keep moving and and try to get shelter. And many times I just got out of the place and then they got shelled.

00:26:47 Speaker 1

But first Lieutenant, I lost W from Indiana from. In fact, he knew some of the people back in Francisville that I knew. And right now, after the war was over.

00:26:57 Speaker 1

My.

00:26:58 Speaker 1

Sister married his cousin. Yeah, and I didn't even know about him before. But I knew his cousin there in Francisville. Yeah.

00:27:07 Speaker 1

In fact, he's the one that's in this service home right now, Boyd first.

00:27:15 Speaker 1

So you never really came face to face with your enemy. I mean, they they're they try to get you with their artillery, but then.

00:27:22 Speaker 1

Right, my. My gun. My job was mostly after guns as a crew chief. Given the fire command and keeping the gun firing.

00:27:32 Speaker 1

Did you take any surrenders?

00:27:34 Speaker 1

But.

00:27:35 Speaker 1

Well, not us, but they come back through us right when they actually.

00:27:40 Speaker 1

When they want to see our secret weapon. Yeah. Yeah. Chris, our our guns out there in World War 2.

00:27:43

Trader Joe's on.

00:27:47 Speaker 1

Is obsolete now.

00:27:50 Speaker 1

So they they didn't know that you had these little sawed off 10 fives. No, no, no. OK.

00:27:59 Speaker 1

How?

00:28:00 Speaker 1

Would you compare that to the 88?

00:28:02 Speaker 1

Well, really it was a long range. Not then they would I.

00:28:07 Speaker 1

Know our little gun, though, wasn't it?

00:28:09 Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah, you couldn't.

00:28:09 Speaker 1

Anti.

00:28:11 Speaker 1

There was a big gun. Yeah, I remember. After we got across the Rhine River, we've gone down the autobahn. And that's the first time I've seen the four lane highway and the 80s come out of a big mountain over on the other side, the trees opened up and they pushed it out on a railroad.

00:28:25 Speaker 1

Gun.

00:28:26 Speaker 1

And some of our guys was looking with Bon Oculars and they happened to and they fired at us.

00:28:32 Speaker 1

And they went right over our head and hit. We was on this autobahn. There was a big rock Cliff, right, right beside the Autobahn that hit hit right overhead. And the rock started tumbling down towards us. Yeah. And so we called for the.

00:28:48 Speaker 1

The 8th Air Force fighter planes and they dive on the side of that hill then.

00:28:57 Speaker 1

So.

00:29:00 Speaker 1

Where were you? What?

00:29:01 Speaker 1

What May 7th or when the when the?

00:29:05 Speaker 1

One year we at the end of the war they they announced it on May the 5th. That was my birthday. That's all I remembered. And we met the Russians in Austria.

00:29:18 Speaker 1

And so then there was a big hill there in the river between US and the the Russian. So they wasn't supposed to come across the river.

00:29:29 Speaker 1

And so then we.

00:29:32 Speaker 1

It was a big hill there and some of the German soldiers are still up there, so they they.

00:29:37 Speaker 1

They didn't need my big guns, but they didn't need our guns and so they put me in charge of a railroad station. So when they captured the if they captured the Germans, I I loaded them on box cars and sent the machine gunner with them back into Germany then.

00:29:54

8656.

00:29:56 Speaker 1

I've often seen pictures of the huge numbers of German prisoners for the end, and I'm wondering that would be a logistic nightmare trying to take care of all those people. Well, not really. Most of them was ready to give up. They just put their hands behind him and I was probably.

00:30:12

Thank you.

00:30:16 Speaker 1

Why I got the Bronze Star from given to me by patent our guns was the largest of the 50 and and the empty had called for firepower. Our Lieutenant up there observer and we had they had rationed our ammunition. We couldn't get enough ammunition at one time.

00:30:35 Speaker 1

So if they call back and says to my captain, he says we found a 75 millimeter German gun and a lot of ammunition and we know it's pretty sure it's booby booby trapped. So if you got a somebody could.

00:30:52 Speaker 1

The take the Ruby crap out of it and we could find their own ammunition back at them. So the captain called you and asked me if I want to go up there and I said yeah, I'll take a go up. Took a look. So I took my Jeep driver and we went up there and and sure enough, every booby trap and.

00:31:07 Speaker 1

We got the dynamite.

00:31:08 Speaker 1

Charges out of it safely, and then we couldn't find that.

00:31:12 Speaker 1

The site.

00:31:14 Speaker 1

And the the Gunner site. And so I told Milner he was from.

00:31:18 Speaker 1

They're out West, I said. No, and I says.

