

## **James L. Swindell Interview #2**

Company K, 317th Inf Reg

*(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Douglas Clanin)*

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

00:00:03 Speaker 1

And you went on your trip to Buchenwald in April.

00:00:06 Speaker 2

Yeah. When? When I was, when I was in booking all in.

00:00:09 Speaker 2

April.

00:00:10 Speaker 2

I met this friend which is a pastor of a church in Ohio, and he asked me a question. He said, well, how did you maintain your sanity?

00:00:18 Speaker 2

Do all this and I said, well, I I talked to the moon. I related to the moon and at night and I said I found I found comfort in that. And he looked at me and he smiled and he said he said to me, you know, the Lord relates to people through the sun and the moon and the stars. He said you were really related to the, to the Lord. And you didn't really know it. And I said, well, I.

00:00:37 Speaker 2

It makes sense.

00:00:38 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:00:39 Speaker 2

But I didn't and but, but not everybody did maintain their sanity.

00:00:48 Speaker 2

On one occasion there we happen to be able to stay in a House that night.

00:00:54 Speaker 2

I mean about four of us.

00:00:57 Speaker 2

By candlelight, writing to write letters, home to to our parents. And I seen this fellow woke up along side of me. There at the table.

00:01:10 Speaker 2

But he was one of us and you know, and and we were in for the night and I didn't really think too much about it.

00:01:17 Speaker 2

But he was carrying an Army 45 and he pulls his Army 45 out of his holster and he starts firing right down to the middle of the table while we're writing our letters.

00:01:26 Speaker 2

He hits this guy over here in the leg.

00:01:30 Speaker 2

And between me and the guy on the other side.

00:01:34 Speaker 2

He jumps up and grabs him and I hit him and knock him out.

00:01:39 Speaker 2

Now we got a a wounding gun.

00:01:40 Speaker 2

Right.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

And the guys lost his mind.

00:01:44 Speaker 2

What do we do with him? Well, the woman guy patched him up and he got to go back.

00:01:50 Speaker 2

Might be one of your \$1,000,000 wounds are talking about, but now we've got this guy over here and what do we do with him? And I said well.

00:01:59 Speaker 2

I seen a bedroom back here. There's no windows in it and said let's take him back there and we put him in that bedroom.

00:02:05 Speaker 2

Said we took him back here in that bedroom he's knocked out.

00:02:09 Speaker 2

Either that, or he's a fake and it pretty good, but anyway he didn't come live.

00:02:14 Speaker 2

And we we laid him on the bed in there.

00:02:17 Speaker 2

And took his weapons away from him.

00:02:20 Speaker 2

The next morning we get ready to move out and I thought, I don't want to check on him, you know.

00:02:27 Speaker 2

So I go back there and he's still laying on the bed and he's not moving or nothing.

00:02:32 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:36 Speaker 2

I gave him my blanket that I had and all the key rations I had, and I laid them on the on the table.

00:02:42 Speaker 2

There beside him.

00:02:44 Speaker 2

And I went out and then I locked the door and I laid the key on a little stand there in this hallway.

00:02:51 Speaker 2

And it's about me for 50 years what's happened to him. Did he die in that room? Did he get out?

00:02:59 Speaker 2

They called him the swamp rat. He was from the Carolinas governor.

00:03:03 Speaker 2

And.

00:03:05 Speaker 2

I don't know yet what ever happened to.

00:03:07 Speaker 2

Him.

00:03:08 Speaker 2

I just I haven't had the nerve to really find out.

00:03:12 Speaker 2

I would like to know if he's still alive or where they got out, or did we leave him there to his death?  
Did he start the death that they find him?

00:03:19 Speaker 2

Did he shoot him? What happened?

00:03:22 Speaker 1

You didn't tell an officer about.

00:03:24 Speaker 2

No, I didn't tell him back. I didn't, you know, we didn't see officers very often, you know, kind of on our own. We lost a lot of times, didn't tell anybody about it till it. That that's bugged me for years. Whatever happened to him, you know, whether he ever got out.

00:03:24 Speaker 1

It.

00:03:41 Speaker 1

Did you ever see a?

00:03:41 Speaker 1

Chaplain. No. Never thought that.

00:03:45 Speaker 2

Then I remember the case.

00:03:49 Speaker 2

Went on and now I gotta relate a little bit. This is a a sort of a platoon Sergeant.

00:03:54 Speaker 2

He's a basically a good soldier. He leads his men and he's a good soldier. He's not. He's not an extrovert. He's not loud mouth and boisterous. He's just a good builder.

00:04:09 Speaker 2

One day, he.

00:04:12 Speaker 2

Has written up here across the top of his helmet with the lead and pit.

00:04:18 Speaker 2

And he wrote, he put a dot right here, which would be in relation to he still help me put a dot right here in the center of his forehead and up above it, he wrote. Shoot me here.

00:04:27 Speaker 2

Shoot me here and he put a dot right there and he walked around with that for like 2 weeks.

00:04:35 Speaker 2

And one day.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

The.

00:04:40 Speaker 2

Officer called me up and he said.

00:04:44 Speaker 2

Name Miss Padilla said I sent Sergeant Padilla out on a patrol with two men. They said they haven't come back. He said. I'd like you go see if you could find him.

00:04:56 Speaker 2

So.

00:04:57 Speaker 2

He told me basically what area he was going in.

00:05:01 Speaker 2

And I more or less tracked him and use my instinct to think what might he might be going to do, you know, cause you know, he knew what he was supposed to do. And I've been out there like 2 hours probably.

00:05:16 Speaker 2

And had gotten pretty far out in front of our lines and I was getting a little worried about that.

00:05:21 Speaker 2

And I was about ready to come back and I seen something going up in a clearing up there.

00:05:28 Speaker 2

Until I go on up there and look at it.

00:05:30 Speaker 2

And here's his fence helmet laying there.

00:05:34 Speaker 2

A bullet hole an inch from that mark.

00:05:38 Speaker 2

Landing on the ground, you know, nobody's nobody around.

00:05:43 Speaker 2

I turned the helmet over and look and it's full of blood and blood on the ground, but I don't find him any place.

00:05:51 Speaker 2

And what made that man do that?

00:05:54 Speaker 2

Did he have a premonition? Did he just give up? Was he hoping that's what happened?

00:06:01 Speaker 2

But I later heard that we did get him back.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

But I never did ever see him again. He probably went on back.

00:06:07 Speaker 1

He was wounded.

00:06:08 Speaker 2

He was wounded.

00:06:09 Speaker 1

And what about the two men with him did?

00:06:11 Speaker 2

Well, they, they they went back, they they got them all.

00:06:13 Speaker 2

Three back. They got all three backs.

00:06:14 Speaker 1

You know freeman?

00:06:16 Speaker 2

But I've got men walking up there and looking at that helmet there. And here's that, dot says, shooting me here and justice that far away from it as a bullet hole.

00:06:24 Speaker 1

But it was a German bullet, not it was not self-inflicted.

00:06:25 Speaker 2

Oh yeah.

00:06:27 Speaker 2

No, no.

00:06:29 Speaker 1

So OK.

00:06:32 Speaker 1

That's that's incredible. But you just had a premonition, like you say.

00:06:33 Speaker 2

And.

00:06:34 Speaker 2

Yeah, I'll say. Men. Men know or something. Or he was hoping or something. You know I don't.

00:06:40 Speaker 2

Like I say, he wasn't. He wasn't a magic. Given his background, the kind of person he was. And then then that's what happens.

00:06:49 Speaker 1

So there were morale problems in your company.

00:06:53 Speaker 1

Maybe not a whole lot, but there were some severe morale problems fellows that just couldn't deal with the, you know, fighting.

00:06:56 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:06:58

Yeah.

00:07:03 Speaker 2

I don't know if anybody ever told you about a letter or mail or that type of stuff, but.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

While we was on the front, we didn't get any mail. I mean, nobody come along and daily and handed you a letter and said, here's your mail and but eventually mail was supposed to come up with

supplies, you know? Well, supplies didn't come very often either. All the time, you know. And but then sometimes they get mail with it. And and and.

00:07:30 Speaker 2

If you happen to be in a in an area where they could congregate a little bit, you know, then you know in a.

00:07:37 Speaker 2

Substation, or congregation. You wasn't actually laying in the hall at the time. Then they give you your mail. Well, I don't know how the other guys felt about mail call.

00:07:50 Speaker 2

But maybe mail call might be two weeks or three weeks or four, since we've heard from whom.

00:07:56 Speaker 2

And the first thing I always done, I always look to see where they had nailed in the bag or what he had in his hand.

00:08:02 Speaker 2

Of course he had a bag. There's a chance there might be a letter in there for me if he's just got a few in his hand, your odds is low. So you look at the first thing I did. How much has he got?

00:08:15 Speaker 2

You know, and watch my odds. This is kind of funny. Weird, but that's what happened to me. That was my relaxation.

00:08:25 Speaker 2

And then they start calling off the mail, and then you'd think, well, there's half. I'm gone. I've not been called mods about half now, maybe getting one, but there's always some Joe over here seems to get all the mail. I never did pick up that one out. So then it gets down when you're counting all these letters and boy, gosh, there's only three. I'm not going to make it, you know.

00:08:44 Speaker 2

And this things go through your mind. And then and then if you don't get a mail, don't get a letter.

00:08:49 Speaker 2

Then your your hopes just die. You just literally die. You think nobody cares? Nobody writes to me. Nobody knows I'm out here.

00:08:58 Speaker 2

But if you do get a letter, then you're happy and guys will get a letter. They might read that thing 50 times, and if they had a good buddy, he'd let his buddy read his mail just so he'd have something to read.



00:09:08 Speaker 1

In case he did get a.

00:09:09 Speaker 1

Letter by. Yeah, it'd be something from home.

00:09:11 Speaker 2

Well, yeah, we might be somebody, but.

00:09:14 Speaker 2

But your heart just drops when you don't get all there.

00:09:17 Speaker 1

So mail that proves that mail was extremely important for morale.

00:09:20 Speaker 2

Extremely important if if, if, if, if it wasn't anything but a letter.

00:09:28 Speaker 2

That said, hi.

00:09:29 Speaker 2

You'd cherish it at all time.

00:09:33 Speaker 1

Now they said this, what they call the V male. Is that what?

00:09:35 Speaker 1

You'd receive.

00:09:35 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:09:37 Speaker 1

That they miniaturized the mail from home, microfilm it, bring it over and then they.

00:09:42 Speaker 1

Process it, yeah.

00:09:43 Speaker 1

Yeah, I understand it. Yeah, save on weight.

00:09:46 Speaker 1

So you'd be getting like a photostatic copy.

00:09:48 Speaker 1

Of the original.

00:09:49 Speaker 2

Well, I don't remember getting to my folks. I might, as always original, I think you know pretty much original at that time. But then later we did get some photos, that's one. But but.

00:09:54 Speaker 1

Korea.

00:09:59 Speaker 1

And vice versa.

00:10:02 Speaker 1

Could you write home on a regular basis or was it pretty infrequent?

00:10:06 Speaker 2

Putting in frequent because you just shouldn't have time. You just.

00:10:12 Speaker 2

I told you about my sister Teresa.

00:10:15 Speaker 2

She wrote me a letter one time, said. Now, if you ever need anything, you just be sure and let me know.

00:10:20 Speaker 2

Well, someplace along the line I lost all my toothbrushes and I had no toothbrush, you know.

00:10:29 Speaker 2

And no, no toiletries of any type, you know and.

00:10:36 Speaker 2

Where we cleaned their teeth. They're the way I did. If you could find.

