

Virgil E. Ronnabaum Interview

319th Infantry Regiment

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Mika Schmehle)

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

00:00:02 Speaker 2

I'm Micah Smelley, a senior in law Central High School, and I'm I'm interviewing Virgil Ronnebaum from Axel on November the 28th, 2016.

00:00:17 Speaker 3

Where were you born at?

00:00:19 Speaker 1

At baileyville, Kansas.

00:00:21 Speaker 3

OK. And when?

00:00:22 Speaker 1

And.

00:00:25 Speaker 1

52323 May May 23rd of 1923.

00:00:30 Speaker 3

OK. And did you have any other siblings that served?

00:00:36 Speaker 1

Yes, my my brother under my older brother.

00:00:43 Speaker 1

And then.

00:00:43 Speaker 1

I have another brother that's in Saint Mary's that they were. They were both in.

00:00:48 Speaker 3

OK, what did you do before the service?

00:00:53 Speaker 1

Mainly farming, and I was hired farm hand right short before I went in. I was working for a man.

00:01:05 Speaker 1

That.

00:01:08 Speaker 1

So you you had to have about so many points that you'd have a lot of livestock, a lot of farming or something to get deferment. And I had a deferment.

00:01:23 Speaker 1

Where one see deferment but.

00:01:28 Speaker 1

Everybody else is gone and and I never did feel right.

00:01:33 Speaker 1

And anyway, the guy I was working for, we we didn't see I had. I had one day and and I just quit and went to service and I I went in I worked on the farm otherwise all my life.

00:01:47 Speaker 3

OK, so did you enlist? Did you end up enlisting?

00:01:51 Speaker 1

I I guess you could say I did. I went see, I had this deferment and I didn't. I wouldn't have to go along with. I had that. But after I had this.

00:02:04 Speaker 1

Go around with this fellow.

00:02:07 Speaker 1

My dad and I went down to the draft board the next morning because I was going to tell him that I I'm ready to go and they already knew about it, had already been turned in that.

00:02:18 Speaker 1

And.

00:02:20 Speaker 1

Yeah, I wouldn't have had to go with that particular time, but I I would say I was a draftee. Yeah.

00:02:26 Speaker 3

OK. And what branch did you serve in?

00:02:30 Speaker 1

With the I was the anti tag company with the 319th Infantry.

00:02:43 Speaker 3

And where was your basic training at?

00:02:47 Speaker 1

Camp Fannin, Texas.

00:02:51 Speaker 3

And what was that like?

00:02:54 Speaker 1

Well.

00:02:55 Speaker 1

It was hot.

00:03:00 Speaker 1

It it wasn't too bad for me, but for for some of the guys that had been working in the city or in inside, or they couldn't really take it because I went there in August and it was terrible.

00:03:15 Speaker 1

But it it I never found it be too rough.

00:03:19 Speaker 3

OK, so where did you serve at once? Once you got overseas into Europe where all were you at?

00:03:30 Speaker 1

I don't know if you need all this stuff, but see when when we went over.

00:03:35 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:03:37 Speaker 1

There, there, there was. The torpedoes were quite a.

00:03:42 Speaker 1

Problem crossing the Atlantic so they.

00:03:46 Speaker 1

I I loaded on the ship at.

00:03:50 Speaker 1

At Pier 13 in Staten Island.

00:03:55 Speaker 1

And we we sell to.

00:03:58 Speaker 1

Glasgow, Scotland.

00:04:01 Speaker 1

And then then I got to.

00:04:04 Speaker 1

Get on a train at Glasgow and went to.

00:04:09 Speaker 1

Across Scotland and England.

00:04:12 Speaker 1

And to Southampton, England.

00:04:16 Speaker 1

And that's.

00:04:19 Speaker 1

And we we laid around there until it got real foggy at night and then we crossed.

00:04:25 Speaker 1

The English Channel into France.

00:04:30 Speaker 1

And then I was.

00:04:33 Speaker 1

Went to a replacement depot there for a few days to leave.

00:04:37 Speaker 1

Get ISOD in what's carrying on, and then then they they sent me to Luxembourg, Germany. And that's where the battle of the bulge was. But. But it was the the the main fighting was over with. When I got there.

00:04:56 Speaker 1

So I was.

00:04:58 Speaker 1

I was in Luxembourg.

00:05:01 Speaker 1

And then from after that was over away, we moved back.

00:05:08 Speaker 1

To.

00:05:10 Speaker 1

To do the Ryan River crossing.

00:05:14 Speaker 1

And we crossed the Rhine.

00:05:16 Speaker 1

When I say I stayed in little town there, Worms Germany but.

00:05:23 Speaker 1

That isn't where across the the Ryan. I've got a map where that was, but we crossed the Rhine.

00:05:32 Speaker 1

And then I we went across the ohh. We got the castle. That's where this real bad fight was.

00:05:42 Speaker 1

And that was really the only really bad skirmish that I was in, and we went to.

00:05:49 Speaker 1

Across Germany.

00:05:52 Speaker 1

And we were, we were. We were headed, I said right straight into Berlin.

00:05:59 Speaker 1

And I I know this was put up deal because they.

00:06:05 Speaker 1

They stabbed our troops and sent us down to Austria and I know why they did that because the Russians were coming in to Berlin and I think they had a deal that they get part of the pie there so.

00:06:26 Speaker 1

That's.

00:06:28 Speaker 1

Then I went from.

00:06:32 Speaker 1

From the there went down to Austria, Austria.

00:06:38 Speaker 1

And then I I guarded that those.

00:06:42 Speaker 1

The salt mines here, and you ever hear about them? Famous paintings and set they had their.

00:06:49 Speaker 3

Is that? Did they make like a movie about that yourself?

00:06:52 Speaker 1

Yep, they sure did. They sure did. But here's the.

00:07:04 Speaker 1

That's.