00:31:22 Speaker 1

That sites around here someplace he didn't carry it with him. I said let's look back here in the weeds. So we found it back in the reeds.

00:31:28 Speaker 1

We put it on there, so they threw.

00:31:30 Speaker 1

It. Yeah. And so then I called back to the captain. I says I'm ready to tell him. Bring the ammunition. So the ammunition, Sergeant he was from.

00:31:42 Speaker 1

Wisconsin, he went after them and them and ammunition brought it in there and we was firing their ammunition. That confused them because their gun sounds different than ours.

00:31:53 Speaker 1

And so they thought it was friendly troops over there, that they get friendly fire. Right. Well, they thought that's where their their their troops were. So they come over and I have to kept capturing them. Yeah. I don't know. They they said it's 5000 or more they captured through that through that ordeal.

00:32:12 Speaker 1

And then Patton heard about.

00:32:14 Speaker 1

Got it. And he said let's go on up there because we had him lined up for miles, but going back to the through the rear echelon. And so Patton called, my captain says what's going on up there and. And Captain Holdridge told him. And he says, I'd like to see that. So.

00:32:33 Speaker 1

Next thing I knew, my gunner.

00:32:35 Speaker 1

That was there by he was taking the number one place, firing the gun in the and he says, hey, sorry, there's patent standing behind me. And I said, oh, sure.

00:32:47 Speaker 1

And he said, no kidding. Sergeant, I said, I'll knock it off the owner. And because he was always teasing each other and he said sorry, look behind you. So I looked back there, Mary Stewart, with his Pearl. They said Pearl handled pistols. And so I got up and saluted him. And he said that he started. You don't have to sleep on the battlefield and.

00:33:05 Speaker 1

So and he says, I like that gun. And he demonstrated it for him. And and I I told him what I had to do to get it to fire and everything. And he turned around and my captain, he says, get out, soldier. He said a silver star. But it only comes through as a bronze.

00:33:21 Speaker 1

*

00:33:23 Speaker 1

Now.

00:33:24 Speaker 1

Silver Star was just a little better, but you don't think about that thing. Then there's many of the entry boys of that deserved it more than I did.

00:33:33 Speaker 1

So anyway, how many 70?

00:33:35 Speaker 1

Fives did you have with that group?

00:33:37 Speaker 1

Just one, just the one, just the 175 millimeter, I got picture of me firing. Yeah. Yeah. There's a news man with Pat and Master.

00:33:47 Speaker 1

Then I had the boy from New York in my platoon, and then one from Chicago and and.

00:33:53 Speaker 1

When they got their newspaper, they says, hey, sorry, you made headlines and it was in there, but it wasn't in my little town paper.

00:34:02 Speaker 1

OK, so you're in Austria when the when the? Yeah. When the war started, war ended. Might have to look on my map to tell you what town it was. Yeah.

00:34:11 Speaker 1

OK, you had to be a little bit.

00:34:12 Speaker 1

Happy that day. Oh, yeah. Yeah, when there's now.

00:34:16 Speaker 1

The war is over.

00:34:17 Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah, but.

00:34:17 Speaker 1

Then what? When gold for you? But then.

00:34:21 Speaker 1

Were you afraid to next next move, you're going to be heading over in.

00:34:24 Speaker 1

Japan. Yeah, we've already announced. Oh, really? Yeah. We was patting spearheaded division a lot of times we had we had more than one division, but yeah, we we was one of them. And and then after we met.

00:34:37 Speaker 1

The Russians there, there, there was talk that was going to be shipped to.

00:34:42 Speaker 1

Japan, or over in the Pacific? When then the next thing Truman dropped the atomic bomb. You already heard the hollering. Guys was glad to hear.

00:34:53 Speaker 1

That yeah, I can remember so.

00:34:57 Speaker 1

I was in grade school.

00:34:59 Speaker 1

But I can remember.

00:35:00 Speaker 1

The the horror, the people.

00:35:03 Speaker 1

Yeah, right. And the and the idea of having to invade the home islands that people just really were afraid of.

00:35:08 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:35:13 Speaker 1

OK so.

00:35:15 Speaker 1

Now they're they're one of our best allies.

00:35:17 Speaker 1

Oh yeah, yeah.

00:35:19 Speaker 1

And so now.

00:35:22 Speaker 1

The war finally ended.

00:35:27 Speaker 1

You must have been pretty going through all that. You had to be pretty high on.

00:35:31 Speaker 1

The point system, weren't you?

00:35:32 Speaker 1

I was, yeah.

00:35:35 Speaker 1

Yeah, I have to get well.

00:35:37 Speaker 1

I was one of the 1st 10 or 15 in the company that left.