00:10:41 Speaker 2

A piece of clean cloth somewhere you'd rub your teeth with a clean cloth because your uniform and everything was so dirty you didn't dare touch that in your mouth. And if you look in the house or something, if you did find something clean a clean car, you could rub your teeth with it, you know, or something like that. So I wrote a letter back and I wanted a toothbrush.

00:11:01 Speaker 2

Because I hadn't had a toothbrush for months, you know.

00:11:05 Speaker 2

And I, knowing that she couldn't probably put a whole toothbrush in her litter.

00:11:10 Speaker 2

I, I said.

00:11:12 Speaker 2

Get a tooth close, cut the handle off and mail it to him.

00:11:16 Speaker 2

What I meant was send me the brush. Well, she got the letter and she took it to mom and dad said, well, Jim wants a toothbrush handle. What does she want the handle for?

00:11:29 Speaker 2

I'm missing. No, I don't know. Must be something to do with the war. He wants a toothbrush handle. So they buy a toothbrush. Saw the brush off. Send me the handle.

00:11:41 Speaker 2

Send me the handle.

00:11:44 Speaker 2

And finally I get that letter and I see it's in. There's something that, oh, boy, I got my toothbrush. I can wash my teeth tonight. You know, I opened that letter and it was nothing but that handle.

00:11:57 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:12:01 Speaker 2

We're laughing now about this, but this thing is coming my mind.

00:12:08 Speaker 2

I don't remember laughing.

00:12:11 Speaker 2

Hardly only one time over there, especially because war is serious. You know you don't laugh and laugh, is laughter is good for this, for your, you know.

00:12:21 Speaker 2

But I can only remember laughing one time.

00:12:24 Speaker 2

And that's when we were in Nurnberg, and we must have had two or three days of rest there. And because the paper says we had a couple days rest.

00:12:31 Speaker 2

But.

00:12:31 Speaker 2

I didn't remember it. To me it was about like everything.

00:12:35 Speaker 2

But some of the boys we stayed in the house a couple of nights, some of the boys apparently was a doctor's house. We would stay in and they found a skeleton all fully intact, you know, all the joints and everything moved.

00:12:48 Speaker 2

They took this skillet and they took it out and this house, most of the houses had steel, picket fence, steel fences with bikes on them and fell out. They took this helmet out. The skeleton out there and they wired it to this steel fence and they found a little round Derby hat and they put the Derby hat on and and they found some string.

00:13:10 Speaker 2

And they set this skeleton under a limb branch and and from the second story they throw this string out across this limb branch and down there, this Skelton's arm. And he crossed his leg, and he had a string on that so they could pull his leg and make him look like he's laying there like that. The leg wasn't moving. And from upstairs there they could pull this string and he'd raise his.

00:13:32 Speaker 2

I'm way about, you know, like that.

00:13:35 Speaker 2

And I'm telling you about wrecked all Nuremberg people going down that's going out there. That's the only time I ever remember having that laughter.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

But that's getting on that fence with it. It was, you know, it wasn't real active, right then war with just a little bit.

00:13:51 Speaker 2

To the back. By that time, after we've taken the town, things have settled down and there was all kinds of.

00:13:55 Speaker 2

Traffic down this road.

00:13:57 Speaker 2

And guys go back and his skill and wave up his hand out. Alright, but but that's that's basically the only time I've ever remember.

00:14:11 Speaker 1

Well, you mentioned on the situation before the end of the war, you.

00:14:15 Speaker 1

Received.

00:14:16 Speaker 1

The Silver star for bravery and in combat on 10 April 1945. That's the day before the liberation of the booking law concentration camp. Or is there anything more in addition to the citation that you recall about what happened?

00:14:30 Speaker 1

It was almost like what?

00:14:31 Speaker 1

Sergeant York, did you know capturing all those British prisoners?

00:14:36 Speaker 1

Made prisoners out of a bunch of British German soldiers.

00:14:42 Speaker 2

I don't know. Not much really. I just.

00:14:44 Speaker 2

And I don't remember too much more about that over any other day. Just one day, the guy said, well, you're going to get a silver star for something or other, you know? And I I didn't know what.

00:14:53 Speaker 2

It was you.

00:14:54 Speaker 2

Know I just there wasn't anything outstanding to me that I did it that was, but that was the day.

00:14:55 Speaker 1

Just another.

00:15:01 Speaker 2

That I told you that the the other soldier was in the box hole and I was firing over his head at his German machine gun encampment and he kept screaming at me. Don't stop. Don't stop. Don't quit firing. Don't quit. Firing was fun. But that that, that other than that, I just.

00:15:18 Speaker 2

You you just don't know just anything other than that, but then.

00:15:23 Speaker 1

You destroyed the gun.

00:15:25 Speaker 1

And then you you continued on, you captured another machine gun and 21 soldiers and then you?

00:15:31 Speaker 1

Got.

00:15:32 Speaker 1

One of these prisoners you got him to talk another 41 men into surrendering. 2 For a grand total of what, 6263 men? According to this citation.

00:15:42 Speaker 2

I guess, but they was willing to give up at that time, I guess.

00:15:44 Speaker 1

Right, all the fight going at them. But they gave up to you, right? They gave to you not anybody else, just you.

00:15:48 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:15:51 Speaker 2

Now they give up to me, but they would.

00:15:55 Speaker 2

Thing was disoriented and a lot of them was ready to quit, you know, but there was still where they were still fighting. But but they give up easy and, you know, but the but the scene guns was pretty active. Yeah. But but the others after after the machine gun was out, then everybody when.

00:16:10 Speaker 1

They everybody wanted to quit at that point in time and that was that benders label.

00:16:15 Speaker 1

Germany.

00:16:16 Speaker 2

Then actually even I think it is, yeah.

00:16:17 Speaker 1

Vendors Labin close to probably Weimar because that's the next day is.

00:16:20 Speaker 2

Yeah. Yeah. And I guess I don't remember the dates. Like I said, March 13th, the only date.

00:16:22 Speaker 1

Where?

00:16:27 Speaker 2

That I actually remember and.

00:16:31 Speaker 2

I am.

00:16:34 Speaker 2

OK, I can.

00:16:38 Speaker 2

You know, I told you. I told you that I only had two changes to close from January till May.

00:16:46 Speaker 2

Apparently the German soldier was in the same situation because I could smell them.

00:16:52 Speaker 2

When we would, if it passed to there or we were close to him.

00:16:56 Speaker 2

They smell like horses to me and I don't know what we smell like to them, but I'm sure they could smell us too. But but the German soldiers, if we was going, I could smell like was sniffing around and they were close. All you know, right here and I don't know. But I could always smell them and.

00:17:14 Speaker 2

And I'm sure they did. Did to us too.

00:17:19 Speaker 2

There was ever one time there.

00:17:24 Speaker 2

I wasn't the only one that had a guardian Angel, because I know another fellow that did.

00:17:30 Speaker 2

We were we were being shelled in a wooded area.

00:17:36 Speaker 2

I was in a I was in a foxhole and I heard a rustle of the leaves on in front of me. I heard something coming out in front of him. There wasn't supposed to be anybody out there because I was on the point.

00:17:46 Speaker 2

So I assumed it was a German soldier.

00:17:49 Speaker 2

Well, I laid back in my in my turned around in my foxhole and I'm laying there with my rifle, aiming towards the noise.

00:17:59 Speaker 2

And and the noise gets a little bit closer to me. I'm hearing it in between shillings. Noise is getting a little closer.

00:18:07 Speaker 2

And suddenly right up right in front of me, I guy jumps in my hole.

00:18:14 Speaker 2

But it was an American soldier, and he was a wire Stringer for the communications, and he got to for out of line after he was wasn't where he's supposed to be. And he was stringing wire and he was trying to get back.

00:18:28 Speaker 2

And I'm learning this hole with my rifle right in his guts.

00:18:33 Speaker 2

And I know I had pressure on that trigger and just just at the last fraction of a second, I realized it was an American and I didn't shoot him.

00:18:45 Speaker 2

And he realized what has happened. And he said, Oh my gosh, he said, I don't believe you have shot me. He said that I shouldn't have been out there. I should have been out there. And he said, I'm getting out of here. And I said, what are you doing out there anyway? He said, well, he said I'm gonna water strainer for the communication. And he said I shouldn't be out there. And he jumped on that hole and was gone.

00:19:03 Speaker 2



And I never could understand why I just what? What spared his life at.

00:19:09 Speaker 2

You know, just I just realized at the last second that.

00:19:14 Speaker 2

What? That? That he was an American GI.

00:19:18 Speaker 2

A lot of you know, I had to blow him away and he'd have fell right on me because I was laying in a position to do it.

00:19:37 Speaker 2

I'm about to run out.

00:19:46 Speaker 2

I.

00:19:48 Speaker 2

I might mentioned about the helmets.

00:19:52 Speaker 2

We had our steel helmets.

00:19:54 Speaker 2

And we cook out of them. If we had anything to eat or we washed out of them. And one time I was in Luxembourg, I believe it was and I had the at the Luxembourg River.

00:20:07 Speaker 2

And I had an occasion to get my.

00:20:11 Speaker 2

Some water with my helmet out of the out of the river and I washed my hands and I was wearing a class ring, but I lost so much weight.

00:20:20 Speaker 2

The class ring slipped off my finger and then when I was washing my hands and my face and I threw my high school class ring in the Luxembourg River because it was. I was so thin and I didn't just set it up, throw it in there, I knew what I'd done. So I left my classroom there and looked from the river.

00:20:39 Speaker 2

It's it's probably not known and I can't verify it other than what the man tells me.

00:20:46 Speaker 2

But a lot of people probably don't realize that we had convicts over there too. That was released from the prison. Had you ever heard that?

00:20:54 Speaker 2

We had convicts.

00:20:56 Speaker 2

That had volunteered to go overseas if they'd release them to the prison, and we had three of them.

00:21:03 Speaker 2

That I know of.

00:21:04 Speaker 2

And the one man said, I don't. He didn't tell me what he was in jail for, but they had no training and I don't know, very little. They didn't know.

00:21:12 Speaker 2

Nothing.

00:21:13 Speaker 2

When they got over there and one man turned out to be real good, he got to be a good soldier.

00:21:18 Speaker 2

And the other men, he didn't last too long. He got wounded or think.

00:21:22 Speaker 2

And then the third man, he was a a real quiet kind of a guy.

00:21:29 Speaker 2

And but he lived. He came from.

00:21:30 Speaker 2

New York City.

00:21:33 Speaker 2

And he lived on this payment. I don't think he'd ever seen grasp before.

00:21:38 Speaker 2

I've been out and I actually had to tell that man how to shoot a rifle.

00:21:44 Speaker 2

Because he was getting getting his face banged up on his thumbs with an army rifle, you push your clip in and you get the finger out.

00:21:53 Speaker 2

Quick the plunger smashes, you get what you call an M1 thumb, and if you don't hold a rifle tight against your shoulder, you get an M1 shoulder.

00:22:02 Speaker 2

And I actually had to teach him how to shoot. Shoot the rifle.

00:22:06 Speaker 2

But anyway he he ended up being a pretty good soldier. But.

00:22:10 Speaker 2

He found out that the German word for eggs was higher.

00:22:15 Speaker 2

So we'd take a little town and he'd take his steel helmet and he'd go out amongst the civilians and he'd go at the door and he'd say humans, they are, which means have you eggs?

00:22:28 Speaker 2

And he'd come back with eggs all the time. So we. But then we'd scramble up them eggs in our steel helmet and find them, make some kind of a fire, and we'd eat eggs out of them. Steel helmets. One time he come back with great big eggs, you know, big, and he'd never seen anything like that before.

00:22:45 Speaker 2

And he said, Oh my God, he said look at the size of these eggs. And I said, well, I said you've got duck eggs.

00:22:52 Speaker 2

And man, we had a feast of them. Duck eggs.