00:07:06 Speaker 1

That's what. That's what that mine was.

00:07:13 Speaker 1

You don't read it all you want to, but that's.

00:07:18 Speaker 3

OK.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

So then I I guarded there for a while and then uh.

00:07:30 Speaker 1

Then from there I went back over to Czechoslovakia.

00:07:35 Speaker 1

And with guard in Czechoslovakia, where this victor was taken.

00:07:40 Speaker 1

And then from.

00:07:43 Speaker 1

From Czechoslovakia. Why? They sent me to Nuremberg. Were there more crimes? Trials. And I spent the remainder remainder of my time.

00:07:54 Speaker 1

And Nurnberg and when the.

00:07:58 Speaker 1

When I had enough points to get home.

00:08:00 Speaker 1

I came home.

00:08:02 Speaker 1

But it was it was an interesting trip, you might say.

00:08:09 Speaker 1

Now did did you ever hear the story of Theresa Newman?

00:08:13 Speaker 3

I don't think so.

00:08:16 Speaker 1

I get it.

00:08:18 Speaker 1

I get a picture of her here. This this gal.

00:08:23 Speaker 1

Was supposed to have not eaten anything at that time for 27 years, except for the.

00:08:30 Speaker 1

Blessed Sacrament, and she had the.

00:08:36 Speaker 1

She had the.

00:08:39 Speaker 1

The Yeah, the Prince of the.

00:08:43 Speaker 1

Agony every Friday and on 1st.

00:08:48 Speaker 1

The first Friday she would go through the complete agony and her her hands. You could see her. The imprint and her hands with her hands would bleed. She would bleed by her head.

00:09:03 Speaker 1

In.

00:09:05 Speaker 1

And then Father al.

00:09:10 Speaker 1

Kind of.

00:09:12 Speaker 1

Read up on that a little bit more. They've never.

00:09:18 Speaker 1

Never said she was a St. or anything because there's nothing ever.

00:09:23 Speaker 1

Performed through her.

00:09:26 Speaker 1

But.

00:09:28 Speaker 1

Yeah, get it.

00:09:31 Speaker 1

I'll have to show you that.

00:09:38 Speaker 1

I got all that stuff.

00:09:46 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:09:49 Speaker 1

Theresa Newman I had.

00:09:53 Speaker 1

That.

00:09:59 Speaker 1

This this was a a letter I wrote to my sister when when I stopped to see her.

00:10:14 Speaker 3

Did you write home a?

00:10:15 Speaker 3

Lot.

00:10:16 Speaker 3

Did you write home?

00:10:17 Speaker 1

A lot. Oh, yeah. As much as I could. Yeah, I got a lot of mail from the folks, and yeah, I rode home a lot.

00:10:28 Speaker 1

Because.

00:10:30 Speaker 2

What?

00:10:30 Speaker 1

Let's see, after we got into.

00:10:33 Speaker 1

Austria.

00:10:35 Speaker 1

There we didn't have any kind of bad or anything then, but just occupation forces at.

00:10:44 Speaker 1

Oh yeah, I rode home a lot.

00:10:54 Speaker 3

So what were your main duties? Were you an MP?

00:10:58 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:10:59 Speaker 1

Or I was in the anti tank companies with, but that's what it was for. I was drafted and trained.

00:11:00 Speaker 3

Your.

00:11:11 Speaker 1

Anti tank Company but actually.

00:11:17 Speaker 1

When we got over there, everybody was replacement infant treatment really. So that's that's more what I did over there. I I did.

00:11:28 Speaker 1

Hey.

00:11:30 Speaker 1

Help with the the guns and stuff for the for the tank companies, but.

00:11:39 Speaker 1

But I my main.

00:11:42 Speaker 1

Job over there was was guard duty after the war was over, OK?

00:11:49 Speaker 3

So you were only on the front lines like when you were in Luxembourg.

00:11:55 Speaker 1

I was in in Luxembourg in.

00:11:55 Speaker 3

Mostly.

00:11:58 Speaker 1

And.

00:12:00 Speaker 1

And worms and at Castle Castle was a bad bite.

00:12:07 Speaker 1

The yeah.

00:12:11 Speaker 1

Let's see.

00:12:14 Speaker 1

So which one?

00:12:16 Speaker 1

This is.

00:12:20

And.

00:12:33 Speaker 1

Here's where we.

00:12:36 Speaker 1

It cancel.

00:12:38 Speaker 1

And that was April 3rd and my I'll show you my map. That's when where I was April 3rd.

00:12:46 Speaker 3

OK.

00:12:55 Speaker 1

But no, I I never spent a whole lot of time, you know, like some of the guys had to go over a lot earlier than I did.

00:13:08 Speaker 1

Actually fighting.

00:13:11 Speaker 1

But there is that Nurnberg.

00:13:14 Speaker 1

I mean Luxembourg, that that's something you'll never get out of my mind that.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

And.

00:13:24 Speaker 1

And this tells here where the the Americans just slaughtered those people. They came in there and.

00:13:31 Speaker 1

And.

00:13:34 Speaker 1

They said it was just a butchery.

00:13:36 Speaker 1

And they had. They killed men and horses and everything in it. And I never could figure why those horses were there, but.

00:13:49 Speaker 1

With this.

00:13:53 Speaker 1

Well, this is it when they.

00:13:56 Speaker 1

When they came in to.

00:13:59 Speaker 1

Luxembourg but those those guys.

00:14:01 Speaker 1

And then.

00:14:05 Speaker 1

They had it worse than I did. They were there quite a while, but but here it tells about.

00:14:12 Speaker 1

Where they came into.

00:14:18 Speaker 3

OK.

00:14:28 Speaker 1

See at that time the the Germans were more or less knew they were, they were whipped and.

00:14:40 Speaker 1

That tells in here that that the the.

00:14:43 Speaker 1

Some of their tanks.