00:35:43 Speaker 1

Did you were you training with the company all the way through? I always think about the the guys that were replace replacements people that would come into France.

00:35:54 Speaker 1

Have we got several replacements? Not as many as the rifle.

00:35:57 Speaker 1

Company and these guys would just be sent to plug in someplace all by themselves.

00:36:05 Speaker 1

That had to be horrible. Yeah. You didn't have to worry about that yourself, but.

00:36:08 Speaker 1

We had a good bunch of guys in our company and and so.

00:36:14 Speaker 1

When they kind of help these guys out a little bit, when they first show up.

00:36:17 Speaker 1

You know these replacements? Yeah, they kind of fell right in. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They kind of fell right in because.

00:36:24 Speaker 1

We didn't get that many, but I could say in a rifle company that must have been, yeah, yeah.

00:36:31 Speaker 1

There's a big turnover.

00:36:34 Speaker 1

OK so.

00:36:40 Speaker 1

So the war ended, at least in Europe, and you didn't have to go back to Japan. What? What was the after the war was over over there. No more fighting. What? What did you do? Well, they started ball teams. Really. I got to play baseball. Then for three months.

00:36:58 Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah, I. And then we would have tournaments like in a regiment. The companies that play each other in the we was pretty. We had a pretty good team. And so then.

00:37:15 Speaker 1

We won the regiment team and then three of us in our company team got to play on the regiment team and then we won the division team and then two of us got to play on the division team and and then then the core team and then two of us played on that and then we went.

00:37:32 Speaker 1

Back to Paris.

00:37:33 Speaker 1

And played the team back there and then.

00:37:35 Speaker 1

There were some of your professional players back there and I got the bat against some professional batter pictures and yeah, and and then the kernel back there wanted me to stay in Paris and play on that team. And I said, well, I lost the brother and I'd like to get home.

00:37:54 Speaker 1

And then he said, well, you can take your discharge here in the civil service. And so I said, yeah, I think I'm ready to get out. Get out of service. But after I was home a month, I've kind of reached. I was back there again because I'd like to play ball. Yeah. When I got home, we started the team and.

00:38:12 Speaker 1

And the 10 teams by that time we had a TEN Team League and and so I played baseball towards 39 then.

00:38:21 Speaker 1

Have a question here for you. You fought under General Patton.

00:38:26 Speaker 1

Yeah. What do you think in general? But he was an army man. Yeah. And he was. He was out to win.

00:38:33 Speaker 1

And it didn't.

00:38:37 Speaker 1

Some thought maybe that he took chances, but.

00:38:42 Speaker 1

He felt like this if you was.

00:38:45 Speaker 1

If he had the enemy going, keep him going because he can't shoot at you with her back towards you. He he would make that remark so, so. And I I seen that in the war that you let him dig in yet that you lost a lot of lives trying to get them going again. Yeah.

00:39:02 Speaker 1

So he was.

00:39:04 Speaker 1

Let me like McArthur, the blitz, he.

00:39:06 Speaker 1

MacArthur has brought home in in the Korean War. He was going in and clean them out so he was army men and that's what they was trained for.

00:39:16

OK.

00:39:19 Speaker 1

Heavy. Difficult for when you got those. Where were you when you got the word about your brother?

00:39:25 Speaker 1

I you know, I I can't really remember, but just hit hard. My brother John was eight years older than me. He was he was like a dad to me. If I wanted some advice, I'd go to John.

00:39:37 Speaker 1

And this this works hard but.

00:39:42 Speaker 1

And I was really.

00:39:43 Speaker 1

And the.

00:39:44 Speaker 1

The hard feelings at the Germans at the time, but you?

00:39:48 Speaker 1

Were over in your.

00:39:49 Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah, I was fighting there. Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I got the telegram from home. Yeah.

00:39:56 Speaker 1

But.

00:39:57 Speaker 1

You know, I had quite an experience and after that, when we come back for Army occupation, we stayed in the House.

00:40:04 Speaker 1

House.

00:40:06 Speaker 1

In the.

00:40:07 Speaker 1

The little town where we.

00:40:09 Speaker 1

Was on on the occupation. I went, stayed in this house and there was this lady and their 15 year old daughter, 14 or something. And so she was going to give me her bedroom. And I said no, you keep that. She says, where you going to sleep? I said we'll sleep on the floor.

00:40:27 Speaker 1

No, no, no, she says. And I said, well, we slept in a foxhole for 10 months. I said, you just keep your kitchen in your bedroom. And so he says, at least we got a roof over her head. Well, and I got talking to her. She lost her husband. And I lost my brother. So we had something in common. And I found out to the German people didn't want to warn you.

00:40:47 Speaker 1

Any more than we did so.