00:22:55 Speaker 2

Well, he got a little bit too brave about that one time he come out to hunt the eggs and he never come back and I don't know, whatever happened to him.

00:23:03 Speaker 2

But he was from New York and.

00:23:06 Speaker 2

And he was one of the he never confessed that it was a convict.

00:23:11 Speaker 2

But the other two, one especially said he was, and he could they all.

00:23:16 Speaker 2

Come together, you know, and I.

00:23:19 Speaker 2

But he did he he didn't know nothing.

00:23:21 Speaker 1

For these replacement fellows at Kenya.

00:23:22 Speaker 2

Yeah, this is the last of the war. They come as replacements.

00:23:26 Speaker 2

And this one. So I said, dude.

00:23:29 Speaker 2

Should he come from prison?

00:23:32 Speaker 1

They cleaned the prisons out. They gave them a choice. So you to stay in prison.

00:23:32 Speaker 2

I don't.

00:23:34 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:23:35 Speaker 1

Or.

00:23:35 Speaker 1

You come over and and how?

00:23:36 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:23:36 Speaker 1

Could they earn time off if they?

00:23:38 Speaker 2

Well, if they lived through it, they got out, then maybe they was they they didn't have. But the prison.

00:23:40 Speaker 1

Send that out.

00:23:45 Speaker 2

And I don't think too many people ever know about that, but, and and they certainly act like they had no training because like I said.

00:23:46 Speaker 1

Hadn't heard of that before?

00:23:53 Speaker 2

And then this one fellow said he was prisoner and then then the rumor was that all three of them was.

00:23:58 Speaker 1

And they just ship them overseas with no training.

00:24:00 Speaker 1

Or that's this. I don't.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

Apparently they did.

00:24:02 Speaker 1

So when I see the movie, The Dirty Dozen, now those fellows were already in service and they, you know, committed various capital crimes according to the movie. But I hadn't heard that they were cleaning the prisons out, sending in war.

00:24:12 Speaker 2

Well, I don't know how many of you did, but I'm going to sure we.

00:24:15 Speaker 1

This is in UK company, though right there 3/3 fellows.

00:24:17 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:24:19 Speaker 2

Oh.

00:24:20 Speaker 2

Yeah, and.

00:24:23 Speaker 1

The one, the one that was collecting eggs, he named, he disappeared and never came back. And.

00:24:26 Speaker 2

I never come back. I needed. I know what happened.

00:24:30 Speaker 1

And the the other two one.

00:24:32 Speaker 2

The one was wounded and the other made it to the war.

00:24:35 Speaker 1

The one that was turned out.

00:24:36 Speaker 1

To be a pretty good.

00:24:37 Speaker 2

Yeah, the guy that was pretty good. He made it. He made it to the war and.

00:24:41

Yeah.

00:24:41

Uh.

00:24:43 Speaker 2

And I don't think too many, too many people know about that.

00:24:51 Speaker 2

Then I almost lost my lost my life after the war was over by a replacement that was that came over to replace us.

00:25:03 Speaker 2

And this is after the war was over and the Lieutenant says.

00:25:06 Speaker 2

There's a whole pile of German rifles over there, and he's told this guy, he said. Break up those rifles over that rock, break them up.

00:25:15 Speaker 2

Well, he didn't know the discharge to to take the bullet out of the chamber or check. And he was breaking these rifles over.

00:25:22 Speaker 2

And he both went over the rock and it it discharged. And I heard the bullet goes.

00:25:27 Speaker 2

Right by my head. And of course I hit the ground.

00:25:32 Speaker 2

When I come up off the ground, was pretty upset when I got done chewing on him.

00:25:44 Speaker 2

She was feeling pretty bad too.

00:25:46 Speaker 2

But I thought.

00:25:49 Speaker 2

Going through all this and then get myself blown away by something like that, you know you can hear.

00:25:55 Speaker 1

All the close calls you had and you almost.

00:25:58 Speaker 1

Got killed by an American at the end of the war.

00:25:59 Speaker 2

Yeah, I had a.

00:26:03 Speaker 2

It was never reported, but I was missing for three days one time.

00:26:09 Speaker 2

And this is kind of a weird deal.

00:26:12 Speaker 2

We were moving at night and it was dark. I mean dark.

00:26:16 Speaker 2

And they said hold on to the man's belt in front of you and then we're going to take you someplace because it was so dark.

00:26:26 Speaker 2

I happen to be the very last man on the column.

00:26:29 Speaker 2

And as near as I can figure out what happened was.

00:26:33 Speaker 2

They went down a ravine like a riverbed or something like that. And the guy in front of Maine slipped.

00:26:40 Speaker 2

And when he did, I lost. I lost my grip on his belt and I lost it.

00:26:46 Speaker 2

And.

00:26:48 Speaker 2

Apparently they must have went up the valley up the riverbed.

00:26:52 Speaker 2

I thought the cross.

00:26:55 Speaker 2

And they didn't want to holler out, you know. And so I went up to the bank on the other side, and I'm and it's dark. And it's in this forest. It's it's dark.

00:27:05 Speaker 2

And I stumble over something and I hear German voices talking.

00:27:10 Speaker 2

I stumbled into a German camp.

00:27:13 Speaker 2

And I just froze. I just did. There I could then him and mumbling around in German and.

00:27:20 Speaker 2

And and then I tried to walk one out of there and I bumped somebody else again, I guess. And here it all flared up again.

00:27:27 Speaker 2

German talk.

00:27:29 Speaker 2



When I got out of the camp, or apparently whatever it was.

00:27:34 Speaker 2

Then.

00:27:38 Speaker 2

Then.

00:27:39 Speaker 2

Then I I got as far away from there as I could.

00:27:43 Speaker 2

Then in the next morning, I've seen no life anywhere. I couldn't find no Americans. I couldn't find no German.

00:27:50 Speaker 2

And I wanted to run that woods for two days.

00:27:55 Speaker 2

And not run out of food.

00:27:59 Speaker 2

And.

00:28:00 Speaker 2

On the third day.

00:28:02 Speaker 2

I don't know whether I was going in circles or what and and at night I just. I just leaned up against the tree and I try to stay there at night and then the moon come out. It got a little daylight on the last day and then I'd wander at night and just kind of stayed dark in the trees. In the daytime, you know?

00:28:22 Speaker 2

And then on a certain day, I I finally found my way.

00:28:25 Speaker 2

Out of that woods.

00:28:27 Speaker 2

And I've never seen anybody for three days. And then then I seen some movement off down in that way. Well, and I didn't know whether that was Germans or American. So I slipped on down in that way and found out it was American forces down in that way.

00:28:42 Speaker 2

And.

00:28:43 Speaker 2

I really had thought, why don't I just stay here till the war is over? It's pretty safe. I have anything to eat, but it's pretty safe. I'm. I'm thinking this. I'll admit it.

00:28:54 Speaker 2

And but then.

00:28:56 Speaker 2

Then I I go on down into this American forces deal down there, but they wasn't my outfit and I got food down there and then I asked her where's she eat at the he said, well, I don't know, you know? And then finally. So I said, well, I think they're all this way. So I wandered around another day and finally found.

00:29:12 Speaker 2

Found.

00:29:12 Speaker 2

My unit again, but the only thing that that drove me is that not staying into the woods.

00:29:18 Speaker 2

But.

00:29:19 Speaker 2

I didn't want my parents back home to get a a mission, an action letter because it was on my mind all time I died. Oh, I gotta get out there. I gotta find my way home. I don't want my mom. Got to get it. Missing in action letter.

00:29:31 Speaker 2

Of course. And then then I guess of course, the office people as you as you want to call them are headquarters.

00:29:40 Speaker 2

They're never up on this every day anyhow, you know. And I guess when I finally got back, they were getting ready to type me in.

00:29:46 Speaker 2

Missing an action, but then I did get. I get to get back but I wanted around 3 days out there.

00:29:52 Speaker 1

So your parents were never notified that you were Mia?

00:29:55 Speaker 2

No, they never did get notified.

00:29:57 Speaker 2

I got to stop before.

00:29:57 Speaker 1

OK, that's good.

00:29:59 Speaker 1

Because that would have been bad to worry them, and they would have.

00:30:02 Speaker 2

Yeah, I I was on the line. I don't want to.

00:30:05 Speaker 2

I don't want to.

00:30:07 Speaker 2

I don't wanna have that happen.

00:30:13 Speaker 2

Well, you want to hear about the Nuremberg trial.

00:30:15 Speaker 1

Well.

00:30:16 Speaker 1

Before we do that, I wondered.

00:30:17 Speaker 1

If we could talk.

00:30:18 Speaker 1

About the liberation of the book and Law concentration camp on April 11th, 1945. Now you're the third man I've talked to who was in the camp on April 11th, 1945, when the when the camp was liberated.

00:30:30 Speaker 2

Right.

00:30:30 Speaker 1

And one of the questions I asked the other two gentlemen I interviewed Mr. Lowell Drudge and Mr.

00:30:36 Speaker 1

Clark was, and this is a question I asked them. Were you notified by anybody prior to the liberation of the camp what you were going to be facing? Did anybody prepare you for what you saw that day?

00:30:49 Speaker 2

No, I had no idea. Nobody told me anything. And like I say, I was first scout. They should then go off this way today, you know? And and.

00:30:58 Speaker 2

I had no preparation of anytime what it was, but but I remember I started smelling the odor.

00:31:06 Speaker 2

Before I got into the camp and and and I went in there like.

00:31:11 Speaker 2

8:00 or early in the morning and there was columns of smoke coming up out of there, and I smelled this odor, and I think I'd been away long enough. I'd smell burning flesh before, but I didn't know what I was getting into, and nobody ever said anything and where I will, actually.

00:31:32 Speaker 2

And I I crossed this clearing and there was a gate there and I went through the gate. There was and wasn't locked in anything. And the gate happened to be real close to the crematorium where it was burning all these people. And that's about the first thing I've seen was the creaming to him. And with the body stepped around over.

00:31:47 Speaker 2

Were and and and the stench and and the smoke. And then I come across the pits where they was lined up almost full, you know, and.

00:31:59 Speaker 2

I I remember standing there at the edge of this pit and and looking in there at all these bodies. It was.

00:32:07 Speaker 2

They had no clothes on and they were dehydrated. There was nothing but just bare skin and bones.

00:32:12 Speaker 2

And someone's eyes were bowed down, but most of them eyes are back in their heads, you know.

00:32:19 Speaker 2

And I remember standing on the edge of this whole, looking at these people.

00:32:27 Speaker 2

And I thought I seen something moved down there and I said, oh, no.

00:32:31 Speaker 2

I can't do this and I can't dig in there and I walked on.

00:32:37 Speaker 2

From it and I know what my eyes played tricks on me or not, but anyway it would. It would have been gone anyhow.

00:32:44 Speaker 1

That debt, with red Americans in the camp that.

00:32:47 Speaker 2

No.

00:32:49 Speaker 2

Like there was. No, I didn't. I was on the lower end where the crematorium was in the railroad station. The main gate is, like, off to the left and the barracks is up that way. I didn't see nobody live. I didn't see one soul. But my job is to push on.

00:33:06 Speaker 2

And I then I remember I went into a concert type metal building there.

00:33:13 Speaker 2

I'm looking for people see resistance and which is what I'm supposed to be doing.

00:33:19 Speaker 2

And in this metal building, there was closed stacked from the floor like 15 feet high, and the odor of those clothes that was worse than the the stench of those bodies.

00:33:31 Speaker 2

And it was just the odor was just terrible from them clothes. And it was just where they're taking their clothes and just throw them and throw them and throw them up there. And I know who knows how long they've all been piled up in there.

00:33:42 Speaker 2

Then when I left, I left there.