00:14:46 Speaker 1

We're brand new, they said the paint wasn't even hard to dry on them and and some of them that that we blew up only had 15 miles on them.

00:14:58 Speaker 1

They were but the.

00:15:02 Speaker 1

See that in castle when?

00:15:06 Speaker 1

When they knew that that we were taking them, why they they went on into town and turned. They turned loose a whole bunch of prisoners and.

00:15:21 Speaker 1

Well, in fact.

00:15:24 Speaker 1

I've seen the guys.

00:15:26 Speaker 1

That we're pretty close to home, you know, and they just take home no home.

00:15:31 Speaker 1

Because they knew it was all over with.

00:15:34 Speaker 1

So.

00:15:37 Speaker 1

Yeah, I just hit a a couple of mean places outside of that my time is.

00:15:46 Speaker 1

As a garden, there was.

00:15:49 Speaker 1

Was, I'd say interesting because this this thing there.

00:15:55 Speaker 1

See all Goring. I don't know if you've read much about the than the German prisoners, but Goring.

00:16:07 Speaker 1

We had him there and we were we were guarding him and.

00:16:14 Speaker 1

He had a cyanide capsule, so the inside of his cheek, and when he got ready to leave this world, he just reached up and broke it.

00:16:26 Speaker 1

And commit suicide right there.

00:16:29 Speaker 1

Yeah, that's that's in there.

00:16:35 Speaker 3

What was it like guarding like the salt mines?

00:16:39 Speaker 1

Salt mines? Well, you see, they had.

00:16:44 Speaker 1

Had all those paintings back in there that the Germans had picked up, they were really gorings going to be gorings.

00:16:55 Speaker 1

Collection, but they had them stored in this salt mine and then they.

00:17:02 Speaker 1

And it was so far under under the mountain that they couldn't bomb it.

00:17:07 Speaker 1

To.

00:17:09 Speaker 1

To destroy anything.

00:17:12 Speaker 1

But they had they had done long.

00:17:17 Speaker 1

Trail back under there. I don't know how long it was. We get back to the rooms. They had giant rooms with big doors on where they head this stuff into mine.

00:17:29 Speaker 1

But on the way back, they had just a little narrow tracks with it.

00:17:34 Speaker 1

With them salt cards on that they use during salt hat and.

00:17:39 Speaker 1

So when we went back in there, all we had was a little carbide light.

00:17:44 Speaker 1

And when we get to one of the places where they had tried to blow that up way they have to crawl over that and go back.

00:17:54 Speaker 1

And.

00:17:56 Speaker 1

Went back in there and then there was nothing to do. Just sit there and put in your time.

00:18:01 Speaker 1

And.

00:18:03 Speaker 1

But then.

00:18:04 Speaker 1

That, well, that show that he had, he showed a lot of that, but a lot of that wasn't so.

00:18:14 Speaker 1

I talked to a guy when I come out of the theater.

00:18:18 Speaker 1

And I said, you know, I was there when that happened. He said, how much of it was so when I said not near all of it.

00:18:25 Speaker 3

What parts weren't true in the movie?

00:18:27 Speaker 1

Well, they see they had the pictures they had. They had all these.

00:18:33 Speaker 1

Famous paintings in a great big building, you know. And they were just going through sorting this stuff out and they maybe they did that a lot later than when I was there. But when we were there.

00:18:47 Speaker 1

All we we had to do was keep.

00:18:50 Speaker 1

They keep the Germans from getting in there or getting anybody in there to to destroy those pictures.

00:18:59 Speaker 1

Because there were some pretty famous paintings in there.

00:19:02 Speaker 3

Did you get to see any of the paintings?

00:19:04 Speaker 1

Never saw one. What? All I saw in that line.

00:19:10 Speaker 1

Once the door, would you crawl back in there and?

00:19:16 Speaker 1

Sit there and they had these big doors. See the salt mines? The atmosphere is is perfect for storing paintings and stuff. And that's the that's the reason.

00:19:26 Speaker 2

Mm-hmm.

00:19:31 Speaker 1

That we were.

00:19:34 Speaker 1

And that's reason we were there.

00:19:37 Speaker 1

But then I don't know how come they moved us out of that quick, but they moved us into Czechoslovakia.

00:19:45 Speaker 1

There was there was an uprising in Czechoslovakia.

00:19:50 Speaker 1

And they were moving out. Anybody with German descent and one guy said he'd been there all his life, had he had run a drug store there.

00:20:03 Speaker 1

And they they're trying to move all them out.

00:20:07 Speaker 1

And it just looked like that we were just putting the whip in the other hand.

00:20:13 Speaker 1

But.

00:20:15 Speaker 1

Anyway, we went there to to stop that.

00:20:20 Speaker 1

And.

00:20:22 Speaker 1

And that's.

00:20:24 Speaker 1

I had a.

00:20:25 Speaker 1

I had a pretty good place to stay there and in Francine's bud.

00:20:31 Speaker 1

Because.

00:20:35 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:20:36 Speaker 1

And the picture of the.

00:20:38 Speaker 1

Picture of the hotel I stayed in there.

00:20:45 Speaker 1

It was nice.

00:20:47 Speaker 1

And don't matter anyways.

00:20:57 Speaker 1

Yeah, this is 1.

00:20:59 Speaker 1

When they came in to Luxembourg and that's that's where, that's where I joined the.

00:21:05 Speaker 1

The 80th Division was in in Luxembourg.

00:21:27 Speaker 1

That's what.

00:21:31 Speaker 1

I've got. Well, this is the abbreviated map back here.

00:21:44 Speaker 1

I've got a great big map. My biggest toppest table.

00:21:53 Speaker 1

I guess this hair is busy.

00:21:57 Speaker 1

319.

00:22:12 Speaker 1

Just a second, I wouldn't get that.

00:22:14 Speaker 1

In the man.