00:40:52 Speaker 1

OK, so where were you when you heard about VJ?

00:40:56 Speaker 1

Day.

00:40:57 Speaker 1

When they heard the.

00:40:59 Speaker 1

Ohh, we were still in Austria. Still in Austria. Yeah, right.

00:41:03 Speaker 1

Happy little celebration on that. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:41:09 Speaker 1

So you got to get your points and came back and discharged and what was October of 45?

00:41:17 Speaker 1

Yeah, October 45.

00:41:20 Speaker 1

And so you. Had you headed home and you had to get home.

00:41:25 Speaker 1

You had to be. Yeah. Yeah, we come back.

00:41:29 Speaker 1

Other than Mannheim, Germany, and then that was just about 50 miles from Munich. I remember taking a truck to Munich with our duffel bags, then getting on a train and going to Paris.

00:41:44 Speaker 1

And there.

00:41:45 Speaker 1

From Paris went to the ship and got on the SSS, Argentina.

00:41:51 Speaker 1

When I remember.

00:41:53 Speaker 1

When they come into New York, Lloyd Dema from our nation Sergeant was coming home with me too. And we were downstairs a little ways on the ship, not up on the deck. And we heard a hollering up there, you know, when they could see the Statue of Liberty.

00:42:12 Speaker 1

Brother heard the guys holler, so we went up on the deck then and stood along the edge. So as we come into New York.

00:42:22 Speaker 1

So he came back home and.

00:42:24 Speaker 1

So what do you?

00:42:26 Speaker 1

Do you think about?

00:42:27 Speaker 1

Going back to school or just start working.

00:42:30 Speaker 1

Well, I thought of going back to school, but we started my brother and I started trucking business and.

00:42:36 Speaker 1

Tracking.

00:42:37 Speaker 1

Yeah. Then I got out of that and.

00:42:40 Speaker 1

And let me use. I took a course through the mail and finished my high school, and then I took a course in carpentry. Then I sold in church for three years and then State Farm agent, and that they wanted me to take over the county. But I didn't like sitting around.

00:43:01 Speaker 1

And so I got into construction then and I retired as a Mason contractor after 50 years. 50 years? Yeah.

00:43:10 Speaker 1

Yeah, right. Which mainly commercial building, family homes or mostly housing. Yeah. Yeah, right. I've done general contracting, but in a small town by when things tightened up to rest. And I do.

00:43:28 Speaker 1

Everything masonry to and and so the other carpenters who, once you just do the masonry where when I started a farming operation in 1950 then I.

00:43:39 Speaker 1

Put a man out on farm rendered my file laws for him and I my wife and I ended up buying it. And then we bought another farm. So today we got 700 acres of popcorn. Oh my. And our son runs it now. But I'm the hard man now. I.

00:43:52 Speaker 1

Do most of the work.

00:43:53 Speaker 1

OK.

00:43:54 Speaker 1

So so you you have these other things you're contracting?

00:43:59 Speaker 1

You also have this farm.

00:44:01 Speaker 1

Right, I kept the man up there and then I kept two or three men working with me. I'm like a lot of time. We just go up to the farm and help him out.

00:44:09 Speaker 1

If he got behind, yeah.

00:44:12 Speaker 1

It worked out pretty good.

00:44:13

OK.

00:44:14 Speaker 1

And so.

00:44:17 Speaker 1

I was going to ask you when you're retired, but I don't think.

00:44:20 Speaker 1

That's happened. Everybody asked me that. Nice but good Lord gives me the strength and you only give me talent. So I said we'll just use him till he calls.

00:44:30 Speaker 1

Me home. OK. Do you do you have?

00:44:33 Speaker 1

You slowed down at all.

00:44:34 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah yeah, it's.

00:44:39 Speaker 1

If it's nice to be retired but not completely, but if I don't want to work tomorrow, I don't have to. So and I don't work like I used to.

00:44:51 Speaker 1

I just set my own pace. I guess there's an old saying when you get older. Don't give up, just slow up.

00:45:00 Speaker 1

Your family farm, your original family farm that you grew up on. Well, that was not owned by my dad. My dad lost the farm during the hard times. Yeah, and he was farming 452 acres at one time when I was eight years old.

00:45:03

Move.

00:45:15 Speaker 1

It's a big farm in those.

00:45:16 Speaker 1

Yeah. And we formed it with 16 head of horses. Yeah. And then they we was we was the largest farmer. I can see why folks back. They had big families there.

00:45:32

OK.

00:45:34

OK.

00:45:35 Speaker 1

Anything else you want to add to this? Been very interesting. No, it's been a pleasure of visiting with you. Reminiscing and.