00:33:46 Speaker 2

Then I went out the back end of the thing by the railroad station.

00:33:51 Speaker 2

And I didn't really put quite together at the time, but then I got to seeing military elements, Edmonds and and decorations.

00:34:02 Speaker 2

The s s that went out the back end of the camp and I was attracting them by the stuff they was throwing down because they didn't want to be caught with that.

00:34:11 Speaker 2

And but it was a horrible sight, but.

00:34:15 Speaker 2

It didn't burn into my mind as much as when you lose your buddies at you know flesh and blood and you know and. And I know these people are dead and.

00:34:24 Speaker 2

And and I actually thought it was a plague that sometime at first I thought, no, they're burning these people to get rid of a plague.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

It's.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

Some kind of a of a plague or something. And then then I realize there's a larger magnitude thing than that, you know, and.

00:34:38 Speaker 2

But then I wasn't actually in the camp too long, but there I didn't see no other sign alive.

00:34:43 Speaker 1

You never saw any other of the prisoners that came up to you. Some of the fellows and you?

00:34:48 Speaker 2

No, nobody. Nobody came up to me know what happened behind me. I don't.

00:34:50 Speaker 1

Didn't.

00:34:52 Speaker 2

No.

00:34:53 Speaker 1

But you were like one of the advanced people in the camp.

00:34:55 Speaker 2

Yeah. And I don't want to get involved with a with a war with the 6th Armored Division.

00:35:04 Speaker 2

The 6th Armored Division says that they liberated the Buchenwald camp and you had three factors in the 6th Armor Division. One man says he went up to the main gate and took his rifle and glowed the shot. The lock off and got in. One man says he come up there and put a plastic charge on the main gate and blew it off. Now this is 6 times. They're arguing amongst themselves for 50 years.

00:35:28 Speaker 2

Another man says I walked up there. The gate was open. I just walked in. And that's your man, I believe.

00:35:34 Speaker 2

He's the one that told me about the artillery shelled Over The Rhine River being being hit and I believe that.

00:35:42 Speaker 2

OK. Well, I was over there. I find out that they go in there at about 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning.

00:35:50 Speaker 2

I'm in there at 8:00 at 8:00 that morning, before anything was ever happening up there. But I don't want to get involved with their argument about who was the first one in.

00:36:00 Speaker 2

The.

00:36:00 Speaker 2

Camp, but they've been arguing for 50 years and I think I really, I think I was the 1st.

00:36:05 Speaker 2

Umm.

00:36:06 Speaker 1

But there was no resistance on.

00:36:08 Speaker 1

The part there.

00:36:08 Speaker 2

No resistance. The Germans had left.

00:36:10 Speaker 1

So you just walked in, there was the gateway.

00:36:13 Speaker 2

Walked in. I didn't, you know. And that's what the other man said. That went up to the other gate too. And.

00:36:15 Speaker 1

Hello.

00:36:20 Speaker 1

So you tend to believe him because you'd already been in there for about two or.

00:36:23 Speaker 1

Three hours before.

00:36:24 Speaker 2

Right.

00:36:25 Speaker 2

You know, I feel like and something was settled in Brooklyn, one of six Norman guys he was in here the next day. He wasn't here today. Maybe we was.

00:36:33 Speaker 2

I'm not going to get in their fight, but.

00:36:36 Speaker 2

But I talked to.

00:36:39 Speaker 2

I talked to.

00:36:41 Speaker 2

At the Brooklyn Wall here in April, there was a prisoners over there that that was in the camp today, that it was liberating.

00:36:49 Speaker 2

And I talked to the man that says he's the first one to come out.

00:36:54 Speaker 2

And he said that that that they actually they freed their self see that the the US troops had left and they were. That's what I was doing tracking them on the bottom end with the stuff they were doing away.



00:37:06 Speaker 2

And the first minute come out of that thing, he said. They've had wire cutters they've got from the shop or something to cut the fence and come out that way.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

And then they they they got hold of a couple of and the machine gun or rifle or something. And there was a couple of guards left, and they freed themselves from them guards or shot them. And they surrendered or whatever.

00:37:27 Speaker 2

With the impressive thing of it was how this man has been in there in prison for seven years, went through untold suffering.

00:37:37 Speaker 2

And no seven years. But he was the first man out of the gate.

00:37:41 Speaker 2

Are out of the fence.

00:37:44 Speaker 2

And he said when he got on the outside, he seen a morsel of bread laying out there on the in the street.

00:37:52 Speaker 2

And he stopped and he told me he said I ate the piece of bread before I ran for help.

00:38:00 Speaker 2

As.

00:38:02 Speaker 2

That that hunger took precedence over his freedom after seven years, and he said he weighed 73 lbs.

00:38:10 Speaker 2

And and the and the average weight of the people that was freed was about 70 lbs.

00:38:18 Speaker 2

And this one particular fellow, the first one out of the gate, he had a younger brother that was on his deathbed.

00:38:24 Speaker 2

Today that we come in there and they they both live and they are in Youngstown, OH, now I could give you a name if you'd like, but they live in Youngstown, OH, now. And they're successful business people. They build houses in Youngstown. OH.

00:38:39 Speaker 1

So they both survived, including the brother.

00:38:41 Speaker 2

They both survived.

00:38:42 Speaker 1

Do you recall the name offhand or?

00:38:44

Uh.

00:38:48 Speaker 1

But that's alright if you could send it to.

00:38:50 Speaker 1

Me later, while that be free.

00:38:50 Speaker 2

Call. I can't. I can't call it right now, but I normally I could, but I just. You lost me. Right now they're 2. Two of them.

00:38:56

Right.

00:39:00 Speaker 1

How long would you estimate you were actually in the camp in booking Walt?

00:39:04 Speaker 2

How are you? What?

00:39:05 Speaker 1

How long were you in in book and wall, Mr. Swindell? Do you recall how approximately how many hours or minutes?

00:39:11 Speaker 2

Oh, I was in there. Lesson. I'd say 30 minutes to or less.

00:39:17 Speaker 2

Because.

00:39:19 Speaker 2

And there was no resistance, and I was supposed to be chasing them. And I followed the the out the railroad and and out. And who come in behind me? I don't know. I assume the rest of my company. And are these other fellows coming behind me? I assume. But there was nobody.

00:39:36 Speaker 1

But you didn't see them in the time you were in the camp. You didn't. None of. None of.

00:39:40 Speaker 1

The fellows from your company actually joined you.

00:39:41 Speaker 2

I didn't see one other. I didn't see any other person in there.

00:39:46 Speaker 2

Because I advanced on the camp by myself and I've seen the crematorium in the holes and I was just moving off.

00:39:52 Speaker 1

Just a question I asked.

00:39:54 Speaker 1

Mr. Drudge and Mr. Clark, and it has an obvious answer. You know, there's still people today that say the Holocaust never happened. How? How do you answer somebody like that?

00:40:01 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:40:04 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, it's.

00:40:06 Speaker 2

It's very real, I mean.

00:40:09 Speaker 2

I don't know how. I don't know how you'd make them accept it. I've got great respect for General Patton, and I didn't know this until I was back in Brooklyn Wall this last April, when he finally got in there. And he's seen it. Seen that situation. He went into the town of Vimar, which is real close there. And he marched.

00:40:30 Speaker 2

All the citizens in that town which said they didn't know what was going on. He marched everyone up through the nose films over their documentary films showing these people all walking through this camp and some of them showing up and some of them won't look and but he marched all these people through that town.

00:40:47 Speaker 1

But you didn't peer into any of the barracks to see the any living.

00:40:51 Speaker 1

People at all.

00:40:51 Speaker 2

I didn't see one living soul when I was in, but like I say, I was on the bottom end. They could have been up the other end in the barracks. I think maybe they hadn't even got up yet or something. I don't.

00:41:02 Speaker 1

Do you recall?

00:41:03 Speaker 1

Especially on your trip back, could you estimate the size of the camp?

00:41:08 Speaker 1

Or how many barracks were involved in in the camp itself?

00:41:12 Speaker 2

Yeah. Well, I would say it took in.

00:41:15

Yeah.

00:41:18 Speaker 2

I'd say 7 to 10 acres of land. All told, I never the lot of the buildings are all gone and they put large stone in there and all they've got corner markers are more or less foundation markers or they got a little monument out in front of a little marker. Like, well, there's cement blocks.

00:41:37 Speaker 2

It says this is blocked so and so excel and so on and so on. Then block numbers are still out there, and they're on the corners and that type of stuff.

00:41:44 Speaker 2

But the barracks themselves? Us.

00:41:48 Speaker 2

Oh, I'd say the barracks probably was.

00:41:51 Speaker 2

An acre or so and then there's an adjoining land around them.

00:41:54

Hmm.

00:41:55 Speaker 2

But I had the fortunate of of going in the camp the first time with a farm with a fellow that was a former prisoner there.

00:42:04 Speaker 2

The two people from Ohio were younger men. There was like I spoke about earlier and the Minister.

00:42:12 Speaker 2

They were like 45 years old, approximately, and they brought this older gentleman, which was probably in his 80s but that time and they escorted him over there and they rented a car and they asked me to ride along. So I went into the camp at the first time that, that, that they did with this former prisoner that was there.

00:42:30 Speaker 2

And before we even got into the camp.

00:42:32 Speaker 2

The the the.

00:42:35 Speaker 2

Fenced in area.

00:42:37 Speaker 2

We were walking down a little hill, of course, the the Germans soldiers, they had their barracks up on the hill up above the camp. See, you know, that's where they stayed. There. two-story buildings and they're more or less still there.

00:42:49 Speaker 2

And then you walk down the hill and then you go into the camp encampment there.

00:42:54 Speaker 2

And we're walking down this hill and all of a sudden this, this German prisoner. Yeah, he's Polish, pulling, pulling. He started to shine away like that. He said. Dogs, dogs. That's where they kept them dogs at.

00:43:09 Speaker 2

And she gonna go bite me all the time. Bite my legs. He pulling his fancy legs all chewed up and he shield away from that. It's it's kind of grown up with trees and and the old dog kennel is still there, but it's pretty much dilapidated. He shot away from that 50 years later because he was the dogs and they're always putting the dogs on and chewing them up.

00:43:30

Yeah.

00:43:32 Speaker 2

He's he's the one that told us the story about.

00:43:36 Speaker 2

About the S waves are coming out on Sunday and the day and when he told that he walked up to the fence and he looked at this bear pit, which is outside the barracks, you know, and it was a in cage. I could see the zoo. There was rocks, you know, in formations. And they'd been water there at one time.

00:43:56 Speaker 2

Apparently, where the Bears could naturalize the BearCat.

00:43:59 Speaker 2

And he walked up the fence and he looked over there at that bear fit and he kind of shuddered away. And and he shook his head. And then he didn't want to talk about it. And then he finally said, well.

00:44:09 Speaker 2

Said they'd the s s wise would come out there on Sunday and they'd throw the children in there and then.

00:44:14 Speaker 2

They.

00:44:15 Speaker 2

That was their entertainment to us, to watch the Bears chew up the children and RIP them apart. And he, you could tell he was.

00:44:23 Speaker 2

Very emotional about it. He couldn't even hardly talk about. He wouldn't say about for a while and then finally did.

00:44:28 Speaker 2

Let me see. Stand there. Defense and watch him.

00:44:31 Speaker 1

With those children, you probably heard the story. Then too, of the camp comment at the time it was this woman, Elsa Coke or Cook.

00:44:40 Speaker 1

Koch, the they call her. Excuse me. The \*\*\*\*\* of Buchenwald who had the human skin on black shades and you didn't see that? Of course. Did you?

00:44:46 Speaker 2

Oh yeah.

00:44:49 Speaker 2

I I seen it in the in the in the museum music I like a.