00:22:17 Speaker 1

The.

00:22:28 Speaker 1

In this step.

00:22:34 Speaker 1

Yet to I've got the life of Theresa Newman there, but I don't know how many people will be interested in that first place.

00:22:55 Speaker 1

Let's see which one. I got one that you get the 319.

00:23:04 Speaker 1

That's.

00:23:05 Speaker 1

That's the division I'll get my.

00:23:10 Speaker 1

319 I was in.

00:23:19 Speaker 1

But it will show you.

00:23:21 Speaker 1

Where we were and when we were there.

00:23:27 Speaker 1

Says 39319. That's what I was in.

00:23:31 Speaker 1

And.

00:23:35 Speaker 1

See us over here in.

00:23:41 Speaker 1

If I had let some burger on here.

00:23:46 Speaker 1

Right.

00:23:48 Speaker 1

But anyway.

00:23:51 Speaker 1

It's right in this.

00:23:53 Speaker 1

When they're Luxembourg.

00:23:55 Speaker 1

And that's where I was.

00:23:58 Speaker 1

And then we we came out of there and these there was here for my 319.

00:24:06 Speaker 1

And we we came out of there.

00:24:09 Speaker 1

To catch in London and we were there for a little bit and then we went over here to Worms Germany. And this is the Ryan River.

00:24:19 Speaker 1

And.

00:24:21 Speaker 1

So we.

00:24:24 Speaker 1

Or we couldn't cross there. See the bridges were all blown up. We had to cross with the pontoon.

00:24:31 Speaker 1

Bridges but.

00:24:35 Speaker 1

That's where the buildings were blown up.

00:24:37 Speaker 1

Around this. And so we come out of there and then we crossed it, Armstead and went.

00:24:44 Speaker 1

Then we went on up through here.

00:24:47 Speaker 1

And it's castle Levinson.

00:24:49 Speaker 1

That's where they said that bad.

00:24:53 Speaker 1

They bought the bloodiest battle they had and then we lasted 3 days. So then anyway, we came out of there.

00:25:02 Speaker 1

And started down this way.

00:25:05 Speaker 1

And we got over here to.

00:25:09 Speaker 1

Limbaugh.

00:25:11 Speaker 1

And and that was, that's where I said.

00:25:19 Speaker 1

They did that for a reason because we were headed right on. We could have won right on into Berlin, but they turned us around.

00:25:28 Speaker 1

It came down here.

00:25:31 Speaker 1

And come through nordenberg at that time.

00:25:36 Speaker 1

And.

00:25:40 Speaker 1

And then it comes in here.

00:25:44 Speaker 1

December.

00:25:46 Speaker 1

And.

00:25:50 Speaker 1

And all those seers where the mine was. But this is a town that that we.

00:25:56 Speaker 1

We came into the when we came in.

00:26:01 Speaker 1

When the day or two before the war was ended, and then we came, went over here. Donald cosey.

00:26:08 Speaker 1

And.

00:26:12 Speaker 1

And guarded. It's all mine.

00:26:14 Speaker 1

And then you see.

00:26:16 Speaker 1

Get over in here around Mendel Heim.

00:26:20 Speaker 1

And.

00:26:23 Speaker 1

At that time.

00:26:25 Speaker 1

See the the the vision had enough time in ever sending a lot of people home so so they were.

00:26:36 Speaker 1

Some of us that didn't have the points to come home, they sent through the.

00:26:42 Speaker 1

1st Army Big Red One big red ones down Fort Riley. Now it was.

00:26:51 Speaker 1

And.

00:26:53 Speaker 1

So I stayed, stayed with the First Division.

00:26:58 Speaker 1

Until I came home and I came home, I think it's July 2nd. When I came home.

00:27:04 Speaker 3

OK.

00:27:07 Speaker 3

So what was it like at the Nuremberg Trials? Did you guard prisoners, or did you?

00:27:13 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah.

00:27:15 Speaker 1

Yeah, they.

00:27:20 Speaker 1

I wish that.

00:27:22 Speaker 1

Picture was that was more thorough I had marked on there who I've guarded and what day I did.
Yeah, we guarded.

00:27:34 Speaker 1

Well.

00:27:38 Speaker 1

I wrote a letter to Kenny that David.

00:27:44 Speaker 1

That I was there too, and I don't know what this is it.

00:27:56 Speaker 1

Yeah, we got. See, we guarded uh part time in the courtroom.

00:28:04 Speaker 1

And then then we had to pull guard at all the.

00:28:09 Speaker 1

The judges from the different countries there was but England and France and all them had they had their judges and we had to pull guard for for all of them.

00:28:26 Speaker 1

Let's see.

00:28:32 Speaker 1

Now this this is the one that wrote trumpet Theresa Newman.

00:28:39 Speaker 1

But.

00:28:42 Speaker 1

Yeah, that, that guard there.

00:28:47 Speaker 1

That, that get that get it rough?

00:28:51 Speaker 1

See they they were a little short of men. I think we might have had that printed in here, but see if we were guarding.

00:29:01 Speaker 1

At two hours on and four hours off.

00:29:05 Speaker 1

Day and night. And then if it got, if they got real short of men, we had go 2 hours on two hours off and you would hardly get back to your bed before you had to go back.

00:29:18 Speaker 1

On guard again.

00:29:40 Speaker 1

Yeah, this.

00:29:50 Speaker 1

1st Division.

00:29:52 Speaker 1

That's three. 19th Infantry went home and I joined the 1st Division with friends and squad, Czechoslovakia and.

00:30:05 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:30:06 Speaker 1

Guard at the.

00:30:08 Speaker 1

Nuremberg trials in Nuremberg. They're not much else going on in Nurnberg because she was old. Nurnberg was a walled city, and it had all been all bone pieces. I had a lot of pictures of where that was.

00:30:27 Speaker 1

They all cities bloom.

00:30:31 Speaker 1

And.

00:30:33 Speaker 1

Then here tell us what the.

00:30:36 Speaker 1

They had Nurnberg, and here's a guy that I guarded in the in the courtroom with, yes.

00:30:48 Speaker 1

And he he was.

00:30:51 Speaker 1

At all Hitler's.

00:30:55 Speaker 1

Deputy.

00:31:01 Speaker 1

And see this this guy.

00:31:04 Speaker 1

Yes.

00:31:06 Speaker 1

It looks like he kind of got a bad deal, he.

00:31:10 Speaker 1

He flew over to Scotland in an attempt to negotiate peace with the United Kingdom.

00:31:18 Speaker 1

But instead when.

00:31:22 Speaker 1

When they German.

00:31:25 Speaker 1

Flew into there where they took him prisoner and.

00:31:28 Speaker 1

And he was put in that.

00:31:31 Speaker 1

He died there in 1987.

00:31:35 Speaker 3

OK.

00:31:37 Speaker 1

And then there was.

00:31:39 Speaker 1

There's also guarded the judges quarters. The judges for British, American and Russian.

00:31:47 Speaker 1

And when it went on duty, you get a pass and go sit in the audience. And had these earphones as down your back.

00:32:06 Speaker 1

And then of course.

00:32:11 Speaker 1

It wasn't all rough for me over there. They I had a friend.

00:32:17 Speaker 1

From home, the neighbor boy that was in Paris, truck driver in Paris. So one evening they came in and had a pass to Paris.

00:32:30 Speaker 1

And it wasn't very popular anymore.

00:32:34 Speaker 1

And I said, I'll take that path.

00:32:36 Speaker 1

So I went in there.

00:32:37

There and.

00:32:39 Speaker 1

And went to his trucking company.

00:32:42 Speaker 1

And his commanding officer said, well, he's he's out of the truck.

00:32:47 Speaker 1

But he'll be in here.

00:32:49 Speaker 1

Shortly.

00:32:51 Speaker 1

So when he came in, why his commanding officer said, if you if you boys were neighbor boys at home, I'm going to give him three day pass.

00:33:02 Speaker 1

While I'm there and he knew Paris like back of his hand and.

00:33:08 Speaker 1

I had a lot of fun with him there and.

00:33:19 Speaker 1

I had went on a small vacation to Switzerland.

00:33:31 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah, that German mark.

00:33:34 Speaker 1

I get one of them around here too. Somewhere they don't let mine check money.

00:33:40 Speaker 1

But the uh.

00:33:44 Speaker 1

They doubled the value of the mark.

00:33:47 Speaker 1

After our payroll was sent in, so we actually got paid twice. We paid double the one month.

00:34:13 Speaker 1

Yeah, that's.

00:34:20 Speaker 3

So how long were you at the Nuremberg trials?

00:34:27 Speaker 1

I must have been there.

00:34:30 Speaker 1

I would say about six months, I guess.

00:34:34 Speaker 1

And better not. Probably not that long. I came home.

00:34:40 Speaker 1

I I was there, I bet I was there almost six months.

00:34:44 Speaker 1

In the.

00:34:46 Speaker 1

Guarded there and that that guard duty.

00:34:50 Speaker 1

Was was alright, but it was spit and Polish. You had to have white helmets and and white gloves.

00:34:58 Speaker 1

And if you guard it in the courtroom to guard the judges, they all had just a little.

00:35:07 Speaker 1

Looked like an outdoor Privy sitting there that that they could stand in to get out of the cold, you know? And because we had to be.

00:35:18 Speaker 1

Had to be on duty there 24 hours.

00:35:22 Speaker 1

And the.

00:35:25 Speaker 1

We.

00:35:27 Speaker 1

And we guarded those in.

00:35:29 Speaker 1

And I pulled a lot of guard.

00:35:34 Speaker 1

I don't know really.

00:35:37 Speaker 1

How many months have the actual garden?

00:35:43 Speaker 1

Then I when I got to.

00:35:47 Speaker 1

Nurnberg there was a fellow from Seneca, Bill Selca. I don't know if you ever remember Bill Selk. There was silks lived there.

00:36:01 Speaker 1

They lived. What was that place? They lived in, Rosie.

00:36:04 Speaker 1

Wasn't that redraw?

00:36:06 Speaker 1

Yeah, but anyway.

00:36:11 Speaker 1

He was in.

00:36:15 Speaker 1

I think he was in Berlin.

00:36:18 Speaker 1

I wouldn't either. I was in Nurnberg and he was in Bamberg and he he can. He had a bicycle with a motor on and he'd ride over there and we.

00:36:31 Speaker 1

Visited quite a little bit.

00:36:34 Speaker 1

So then, after we were home.

00:36:38 Speaker 1

And he came over here and and he had got cancer. And he was a good friend of mine. But.

00:36:45 Speaker 1

He said I'd like to go back to Europe. Would you go with me?

00:36:50 Speaker 1

And I said, yeah, if you're going, I'll go with you. But you never got to go.

00:36:57 Speaker 1

Is.

00:36:59 Speaker 1

But he was about the only one that I.

00:37:03 Speaker 1

That I had run across from back this way.

00:37:09 Speaker 1

See when, when? When I finished basic training.

00:37:16 Speaker 1

They they sent me to Fort Meade, MD.

00:37:20 Speaker 1

And.

00:37:24 Speaker 1

That I was there for a week or two and and they when they.

00:37:29 Speaker 1

They called out some names for some guys. They needed file clerks there for a while.

00:37:34 Speaker 1

And I was a final worker for maybe a week or two, and before they. But anyway, what I'm getting that the the troops that I trained with.

00:37:48 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:37:49 Speaker 1

The the war was so hot in Pacific and they shipped them all out, so they went to the Pacific and I went to Europe. I never went over there with with anyone that I trained with.

00:38:06 Speaker 1

But.