00:44:51 Speaker 1

Or today.

00:44:57 Speaker 2

Like a little shrine with a roof or something on it and it says it was made from the skin of this woman made. But it's in Campton Glass. You can't touch it or anything. And I read it. I didn't believe it. I said skin. I said do that and.

00:45:12 Speaker 2

I.

00:45:13 Speaker 2

Found out they really didn't have some kind of process where they molded this.

00:45:17 Speaker 2

It was an ornament that stood for me 8 inches tall. It was kind of cylinder shaped, but it was kind of Octagon shaped like this little pillows of a roof up on it. Like I don't know what it was supposed to represent, but it said that was made from human flesh. It's in the museum where we're looking. I've seen it over there.

00:45:35 Speaker 1

But since you were on the.

00:45:36 Speaker 1

Side scouting, doing your duty. You never got inside to see that at the time in 1945.

00:45:41 Speaker 2

No, no, no, no, no, nothing like that. I didn't see anything in there that time.

00:45:45 Speaker 1

But you really shared your experience, as you mentioned in in that newspaper article while they lived, you never could tell your parents about what you saw.

00:45:53 Speaker 2

I never talked to her.

00:45:55 Speaker 1

Did anybody really comma? When did you first start talking about the fact that you'd be?

00:46:00 Speaker 1

There.

00:46:01 Speaker 2

About 10 years ago, when I got there, seeing where these Vietnam people was needing all this counseling and always said that's a bunch of bull and I've had no counseling. And then I thought, well, maybe there's something to it, you know, and and they said. And that's when I on my own, I started talking about it. Then about 10 years ago and.

00:46:24 Speaker 1

But maybe it's just as well that your parents didn't know.

00:46:27 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:46:28 Speaker 1

Things considered that.

00:46:29 Speaker 2

You know.

00:46:31 Speaker 2

I didn't realize this at the time.

00:46:34 Speaker 2

But when I come home.

00:46:38 Speaker 2

I think people were scared of me.

00:46:41 Speaker 2

I think my parents were scared of me.

00:46:45 Speaker 2



I almost hit my dad with.

00:46:47 Speaker 1

A.

00:46:48 Speaker 2

Scoop shovel and that would have really hurt me if I had a he was down in the barn. I'd only been home a day or two and he was down in the barn. We we lived in the country and he had a couple 3 cows and.

00:46:59 Speaker 2

And I guess I was in the barn. I'm saying it wrong. I was in the barn with the scoop shovel. My dad cooks up behind me. I didn't know he was there, and I swung at him with that scoop shovel, and I just almost busted him, and I just caught myself just in time, and I thought.

00:47:14 Speaker 2

I thought I hit my dad out of the nose thing I've ever done, you know. But then then I got to thinking about that afterwards. Nobody ever walked up behind me.

00:47:22 Speaker 2

And nobody.

00:47:25 Speaker 2

I live. I I slip upstairs in his bedroom at home and there was stairways went up.

00:47:29 Speaker 2

There.

00:47:30 Speaker 2

Nobody ever went up the steps until they started calling my name at the bottom of the steps and.

00:47:36 Speaker 2

And when when mom and fixed dinner a meal.

00:47:41 Speaker 2

And we'd all sit around to eat. I'd go sleeping at dinner table.

00:47:46 Speaker 2

And just drop off like that. I just go to sleep and then nobody touched me. Nobody touched me.

00:47:55 Speaker 2

Because they know they swung at anything that touched me, I guess.

00:47:59 Speaker 2

And then when I'd wake up while everybody be gone, my food still be there and I finished the meal.

00:48:05 Speaker 2

Then.

00:48:07 Speaker 2

I brought home from Germany at a German luger.

00:48:12 Speaker 2

And now first night.

00:48:15 Speaker 2

I put that under my pillow that I stayed at home. I put that gun under my pillow.

00:48:21 Speaker 2

And.

00:48:23 Speaker 2

Mama and them knew it was up there, but my Mama come up, she might sweep the floor, but she wouldn't make the bed. And she.

00:48:28 Speaker 2

Wouldn't.

00:48:28 Speaker 2

Touch that pillow and I slept with that German luger under my pillow.

00:48:34 Speaker 2

For a long time.

00:48:37 Speaker 2

And like I say, everybody come up the steps. They started calling me.

00:48:42 Speaker 2

And apparently that, you know, they all knew I had.

00:48:45 Speaker 2

That gun under there.

00:48:46 Speaker 2

And then one day, I said to myself well.

00:48:50 Speaker 2

I can't. I can't live the rest of my life with a gunman on my pillar, but I.

00:48:56 Speaker 2

Had it so long, I couldn't let loose of it.

00:48:59 Speaker 2

I couldn't get away from it.

00:49:01 Speaker 2

The funny I'm going to say maybe three or four months.

00:49:07 Speaker 2

I said I gotta click this. I can't go on like this and I I took the gun out and I shed it on the my dresser right beside my bed.

00:49:16 Speaker 2

And that I dipped that for maybe a month and then I thought, so I could sit it on the dresser on the other side of the room where I'd.

00:49:23 Speaker 2

Have to get out of it and to get a hold of.

00:49:26 Speaker 2

And then that went on two or three weeks and I finally got sick and put it in the drawer.

00:49:32 Speaker 1

So gradually you could just wean yourself away from, you know, the gun, but it took.

00:49:35 Speaker 1

Several months.

00:49:37 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:49:37 Speaker 1

For you to.

00:49:38 Speaker 2

We're.

00:49:38 Speaker 1

Gonna be felt secure enough.

00:49:41 Speaker 2

Yeah, before I can do it.

00:49:42 Speaker 1

Before you do it.

00:49:43 Speaker 1

Are you bothered by?

00:49:44 Speaker 1

Fireworks, you know, we just had.

00:49:45 Speaker 2

No.

00:49:45 Speaker 1

The 4th of July.

00:49:46 Speaker 2

No, nothing loud noises. You know, sudden noises, all jumping. And I'm almost on the floor for North and I'm like that and.

00:49:52

OK. Yeah.

00:49:56 Speaker 2

But.

00:49:57 Speaker 1

If you know it's coming, if you see a firework, you know it's that wouldn't bother you.

00:49:59 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, that, you know, like somebody banged the door. I might jump a little bit. I still hit or somebody drop a dish.

00:50:06 Speaker 2

Around.

00:50:06 Speaker 2

The restaurant. Somebody drop a dish. I'll jump up out and I'll let I.

00:50:10 Speaker 2

Holler out.

00:50:11 Speaker 2

Stuff like that and.

00:50:12 Speaker 1

But the nightmares have stopped that you used to have within the last 10 years or so, yeah, the really severe ones that used to have. Did you ever ever have nightmares about booking wall? Would you ever?

00:50:25 Speaker 2

Yes, I've seen them bodies before.

00:50:28 Speaker 1

In your dreams.

00:50:29 Speaker 2

Yeah, in my dreams. But the worst one was the guy that lost his head.

00:50:34 Speaker 2

I just.

00:50:35 Speaker 2

Flashing it.

00:50:37 Speaker 2

But I I haven't had that for quite a while.

00:50:41 Speaker 2

Enough.

00:50:42 Speaker 1

Well, thanks for relating that to me. It's very important that.

00:50:45 Speaker 1

That these recollections are recorded for posterity, that we remember these things so that they don't happen again. Hopefully.

00:50:53 Speaker 2

We, we, we would certainly like to hope they didn't.

00:50:57 Speaker 2

Uh.

00:51:00 Speaker 2

When I got, I want to tell you another little father story, which I'm not really proud of.

00:51:07 Speaker 2

But I did it and I can't deny it.

00:51:11 Speaker 2

I had to stay another year after the war was over.

00:51:15 Speaker 2

And then when I finally did get to go home, I sent it through the repo depth, you know, and I finally got to the coast.

00:51:21 Speaker 2

And we had to wait on a ship to come in.

00:51:25 Speaker 2

And.

00:51:27 Speaker 2

We waited 2 weeks and finally a ship come in to bring us to get to come home.

00:51:32 Speaker 2

Well, about the same time the ship landed, they got this document from the Washington that all fathers was needed at home. All fathers was going to get to be furloughed.

00:51:43 Speaker 2

That boatload of people soldiers were fathers.

00:51:48 Speaker 2

Well.

00:51:50 Speaker 2

But one time the army done something right rather than just curse them all over Europe and then bring them back and send them home.

00:51:57 Speaker 2

They put them right back on the same boat that I'm supposed to go home on.

00:52:02 Speaker 2

And they send them home well.

00:52:06 Speaker 2

I could tolerate that.

00:52:08 Speaker 2

But the father's got coffee.

00:52:12 Speaker 2

We're fathers. We gotta go home where needed at home.

00:52:16 Speaker 2

Well.

00:52:17 Speaker 2

I'm pretty nervous and.

00:52:20 Speaker 2

I wouldn't do a lot.

00:52:22 Speaker 2

And when I'm that that kind of went on for a while and when I'm said I'm going home, I'm I'm needed at home.

00:52:29 Speaker 2

And I hit him. I hold off and I hit him and I busted him.

00:52:33 Speaker 2

And a rolling out across the deck and at the beach about that thing. I know I had about 6 of.

00:52:39 Speaker 2

Them guys on me.

00:52:41 Speaker 2

And then my buddies all jumped in and we had a we had our own little fight right there on the beach and.

00:52:51 Speaker 2

We were a little tougher than they was. We was pounding.

00:52:53 Speaker 2

Them pretty hard in fact.

00:52:58 Speaker 2

About that time, the MP's run up there and they tried to separate us, so then then the most of the father, they just first and we took off because we don't want to end up in jail.

00:53:09 Speaker 2

So then we had to wait two more weeks on another ship to come in.

00:53:16 Speaker 2

And that got to go home on that one.

00:53:20 Speaker 2

But I got to thinking about that fight.

00:53:24 Speaker 2

Beating other GIS up being on.

00:53:27 Speaker 2

And all the other things that that had done over there that I wasn't really proud of and.

00:53:32 Speaker 2

And I I said this gotta stop here.

00:53:37 Speaker 2

And before I got on the gang trunk to get on that ship, I stopped at the at the gangplank and I made an old.

00:53:44 Speaker 2

I said and I should tip on there, everything I've done over there over here. Space here. I'm not. I can't go home and live like I've lived over here. And I stopped the second I made a note that.

00:53:57 Speaker 2

That it stops here.

00:53:59 Speaker 2

And pretty much have.

00:54:03 Speaker 1

So you left it over there.

00:54:05 Speaker 1

The Gration and the hostility, the anger and.

00:54:08 Speaker 1

Had remained over there.



00:54:10 Speaker 2

You know.

00:54:10 Speaker 1

And stepped on the gameplay and I said here that you left.

00:54:13 Speaker 1

For Europe on June 17th, 1946 and arrived back in the states on June 26, 1946, for about 9 days 910 those.

00:54:22 Speaker 2

Yeah. And I almost.

00:54:26 Speaker 2

Committed suicide or whatever, not knowing it.

00:54:33 Speaker 2

I knew what I was doing, but I didn't really know what I was doing.

00:54:38 Speaker 2

We used to get liquor rations.

00:54:41 Speaker 2

Get the whiskey.

00:54:43 Speaker 2

And.

00:54:44 Speaker 2

I didn't. I gave mine away to the guys that drank.

00:54:48 Speaker 2

This is after the war, and we've got this liberation.

00:54:54 Speaker 2

And this other guy that's in this room with me.

00:54:58 Speaker 2

He said.

00:55:00 Speaker 2

He said let's just take that and draw a line halfway.

00:55:05 Speaker 2

And I'll drink out of that chuckle of half of it down and you drink the other half halfway straight down.

00:55:11 Speaker 2

And I don't drink.

00:55:13 Speaker 2

But I'm depressed if I want to go home.

00:55:18 Speaker 2

So I agreed to it.

00:55:21 Speaker 2

But I knew what I was doing, but I didn't know how bad it was going to be.

00:55:25 Speaker 2

And he juggled half of his down. He handed it to me and I drank 1/5 of half of 1/5 of whiskeys straight down, and it was awful. I don't I was lost, but I drank 1/2 of 1/5 of whiskey straight down.

00:55:40 Speaker 2

And had hit my system about the time I got the last of that drink down. And I remember falling back, hitting the wall, dropping the bottle, and I slid down the wall like that.

00:55:53 Speaker 2

They picked me up, but they tell me I didn't know. They picked me up and put me in my.

00:55:57 Speaker 2

Bunk.

00:55:58 Speaker 2

But they didn't call them medics or nothing.

00:56:02 Speaker 2

And that's the same time I was doing guard duty at the at the the Nuremberg Trials come time for me to do good. My door. Do they come in? They'd check me and I was still out. So they'd leave me somebody to fill in.

00:56:16 Speaker 2

I didn't come alive for three days.

00:56:19 Speaker 2

Three days I laid there before I come back to life again and I could have.

00:56:25 Speaker 2

I don't know why I just.

00:56:28 Speaker 2

They just put McLaren out.

00:56:31 Speaker 2

And I almost killed myself.

00:56:35 Speaker 1

Your system couldn't tolerate, couldn't just don't.

00:56:39 Speaker 1

Alcohol all at once.

00:56:40 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:56:42 Speaker 2

Pay up.

00:56:44 Speaker 2

And you know.

00:56:46 Speaker 2

I hadn't drank, you know, I didn't.

00:56:49 Speaker 2

But that went it was 4 roses is what it was. Well, the good whiskeys.

00:56:54 Speaker 2

Trying to say it was I it made me put me out for three days.

00:57:01 Speaker 1

You mentioned that you were your guard duty at the Nuremberg War crimes trial, and we could talk a little bit about that experience and the people that you saw there.

00:57:10 Speaker 1

At the Nuremberg.

00:57:11 Speaker 2

Yeah. OK, well.

00:57:13 Speaker 1

Experience.

00:57:15 Speaker 2

They deactivated it. I gotta do a little something else in there before I get there to explain how I come to be there.

00:57:24 Speaker 2

They deactivated the 80th Division and I didn't have enough points to go home, but they sent the 80S division home as a.

00:57:30 Speaker 2

Human see.

00:57:31 Speaker 2

And but they transferred me.

00:57:35 Speaker 2

And and by the way.

00:57:37 Speaker 2

I talk about this bond between men.

00:57:42 Speaker 2

They knew all my buddies knew I wasn't going to go home.

00:57:47 Speaker 2

And and and when, when, when, when they sent me out.

00:57:52 Speaker 2

They all lined up.

00:57:54 Speaker 2

Everyone shook my hand and held me. They went to a drive.

00:58:00 Speaker 2

Eyeball in the place.

00:58:02 Speaker 2

It's just the bond that you get between people, but.

00:58:07 Speaker 2

Anyway, they sent me.

00:58:11 Speaker 2

At that time, right after the war, they set up checkpoints.

00:58:15 Speaker 2

Like the Americans was here on the road and.

00:58:20 Speaker 2

100 or 200 feet down the road, the Russians set up a checkpoint.

00:58:25 Speaker 2

And we would just check papers and passes and that type of stuff. And I don't know what we was looking for, but anyway, they sent me out on one of the checkpoints.

00:58:33 Speaker 2

And then the Russians just down here.

00:58:37 Speaker 2

I think I'm. I'm not sure. Maybe eight of us out there or something like that. Men in these checkpoint. Uh, we had. Well one night while we was out there, the Russians got into the vodka or something.

00:58:53 Speaker 2

And you're never going to find this anyplace, I'm sure.

00:58:56 Speaker 2

The Russians got into the vodka.

00:59:00 Speaker 2

And they started firing on us, shooting at us down here during the night. And you could hear him down there.

00:59:07 Speaker 2

Loud and boisterous, you know, and and pretty soon they started firing at us.

00:59:14 Speaker 2

And the first guy they hit was a Sergeant in charge of that and they killed him.

00:59:21 Speaker 2

And I I I don't know why.

00:59:25 Speaker 2

Is isn't anything I asked for. In fact, I went in a private or come out of private and I wouldn't take any rank.

00:59:33 Speaker 2

And but.

00:59:34 Speaker 2

Men seem to rely on me and he said, what are we going to do? I said, well, we're not going to let him not.

00:59:40 Speaker 2

Let us fight back.

00:59:43 Speaker 2

So we fired back at him and we fought back and forth.

00:59:48 Speaker 2

During the night.

00:59:50 Speaker 2

Until there wasn't any more Russians left down there to fire on us.

00:59:55 Speaker 2

Then reality hit me.

00:59:58 Speaker 2

I'll have to stand trial for this. I'm going to go to jail.

01:00:03 Speaker 2

There'll be a big enquiry on this. This is I'll never gonna go home. I'll never go home. I'm going to jail. I'll be in the brick by night. The next morning will come out. They found out the situation.

01:00:16 Speaker 2

They put me in a Jeep by myself and they didn't let any of those guys talk together. We had. The Sergeant was killed and two others wounded, I believe.

01:00:25 Speaker 2

And there was maybe five of us survived.

01:00:28 Speaker 2

They didn't let us get together.

01:00:30 Speaker 2

They put me in the Jeep and said do I go back to headquarters?

01:00:35 Speaker 2

Get back to headquarters. You should go in there and report to.

01:00:38 Speaker 2

Captain so and so.

01:00:40 Speaker 2

I thought this would be my last free breath. I'm going to jail for for what we did.

01:00:45 Speaker 2

I go in there and I salute the captain and I said reporting.

01:00:50 Speaker 2

And the man gets up out of his desk.

01:00:52 Speaker 2

Walks around in front of the desk, hands me a carton of cigarettes, and I don't even smoke, but it gives me a carton of cigarettes.

01:01:01 Speaker 2

And he said, here's your papers. You're going to Nurnberg. He did not mention in one word, nothing was ever said.

01:01:09 Speaker 2

The shipment in Nurnberg, and that's when I become a gate guard for Justice Supreme Court Justice Jackson.

01:01:17 Speaker 2

May explain that one.

01:01:19 Speaker 2

Now I suppose the other guys got shipped somewhere too. Not one word. Hand me a carton of cigarettes. Said. Here's your transfer. They put me in a Jeep and send me the number.

01:01:30 Speaker 1

And you really got put a place in a in a position of great responsibility. So you must have done something right in their eyes because.

01:01:40 Speaker 2

Then, then in regard to this, Justice Jackson.

01:01:46 Speaker 2

His his stay in in a big three story house with the steel fence around it and a steel gate here in the front. And we have a a gate guard out there to check them as they come in and out, you know.

01:01:59 Speaker 2

Well, my first day out there was in the evening.

01:02:04 Speaker 2

I don't know, Justice Jackson from Adam. I just knew who was supposed to be in the house.

01:02:10 Speaker 2

The chauffeur drives through the gate without stopping and identifying himself.

01:02:17 Speaker 2

And I didn't know who it was. And I fired two shots. So was lemon Justice Jackson Slim line.

01:02:25 Speaker 2

This is the truth. So Oh my God.

01:02:27 Speaker 2

This chauffeur slams on his brakes, those the judge on the floor in the backseat.

01:02:33 Speaker 2

When he when he.

01:02:35 Speaker 2

Looked up. He's looking down the barrel of my rifle. him and I had him both in in line in the back window.

01:02:42 Speaker 2

And that chauffeur, he's a begging for his life, like everything. And he's just a begging that. He's his fault, he said.

01:02:49 Speaker 2

Said I I didn't do it. I should have stopped. I didn't do it. And he's a talking 90 miles an hour.

01:02:55 Speaker 2

So I said, well, identify yourselves.

01:02:58 Speaker 2

And I made them both give me their their ID's. I made Justice Jackson. Give me his idea and I checked his idea and check the chauffeur sauce and chauffeur.



01:03:08 Speaker 2

And when it got done?

01:03:10 Speaker 2

Jesse Jackson. He got back up in the seat then.

01:03:14 Speaker 2

And he he reached out the window and he shook my hand and he said, shoulder, you're you're a good man. He said you did right. He said I'm awful glad I got you out here.

01:03:25 Speaker 2

But then after that I let him pass through like all the rest of them see. But this chauffeur didn't know they had a new man on the.

01:03:32 Speaker 2

Gate.

01:03:33 Speaker 2

And so he drove right through me. And that's when I fired two shots over the line.

01:03:38 Speaker 1

How long were you guard there? Justice Jackson's residence during.

01:03:42 Speaker 2

Got his at his house. He'd come home from the trials, go back to his home for the evening.

01:03:47 Speaker 1

But but how many weeks?

01:03:48 Speaker 1

Oh, would you estimate that you were?

01:03:51 Speaker 1

Active security guard there.

01:03:52 Speaker 2

Oh, I suppose I was a.

01:03:55 Speaker 2

Three months or something like that or better and we had we had Herman Goring in prison.

01:03:56 Speaker 1

Three months.

01:04:03 Speaker 2

And part of my unit was guarding him somewhere else and I happened to.

01:04:06 Speaker 2

Be house guarding.

01:04:08 Speaker 2

They had Herman Gore in in prison somewhere else where all the other war crimes where the other war criminals, they're going, you know, stand trial and all. They had Herman Goring over there.

01:04:18 Speaker 2

I was going to go down and see that guy the next day and that's the night he took the poison.

01:04:23 Speaker 1

The cyanide capsule.

01:04:25 Speaker 2

And I didn't get to see member have been held out against him ever since.

01:04:30 Speaker 1

Did you see any other famous personages coming and going there? Justice.

01:04:34 Speaker 2

Yeah, but I I I went on down the prison and I've seen other guys in there, but I never knew who they were.

01:04:40 Speaker 2

In fact, there was a guy in there by the name of Brown, and I've always tried to associate with. That was the brown. That was a. That was a a physical or something, you know, a brain that they got back over here. Do you remember you?

01:04:53 Speaker 1

Verner von Braun.

01:04:55 Speaker 1

Vernon, Vernon von Braun, right.

01:04:57 Speaker 2

Vernon von Brown.

01:04:59 Speaker 1

Right.

01:04:59 Speaker 2

There was a guy over there in that prison by the name of Von Brown.

01:05:03 Speaker 1

Then they got him back to this kind of lady.

01:05:04 Speaker 2

And he come back over here.

01:05:06 Speaker 1

Right.

01:05:06 Speaker 1

Rocket program for the United States.

01:05:08 Speaker 2

So I did make contact with him, in fact.

01:05:12 Speaker 2

I got interested in cameras and I found a light meter which registers light.

01:05:17 Speaker 2

For for you.

01:05:18 Speaker 2

And I took it down there to him and I asked him if he would translate this German so I could use his light meter, and he transmitted he.

01:05:27 Speaker 2

He translated that German in so I could use that light meter and I give.

01:05:31 Speaker 2

Him cigarettes for it.

01:05:34 Speaker 1

Verna, Ron Braun, heaven's sake. That's incredible.

01:05:38 Speaker 1

It was really kind of the father of the American rocket program when.

01:05:40 Speaker 1

He came to this country.

01:05:41 Speaker 2

Yeah, that's what that's I assume it's the same guy at the same time. I know this guy in the prison with von Brown.

01:05:48 Speaker 2

And next thing I know, he's over here and head of a rougher thing, but he I give him cigarettes to translate that light meter from.