00:38:11 Speaker 1

Yeah. What was it was?

00:38:16 Speaker 1

Experience.

00:38:19 Speaker 1

And then.

00:38:21 Speaker 1

I just remember what one guy said when we came back, when we sailed past the Statue of Liberty.

00:38:29 Speaker 1

And he said old girl, if you ever see me again, you're gonna have to turn around.

00:38:40 Speaker 1

There I've got a picture in there too in France, where?

00:38:45 Speaker 1

Where our Statue of Liberty used to stand. See that was brought over here from France and I got a picture where where they had stood in Paris there.

00:38:57 Speaker 3

So what was the like? The camaraderie like between troops?

00:39:03 Speaker 1

Oh, we got along real good. Yeah, we got along good. I had to.

00:39:09 Speaker 1

I had one time that they came to our outfit and they sent me to the Scots Guards. The Scotch had. They were on the.

00:39:22 Speaker 1

Occupational guards there.

00:39:25 Speaker 1

So they they wanted.

00:39:28 Speaker 1

I still want me to go there.

00:39:31 Speaker 1

And I think there were several of us and then we were supposed to live with them for a week and then come back and give them a report on what was carrying on with the, with the Scotch Guards and the.

00:39:47 Speaker 1

I got over there. They were in Cologne, Germany and.

00:39:54 Speaker 1

I got there and they.

00:39:57 Speaker 1

It was Christmas and New Year's.

00:40:02 Speaker 1

And those Scotch guards, you know how to celebrate?

00:40:08 Speaker 1

We we had a great time.

00:40:12 Speaker 1

After the.

00:40:15 Speaker 1

After the war was over way, I can't see it. I think it was a great experience that.

00:40:22 Speaker 1

I would. I wouldn't take a lot for.

00:40:25 Speaker 1

For what I saw and what the country that I saw.

00:40:32 Speaker 3

So what? What did you do like in your free time? If you had like free time when you were on guard or something?

00:40:41 Speaker 1

Well, at Nuremberg there wasn't much going on, but we could. We could get on a Street car.

00:40:51 Speaker 1

And go into Firth, Germany and Perth is a suburb of Nurnberg and there was the IT wasn't blowing up so bad. There was stuff carrying on there.

00:41:04 Speaker 1

And ohh yeah we had.

00:41:09 Speaker 1

We had movies and stuff to go to and.

00:41:14 Speaker 1

No, no, I guess not a whole lot of entertainment, but it was good enough.

00:41:22 Speaker 3

What was what was like the funniest?

00:41:26 Speaker 3

Thing that happened over there.

00:41:31 Speaker 1

OK. Well yeah, I got one that it it seems funny and I run across that I know the guys name too.

00:41:41 Speaker 1

He get.

00:41:43 Speaker 1

We were coming along there and the sniper got.

00:41:46 Speaker 1

He thought he shot him and and he went down and he was rolling around, he said. I've been hit.

00:41:53 Speaker 1

And he wasn't hit, but he they had tried to hold right through his steel helmet and jewelry. His name was Joe Ragnell.

00:42:02 Speaker 1

And his home was in Johnstown, PA, but that.

00:42:09 Speaker 1

That was really funny, but that was I don't always remember that.

00:42:18 Speaker 3

What was like what was one of the best?

00:42:23 Speaker 3

Parts of being in the service for you, one of the best parts.

00:42:25 Speaker 1

The what?

00:42:30 Speaker 1

Well.

00:42:33 Speaker 1

I I think mainly.

00:42:37 Speaker 1

At that time, you know.

00:42:41 Speaker 1

Everybody was pretty patriotic and.

00:42:45 Speaker 1

And I think I I really did kind of feel bad that I wasn't.

00:42:50 Speaker 1

In quite as quick as I could have been.

00:42:54 Speaker 1

But uh.

00:42:58 Speaker 1

I I never had a deferment very long and I.

00:43:02 Speaker 1

And went on in.

00:43:05 Speaker 1

All the best parts.

00:43:08 Speaker 1

I don't know. I guess it's.

00:43:09

Probably those friends.

00:43:12 Speaker 1

Oh, a lot of good friends. I had a.

00:43:17 Speaker 1

I had a friend.

00:43:19 Speaker 1

That I.

00:43:21 Speaker 1

I met on the on the way home.

00:43:25 Speaker 1

And Shorty Matthews.

00:43:29 Speaker 1

And he he lived in way back on the East Coast or somewhere.

00:43:34

84 Pennsylvania.

00:43:36 Speaker 1

84 Pennsylvania's where he lived, and we're very good friend and I got it with oh after 20 years or so, they moved over here to Bedford, IA.

00:43:45 Speaker 3

Right.

00:43:53 Speaker 1

So then we made it a point to get together once a year. Either I'd go to his place or he would come here. Of course he's passed away now, but yeah.

00:44:07 Speaker 1

Made some really good friends.

00:44:13 Speaker 3

Did you spend Christmas in Europe?

00:44:17 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah.

00:44:17 Speaker 3

I don't know what was that.

00:44:18 Speaker 3

Like.

00:44:19 Speaker 1

Well.

00:44:22 Speaker 1

The.

00:44:23 Speaker 1

I said in there too see when even after the holidays was over. If you do have his own guard duty and then Germans would Blair had silent night or something like that on their speakers. And I think maybe they try to make us homesick.

00:44:43 Speaker 1

And the.

00:44:45 Speaker 1

No, we never, we never did much for.

00:44:49 Speaker 1

For Christmas, except that time I was with the Scotch Guard, so I didn't do anything to celebrate.

00:44:57 Speaker 3

Did you have a chance to celebrate any of like the holidays that you would have back home?

00:45:05 Speaker 1

When when we were where?

00:45:08 Speaker 3

Like when you were in Europe, did you have a chance to celebrate any holidays?

00:45:15 Speaker 1

I can't remember ever.

00:45:18 Speaker 1

And uh.

00:45:22 Speaker 1

No, we had.

00:45:25 Speaker 1

Never really had too much. See the when the war was on. While they of course the.

00:45:33 Speaker 1

Electricity with the known electricity there and then everything had to be run by generators.

00:45:39 Speaker 1

And.

00:45:41 Speaker 1

And they they could put on a movie once in a while, but.

00:45:45 Speaker 1

Not not during the the busy time. We never got anything like that.

00:45:56 Speaker 3

What was like, what was the food like?

00:46:02 Speaker 1

The food was alright except for I made a big mistake when when we went to.

00:46:10 Speaker 1

When we shipped over they, they sent us over on a bridge boat. They call them victory ships at that time and we were on a French boat and they had an English crew.

00:46:26 Speaker 1

And so they told us when we got on there, it said now if.

00:46:32 Speaker 1

There's two meals a day. It's only yet here. But if if you feel that you need more to eat, if you want to work in the kitchen.

00:46:39 Speaker 1

Why?

00:46:40 Speaker 1

You can eat all you want. Another boy. I got to have more than two meals a day, so.

00:46:46 Speaker 1

I said I'll go to work in the.

00:46:48 Speaker 1

Kitchen.

00:46:49 Speaker 1

And we got down there and I remember sitting there, big old coffee pot on the table and first thing and moving and scooter across there and.

00:46:59 Speaker 1

And about two days and I was so sick. I couldn't. I I could not drink water.

00:47:07 Speaker 1

I got out of that kitchen. I didn't work in there anymore, but they.

00:47:11 Speaker 1

They're not the best cooks in the world. Well, ours, of course.

00:47:19 Speaker 1

See with with ours, a lot of it.

00:47:23 Speaker 1

Was some of it was gay rations and stuff, but.

00:47:30 Speaker 1

If we if we had a place where they could set up a a mess all way, it wasn't too bad. It wasn't bad.

00:47:39 Speaker 1

And one thing happened one time. You know, I always liked home cured bacon, and I told my dad one time I said, man, I wish I had some of that little home cured bacon and he took a A can a.

00:47:58 Speaker 1

It it looked like an antifreeze can, but again can and it's winter time and they had this cured bacon. They had that sliced in there and poured lard in there and they soldered that shed and sent that to German.

00:48:17 Speaker 1

That wouldn't get out of axle now, and you tried that, but that came over there just it was just as good as.

00:48:23 Speaker 1

It could be.

00:48:28 Speaker 3

Where were you at when the war ended?

00:48:32 Speaker 1

I was in Austria.

00:48:34 Speaker 1

OK. Yeah.

00:48:37 Speaker 3

And did you take a boat back home?

00:48:41 Speaker 1

Yes.

00:48:43 Speaker 1

Yes, we.

00:48:45 Speaker 1

When you got time for us to come home, my.

00:48:50 Speaker 1

The we were gonna ship out of Lahar, France, and there was a maritime strike on.

00:48:59 Speaker 1

And they they wouldn't load the ships.

00:49:02 Speaker 1

Then so we we were there probably a week or 10 days before they decided to load this, but then we that's where we got on the boat at Lahore and came, came back came back to.

00:49:18 Speaker 1

New York and.

00:49:21 Speaker 1

And then they sent us to.

00:49:25 Speaker 1

Camp in New Jersey and I was there for a while, just kind of waiting my time.

00:49:33 Speaker 1

And.

00:49:35 Speaker 1

So then after you get ready to come back this way, way.

00:49:41 Speaker 1

Get on a train and.

00:49:43 Speaker 1

Came back to Fort Leavenworth and and I was.

00:49:50 Speaker 1

I was discharged in Fort Leavenworth.

00:49:54 Speaker 1

And I remember.

00:49:57 Speaker 1

When I got out of the service, I was anxious to get home and and so we there was a a bus that would pick us up at noon to bring us back to our towns. And I stand out there with my duffel bag.

00:50:15 Speaker 1

And there was a big old black car coming along there.

00:50:18 Speaker 1

And had a couple of GI's in there with him.

00:50:23 Speaker 1

Wonder where I was from and I said Baileyville and he said I'll have you there in an hour and a half for 10 bucks.

00:50:33 Speaker 1

And boy, I gave her 10 bucks and I came back to Belleville.

00:50:38 Speaker 1

So that was the end of that service.

00:50:42 Speaker 3

So did you take a train from like Nuremberg to France or how?

00:50:47 Speaker 3

Did.

00:50:48 Speaker 1

I know mainly on backs of trucks. OK then 6 by trucks.

00:50:54 Speaker 1

I I did ride a troop train.

00:50:58 Speaker 1

Across France once.

00:51:02 Speaker 1

But.

00:51:04 Speaker 1

I don't want most of our transportation was sitting in the back of the truck.

00:51:09 Speaker 3

OK.

00:51:13 Speaker 3

So when you got home, what was it like like with family and friends?

00:51:20 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:51:22 Speaker 1

And I think it was different. You know, you have to kind of get used to everything the way it was. But no, I I had no problem at all.

00:51:33 Speaker 1

Fitting back into the.

00:51:36 Speaker 1

Lifestyle back here by the middle.

00:51:46 Speaker 3

So you said you remained in in contact with some of your friends that you met in the service. How many, like how often would like some of you guys get together?

00:51:57 Speaker 1

Oh, after I was out of the service.

00:52:01 Speaker 1

Ohh I I get. I heard from quite a few of them.

00:52:07 Speaker 1

Gosh, I don't.

00:52:08 Speaker 1

But you didn't get together with.

00:52:10 Speaker 1

No, I I never got together with any of them. We had a.

00:52:16 Speaker 1

Had a Jeep driver that was up here in Nebraska and we went through his town one day and I was going to.