01:05:54 Speaker 1

What? What about American dignitaries? Did you see in any of those or?

01:05:58 Speaker 2

Not another. Nobody that Jacksonville and he was a main dude over there anyhow, he was he was the one holding he holding truck. He get out there, play volleyball with us and.

01:06:00 Speaker 1

Jeff Jackson was the only one.

01:06:09 Speaker 1

I saw that one picture of volleyball. You had a volleyball court there in the compound.

01:06:10 Speaker 2

Yeah, well, that would, yeah.

01:06:13 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah. At at his house, at his house.

01:06:16 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:06:17 Speaker 2

It was all in fence stone and we'd go over there off duty and we'd play volleyball with us and other officers would come up. I think volleyball was when he wasn't in trial.

01:06:26 Speaker 1

So it was a pretty good duty then.

01:06:29 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, he's yeah. He's an icon of.

01:06:31 Speaker 1

What? What kind of hours would you pull guard duty there at this house? And would you rotate it?

01:06:36 Speaker 2

Ohh, we've rotated around and see me like I had. I think we stood 4 hours at a time sometimes and I had mostly night duty.

01:06:45 Speaker 2

But another case with the Russians we were standing under a light shining on us course. This is at.

01:06:51 Speaker 2

War.

01:06:52 Speaker 2

The Russians was in this town in Nuremberg also.

01:06:55 Speaker 2

Those dudes that get across the street and they throw bullets in their chamber, they would still carrying their guns and their ammunition once in on, they'd fire up in the street, up in the air and you could hear them running their their actions on their guns. And they just jabber and carry on over there. And we're standing on here on their St.

01:07:17 Speaker 2

Like and, they're off here in the dark. I thought all the time they're going to shoot somebody and never did. But it was surely didn't make you nervous.

01:07:24 Speaker 1

Were you an MP guard? The only MP guard on your duty shift at the Justice Jackson's home in Nuremberg when you were pulling guard data? You need to be the only there. Just be the one.

01:07:30 Speaker 2

Uh-huh.

01:07:35 Speaker 1

Guard on the gate is that.

01:07:36 Speaker 2

Got right. One guard on the gate.

01:07:36 Speaker 1

Correct, and you'd rotate every four hours. You knew man on the gate.

01:07:39 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, we might be off a day. And on a day, and I just don't remember the schedule, but I know it was a long time out there. I never did like guard duty.

01:07:45 Speaker 1

Color.

01:07:48 Speaker 1

So how many men total would you estimate Ron's garden his house altogether?

01:07:55 Speaker 2

4 hour shifts I suppose.

01:07:56 Speaker 1

For our shift, so you would be on 4 hours and then off.

01:08:00 Speaker 1

8.

01:08:01

But.

01:08:01 Speaker 2

Yeah, something like that.

01:08:02 Speaker 1

So they rotated. So imagine like 3.

01:08:03 Speaker 2

Maybe sometimes it'll be off a day and then in the next day they had a lot.

01:08:07 Speaker 1

Of men for it. They didn't have to, so it wouldn't be necessarily three men. It could be 6 men that could have.

01:08:11 Speaker 2

Yeah, it wasn't a number, man.

01:08:14 Speaker 1

Did you ever get to see the trial itself?

01:08:16 Speaker 2

No, and it was down to the trials. I never did get to get into the court.

01:08:20 Speaker 1

Imagine that was strictly controlled. Who got in?

01:08:22 Speaker 2

I imagine about my unit, I'm sure had men there, but I didn't happen to be stationed at the trail. I happened to be stationed at the main gate where he was making his residence.

01:08:36 Speaker 1

One question I always asked the veterans I've interviewed, Mr. Swindell, what did your work experiences change you as a person? I think I know the answer the question, but I'd like to.

01:08:46 Speaker 1

For you to describe if it changed you, you were very young when you went into service and you saw an awful lot. But did it change you as a person and in what ways?

01:08:55 Speaker 2

Oh, yes, yes. Could you explain what? What?

01:08:58 Speaker 1

Happened to you?

01:09:01 Speaker 2

And become mature quite fast.

01:09:04 Speaker 2

I was active in sports when I went into high school from high school sports. I played on the basketball team, I was active and these kids was my friends.

01:09:13 Speaker 2

And when I come out of the service, I went to a basketball game.

01:09:17

And these.

01:09:18 Speaker 2

These are kids my age or the kids. They're they're so immature. I can't. You know, they're jibbering jabbering. And, you know, I couldn't stand it. I only went to one basketball game, and I quit. I never. I couldn't get.

01:09:31 Speaker 2

Around them, people.

01:09:33 Speaker 2

I couldn't.

01:09:35 Speaker 2

Too young. Just babies. I just childish stuff. Couldn't stand it.

01:09:42 Speaker 2

And so. So consequently I didn't have any friends.

01:09:46 Speaker 2

I just couldn't stand me around him. You know this basketball game.

01:09:50 Speaker 2

Then I made the mistake of going into. Told you I went into Delco. Remy was 16 years old and I made a mistake of going back too soon after I've come home out of service.

01:10:01 Speaker 2

And.

01:10:03 Speaker 2

I don't think I told you this dinner about going back to work.

01:10:08 Speaker 2

The noise. Yeah. The noise. Yeah. Yeah, I got the.

01:10:10 Speaker 1

She came to that party so.

01:10:12 Speaker 1

The farm is a little more.

01:10:13 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:10:14 Speaker 1

Peaceful.

01:10:14 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:10:15 Speaker 1

To deal with.

01:10:16 Speaker 2



But yeah, it it it, it changed it aged.

01:10:21 Speaker 2

Back.

01:10:22 Speaker 2

I just couldn't associate with them.

01:10:25 Speaker 2

Kids anymore.

01:10:26 Speaker 1

Have you attended any 80th Division or regimental reunions since the war?

01:10:33 Speaker 2

I have attended 2.

01:10:36 Speaker 2

Division reunion.

01:10:39 Speaker 2

And the last one was in Boston, massive Boston, MA.

01:10:44 Speaker 2

And I picked up my friend from Maryland. We went up there and I'll never go to another one. Never, ever.

01:10:49 Speaker 2

Because the people I want to see weren't there and the people conducting it are the officers and the bigger people in the division.

01:11:00 Speaker 2

And the people putting it on.

01:11:02 Speaker 2

And your clip.

01:11:06 Speaker 2

Never again.

01:11:08 Speaker 2

It's just, just, just nothing to me.

01:11:11 Speaker 1

You didn't want to cross anything.

01:11:11 Speaker 2

Because because the people I like to see don't go.

01:11:14 Speaker 1

The cake company, then. Yeah. But do you correspond with any of them from the UK company?

01:11:20 Speaker 2

Just my friend in Maryland and then a little bit to one in Florida.

01:11:31 Speaker 2

I'm sure you're probably about ready to climax this thing, so that I wanted to.

01:11:38 Speaker 2

When I come back to the United States.

01:11:42 Speaker 2

Was the most disappointing day in my life.

01:11:45 Speaker 2

I came back on my 20th birthday, June the 26th, 1946. Twenty years old.

01:11:55 Speaker 2

And I was expecting a big celebration. I thought the banners would be a fly and I thought I'd get a Main Street parade.

01:12:04 Speaker 2

The big welcome home soldiers she had to stay another year. That was laying and shattered and tore up at the harbor, you know.

01:12:14 Speaker 2

No bands, no, not them. Two girls in white. I can see him yet today. Walked out on the pier and wave guys.

01:12:22 Speaker 2

And after all there ever was, they unloaded us in a great big warehouse, kind of a building and marked. And we walked to the back end, Red Cross it down there. Give me a coffee and doughnut.

01:12:35 Speaker 2

Put me on a train.

01:12:37 Speaker 2

Sent me to Fort Sheridan, IL.

01:12:41 Speaker 2

Was down there.

01:12:43 Speaker 2

In the process of getting getting out.

01:12:47 Speaker 2

And I remember they died to.

01:12:51 Speaker 2

Pull a slick one on me, I thought.

01:12:54 Speaker 2

They said.

01:12:56 Speaker 2

Anybody that?

01:12:57 Speaker 2

That will sign up for the reserves. We'll get you out of here first. You'll be out by this weekend.

01:13:04 Speaker 2

Now they threatened me. I said take your reserves and keep them. I'm not signing up for nothing when I get out of here, I want to walk out of here free. I'm not going up here and play soldier on the weekend with you.

01:13:16 Speaker 2

And they kept me another two weeks of better. And all those that signed up, they did process another.

01:13:23 Speaker 2

But I said I'll sit this long and I set it longer and they skipped a trip. They tried to pull to get you into the reserve and I didn't sign up.

01:13:32 Speaker 2

Then when I got out of there.

01:13:35 Speaker 2

Quarter that I got 191.

01:13:38 Speaker 2

Dollars.

01:13:39 Speaker 2

\$9.64 traveling pay to come home on, which is in that 191 dollars.

01:13:47 Speaker 2

And and I can I can remember.

01:13:49 Speaker 2

For.

01:13:50 Speaker 2

Thinking well, when you wanted me, you sent the bus to Alexandria and picked me up.

01:13:56 Speaker 2

And 50 some years ago, Illinois seemed me like, way out West to me.

01:14:03 Speaker 2

Show and they give you the money and told you out the door and set the railroad stations down this way and the bus stations down this way.

01:14:12 Speaker 2

And so I went down to the the bus station and I I bought a ticket to come home.

01:14:21 Speaker 2

Then they first.

01:14:23 Speaker 2

Then in this bus station was cut large. There was a.

01:14:27 Speaker 2

The Barber shop.

01:14:30 Speaker 2

And then one of the first things I've done.

01:14:32 Speaker 2

I went and got my store, bought a haircut because I hadn't had one them for over 2 years.

01:14:38 Speaker 2

And when I went into the service.

01:14:40 Speaker 2

I just had a little fuss. I didn't. I'd never been shaved in a Barber shop.

01:14:45 Speaker 2

In fact, in training I don't have to shave about every two weeks and everybody gonna be mad because I could lay in bed another 10 minutes before I'd have to get up because I didn't have shape. I had no fuss.

01:14:55 Speaker 2

And.

01:14:56 Speaker 2

So I bought my store, bought me.

01:14:58 Speaker 2

Shave. I never had one of them before.

01:15:01 Speaker 2

And then some PrettyLittleThing come through there wanting to do my manicures, my fingernails. So I've got a manicure job.

01:15:12 Speaker 2

I just got the whole work and seen me like the time I give her a tip. I just about spent in the bus fare coming home, but I still had money.

01:15:19 Speaker 2

Left, you know.

01:15:21 Speaker 2

And then it it seemed me like it took two days to come to me on the was on the bus. I remember sleeping all night and being awake.

01:15:28 Speaker 2

Look at that.

01:15:30 Speaker 2

Let me out up here at Alexandria and then I caught a ride out to another mile and down by my road and I walked the last mile home.

01:15:39 Speaker 2

And I remember I thought my heart pound out of my chest.

01:15:43 Speaker 2

When I come that last few feet.

01:15:48 Speaker 2

Walking home.

01:15:49 Speaker 2

I just get adrenaline with cooking and.

01:15:52 Speaker 2

I felt my heart on fire and mom shamed me and she'd come running out in the yard and hug me.

01:15:59 Speaker 2

And I said, wait, Dad.

01:16:01 Speaker 2

Right down the barn.

01:16:03 Speaker 2

Got down the barn milking cows and the handbag.

01:16:07 Speaker 2

When he seen me, he jumped up and he about kicked over the bucket and everything.

01:16:16 Speaker 2

Oh.

01:16:17 Speaker 1

That's something you'll never forget. Never that kind of.