00:52:24 Speaker 1

Try to find him.

00:52:26 Speaker 1

And he was gone to a funeral or something, and I didn't get to see him.

00:52:30 Speaker 1

But the only the only one that.

00:52:34 Speaker 1

That I was in the service with with Shorty and he's the one that moved out to Bedford, IA.

00:52:41

OK.

00:52:45 Speaker 1

I've got.

00:52:48 Speaker 1

This one guy that.

00:52:50 Speaker 1

That I went to Switzerland with he's from Washington.

00:52:56 Speaker 1

He's a professor in.

00:52:58 Speaker 1

College or something out there. But he was a good friend of mine.

00:53:03 Speaker 1

And so when we went to Switzerland.

00:53:07 Speaker 1

On that driftway.

00:53:10 Speaker 1

He said someday I'm coming back here and I bet it was 10 years after that and I got a card from or switch from them and all they had on it said I'd return.

00:53:25 Speaker 1

Said he was over there again.

00:53:33 Speaker 3

How do you think your experiences in the service?

00:53:39 Speaker 3

Like changed, maybe the rest of your life affected the rest of your life.

00:53:47 Speaker 1

I don't think it really.

00:53:49 Speaker 1

I'm not so sure that it that it changed me very much when when I got out of the service was going to get out.

00:53:59 Speaker 1

At that time, I didn't think I wanted to come back to the farm. I wanted to be a crane operator and I guess the reason for that was watching them load them ships and stuff. And but boy, when the time came ready to get home, I come back fast as I get here.

00:54:20 Speaker 1

So.

00:54:23 Speaker 3

Did you learn any like life lessons?

00:54:28 Speaker 3

In the military, did you learn any life lessons?

00:54:33 Speaker 1

Any life lessons?

00:54:34 Speaker 3

Yeah. Anything that you'd like, share with other people?

00:54:42 Speaker 1

Well.

00:54:46 Speaker 1

I don't know some some mention that.

00:54:49 Speaker 1

You you learn.

00:54:52 Speaker 1

To be thankful for her being alive, that's one thing, but.

00:55:01 Speaker 1

Yeah. I always felt like I was pretty lucky. We.

00:55:06 Speaker 1

We saw some some bad things but.

00:55:12 Speaker 1

As a whole.

00:55:15 Speaker 1

My experience wasn't bad.

00:55:17 Speaker 1

Had.

00:55:21 Speaker 1

In fact, I enjoyed a lot of it.

00:55:26 Speaker 1

But you know they.

00:55:29 Speaker 1

At that time.

00:55:33 Speaker 1

The colored people, they they weren't allowed with the rest of us like they had their own platoon, and we were coming home from.

00:55:46 Speaker 1

Alone Germany.

00:55:48 Speaker 1

And going back to my outfit.

00:55:51 Speaker 1

And we had this *****.

00:55:54 Speaker 1

Driver on a truck that we were riding in and they wouldn't feed him. They wouldn't even give him a cup of coffee so.

00:56:04 Speaker 1

I went in and got him a sandwich and he kept coffee and took it out to the truck and that should have never been but.

00:56:16 Speaker 1

But that's.

00:56:18 Speaker 1

Going the other way now and they take pretty well. Tell us what to do now.

00:56:27 Speaker 3

Do you have anything else that you want to add?

00:56:32 Speaker 3

Any other stories or anything?

00:56:38 Speaker 1

Now.

00:56:49 Speaker 1

I guess not too much.

00:56:51 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:56:56 Speaker 1

I still say it was a good experience.

00:56:59 Speaker 1

And and I'm.

00:57:01 Speaker 1

I'm glad I.

00:57:03 Speaker 1

Get to go and get through it. All right, it's time I went and I was not.

00:57:10 Speaker 1

Anxious because we went to see when I went in we.

00:57:16 Speaker 1

They send us to Texas for 17 weeks of training.

00:57:22 Speaker 1

And.

00:57:23 Speaker 1

Send us back.

00:57:25 Speaker 1

To.

00:57:27 Speaker 1

Was headed for Fort Meade, MD, but anyway, we had seven days delayed in route.

00:57:34 Speaker 1

And.

00:57:35 Speaker 1

I came home and I was home for.

00:57:39 Speaker 1

For Christmas, at 7:00 on New Year's Day, I had to be back.

00:57:44 Speaker 1

In.

00:57:46 Speaker 1

In Saint Louis so.

00:57:49 Speaker 1

And that that at that time, I know that bothered me.

00:57:55 Speaker 1

To leave but.

00:57:59 Speaker 1

No.

00:58:01 Speaker 1

I think life.

00:58:04 Speaker 1

Over there wasn't that bad.

00:58:08 Speaker 1

Until you see how other people have to live. So, so many.

00:58:15 Speaker 1

Like.

00:58:17 Speaker 1

German people, you know that.

00:58:20 Speaker 1

That would try to to.

00:58:23 Speaker 1

Sort step out of our trash at the mess hall and stuff like that. That always bothered me because.

00:58:33 Speaker 1

We always had enough to eat.

00:58:40 Speaker 1

And the male see we had.

00:58:45 Speaker 1

Went to the there was a lot of e-mail for a while and they.

00:58:49 Speaker 1

A little bit.

00:58:55 Speaker 1

But.

00:58:57 Speaker 1

I get I get quite a bit of.

00:59:01 Speaker 1

Mail quite a bit of information from back home all the time.

00:59:06 Speaker 1

Of course, my my sister.

00:59:09 Speaker 1

And did most of the writing from my dad and mom. Of course they didn't do much of that.

00:59:19 Speaker 1

And then see, I had five brothers. So there we had quite a few that.

00:59:25 Speaker 1

Correspond with.

00:59:33 Speaker 3

Well, those are those are all the questions that I have for you, so.

00:59:37 Speaker 1

OK.

00:59:39 Speaker 1

Well.