01:16:22 Speaker 1

Indelibly ingrained in your memory, after 50 years and let's say, 1946, you were discharged from the army on July 7th, 1946, and in two days it will be.

01:16:34 Speaker 1

Let's see.

01:16:36 Speaker 1

40.

01:16:39 Speaker 1

How many years? 50.

01:16:42 Speaker 1

See, that's 95, the 49 years.

01:16:45 Speaker 1

49 years ago this Friday, July July 7th will be this Friday, so will be 39 years ago.

01:16:49 Speaker 2

Yeah, this.

01:16:55 Speaker 1

Almost to the day when.

01:16:56 Speaker 2

Don't seem that long.

01:16:58 Speaker 1

You got to come home.

01:17:00 Speaker 2

Yeah, well.

01:17:02 Speaker 1

Is there anything we haven't talked about in terms of the interview? I want to make sure we got.

01:17:10 Speaker 2

I.

01:17:10 Speaker 2

Like for you to turn that off a minute and.

01:17:14 Speaker 1

Talking about the off tape, the.

01:17:17 Speaker 1

The salt on the Siegfried line.

01:17:20 Speaker 2

Well.

01:17:21 Speaker 2

My experience with the Siegfried Line.

01:17:25 Speaker 2

Somebody had the idea the Siegfried Line is metal pill boxes with slots in them.

01:17:31 Speaker 2

Where they their line of fire can intercross each other so that you can't get up to it without one box or the other cutting across it and being their line of fire.

01:17:43 Speaker 2

They put us on a on a firing line.

01:17:48 Speaker 2

And the principle was that we was to fire at the little slits in the pill boxes to keep the Germans from firing back out.

01:17:58 Speaker 2

They give a man a bag of plastic closet of some kind.

01:18:04 Speaker 2

And they sent him out.

01:18:06 Speaker 2

And we're like, I'm thinking 250 or 300 yards about a like a football field away.

01:18:15 Speaker 2

The first man gets about third of the way.

01:18:19 Speaker 2

And it gets killed.

01:18:22 Speaker 2

They sent the second man out.

01:18:24 Speaker 2

He picks up the plastic and he gets about 2/3 of the way.

01:18:30 Speaker 2

Put the plastic.

01:18:34 Speaker 2

Then that's all that happened that day.

01:18:36 Speaker 2

Those two men are still laying out there and the plastics out there.

01:18:41 Speaker 2



On the second day.

01:18:44 Speaker 2

That sent me out.

01:18:49 Speaker 2

I crawl with your knees and propel yourself with your toes and push you along. And that's a long ways to crawl.

01:18:59 Speaker 2

I didn't have to cross. I didn't have to get too close to the first man that was dead.

01:19:04 Speaker 2

But when I got to the second man, he was holding the plastic. He had the plastic.

01:19:09 Speaker 2

In a satchel leg.

01:19:11 Speaker 2

And I had to go to him to pick up the plastic. The explosive.

01:19:18 Speaker 2

And.

01:19:20 Speaker 2

I remember rolling him over. I had to roll him over to get the bag.

01:19:25 Speaker 2

His eyes was opened.

01:19:28 Speaker 2

He looked at me.

01:19:30 Speaker 2

I thought that scared me.

01:19:33 Speaker 2

But then I realized there's dirt in his eyes.

01:19:36 Speaker 2

Was dead.

01:19:38 Speaker 2

And and and I don't know. I always thought that was a great injustice, that.

01:19:44 Speaker 2

That the Lord didn't figure some way to shut your eyes when you're dying, but most of the time if you're awake, your eyes is open.

01:19:50 Speaker 2

Your eyes is open.

01:19:53 Speaker 2

And.

01:19:55 Speaker 2

I picked up the plaster. The explosive.

01:19:59 Speaker 2

And and I'd already called 2/3 of a football field and I was tired, but I don't know whether that was original or not, but.

01:20:07 Speaker 2

I took my hand and shut his eyes.

01:20:10 Speaker 2

And I got the rest the way to the pill box with the plastic.

01:20:16 Speaker 2

And then then I got back and they didn't do me. No big favor. They didn't let me get all the way back. And then?

01:20:22 Speaker 2

They.

01:20:22 Speaker 2

They they shot it with a rifle and that's what exploded it.

01:20:27 Speaker 2

If they had hidden.

01:20:29 Speaker 2

Me. If I'd have been exploded with me, there would have been enough left to putting a cigar mulch there was that much of it.

01:20:36 Speaker 2

And that's one reason I lost part of my hearing was that was so bad they didn't let me get all the way back, and I might have gotten nervous and they started firing at that thing and they blew up that pill box.

01:20:48 Speaker 1

And to expose the whole way over and the whole way back to enemy fire. And they were firing at you. And that was just one pill box, right?

01:20:53 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:20:56 Speaker 1

In the Sea tree line.

01:20:57 Speaker 2

And you know what that made me do it the second day.

01:21:02 Speaker 2

That's the only time.

01:21:06 Speaker 2

We never for some reason could never get any tank support.

01:21:11 Speaker 2

And that's the only time that I ever.

01:21:13 Speaker 2

Walked to. There was a tank by front of us after we knocked out to him.

01:21:22 Speaker 1

Then you got tank support.

01:21:25 Speaker 1

On the second day you did have.

01:21:26 Speaker 1

Tank support to get up to to the.

01:21:28 Speaker 2

Yeah, after I got 2 knocked out.

01:21:30 Speaker 1

Have you got 2 knocked out?

01:21:32 Speaker 1

To give you some cover.

01:21:36 Speaker 2

And then to my knowledge, I think actually got a whole world. They just left him to die or give up. That's why I remember.

01:21:46 Speaker 1

How big were these pill?

01:21:47 Speaker 1

Boxes by the.

01:21:48 Speaker 1

Oh God. You remember the ones that were blown up?

01:21:54 Speaker 2

Oh, I'm going to guess they was.

01:21:56 Speaker 2

12 to 15 feet at the base, and it wasn't huge as I remember.

01:22:03 Speaker 2

I remember shutting the plastic bag in it and then go and give it and get out.

01:22:13 Speaker 1

You had a lot of close calls in the Second World War.

01:22:16 Speaker 1

It's a miracle that you're seeing sitting here tonight talking to me. I'm the miracle I'm talking to you at all.

01:22:18 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:22:23 Speaker 2

But that's what I said. It seems like the Lord had his hand on me the whole time I was over there, you know, just so many times.

01:22:31 Speaker 2

Then, then, then, then here in, basically in the.

01:22:35 Speaker 2

Last.

01:22:36 Speaker 2

Since I come back from broken Wall.

01:22:40 Speaker 2

I think why did I have to do that? Was I some kind of a?

01:22:45 Speaker 2

A dumb, dumb dodo that would do anything you'd ask.

01:22:51 Speaker 2

Or did it? Did it just think I could get the job done? Or was it just a a zombie that they?

01:22:58 Speaker 2

That they could just tell him to do anything.

01:23:02 Speaker 2

I don't know.

01:23:04 Speaker 1

Be because of your youth. That might be one of the reasons that you were young enough.

01:23:09 Speaker 1

And maybe didn't think about things. You just obeyed orders.

01:23:13 Speaker 2

That's what I.

01:23:14 Speaker 1

That's considered a good soldier to bail order.

01:23:16 Speaker 2

I I was raised that way to be my parents, and whenever somebody else that looked good.

01:23:24 Speaker 2

But it it kind of bugged me today to think.

01:23:26 Speaker 2

It was.

01:23:28 Speaker 2

Why? Why was I picked on to do that so much?

01:23:31 Speaker 2

I got one more story that I would like to tell you.

01:23:35 Speaker 2

And then I'm going to quit you.

01:23:41 Speaker 2

This is wrong, but I'm proud of it.

01:23:46 Speaker 2

One particular day, as we was on the move and I happened, I was either on the front of the call or the last of the column. Most of the time, most of the time was on the phone, but this particular time.

01:23:58 Speaker 2

We would want to move.

01:24:00 Speaker 2

On the road and word come down from up front to send me up front.

01:24:05 Speaker 2

And I happened to be on the last column that day because I had diarrhea.

01:24:10 Speaker 2

And that was before Port Apart's was invented.

01:24:14 Speaker 2

Where is that? That's where it was.

01:24:16 Speaker 1

That's the restroom. There's no slit, trenches or anything on the move.

01:24:20

No.

01:24:21 Speaker 2

And and I would still behind you know, when I would go back-to-back.

01:24:25 Speaker 2

Or the word comes through. If they wanted me up front.

01:24:29 Speaker 2

Well, everybody knew that when I went up front going to be good for me.

01:24:37 Speaker 2

They knew I was going out on the point.

01:24:40 Speaker 2

And the chances of coming back are slim.

01:24:45 Speaker 2

Then when I got the word and I started walking by, I speeded up, you know, stepped a little bit faster than never. One of them guys and it just makes your hair raised and your heart # every one of them guys with pat me on the butter touch me on the shoulder or they say good luck. Take care. Watch out.

01:25:02 Speaker 2

Or if they didn't say anything, they sit with their eyes or they just touch you as you walk by them because they knew.

01:25:09 Speaker 2

The odds is again.

01:25:12 Speaker 2

And that just it makes my hair curl today. Anyway, I got up front.

01:25:18 Speaker 2

The offices should.

01:25:20 Speaker 2

We want you to scout this area up there. We don't know nothing about it, said. We're going to stay back here. You scout that. And when? When you think it's all right, you give us this.

01:25:32 Speaker 2

I said OK.

01:25:34 Speaker 2

So I've got one out there, maybe 1/4 of a mile or some. Of course I know they're watching me in the field, guys. That's the way they do. I come across this huge big rock.

01:25:43 Speaker 2

I go around on the backside. I hadn't seen any resistance of any kind. I come around on the backside of that.

01:25:50 Speaker 2

And my mind said this was crazy.

01:25:54 Speaker 2

It's just I'm going to stop this war. It's just crazy.

01:25:58 Speaker 2

I'm going to stop it.

01:26:00 Speaker 2

I know I'm not thinking real smart, but that's what I was thinking.

01:26:04 Speaker 2

So I got on the backside of that rock. My son wasn't shining on me. I took off my pack. I laid down my Wi-Fi, leaned back against that wall. Like back, back into that rock like that, and I thought.

01:26:17 Speaker 2

Got the worst off.

01:26:19 Speaker 2

Just going to sit here.

01:26:21 Speaker 2

As I know, they're not going moved right home to.

01:26:24 Speaker 2

And I've I've stopped the war.

01:26:29 Speaker 2

And after about.

01:26:30 Speaker 2

For the 1015 minutes, I've come to realize.

01:26:33 Speaker 2

It.

01:26:33 Speaker 2

But I couldn't do that.

01:26:36 Speaker 2

And.

01:26:38 Speaker 2



Show them.

01:26:40 Speaker 2

I getting my gear back on and I stepped out behind the rock and I give them. Come on, you know.

01:26:47 Speaker 2

So then I was still on out in front.

01:26:53 Speaker 2

Within an hour, we had to cross a crossing. A clearing like I told you that the infantryman's most dreaded thing.

01:27:01 Speaker 2

And then there's a wood there.

01:27:05 Speaker 2

But we met German resistance there.

01:27:09 Speaker 2

And.

01:27:10 Speaker 2

We lost.

01:27:12 Speaker 2

Two or three men.

01:27:14 Speaker 2

2-3 killed.

01:27:16 Speaker 2

Before we got to it.

01:27:18 Speaker 2

And I always said.

01:27:20 Speaker 2

I give the men 1015 minutes more life and 10 or 15 minutes rest.

01:27:27 Speaker 2

It was wrong.

01:27:29 Speaker 2

But I felt a little bit good about.

01:27:31 Speaker 1

You stopped the war.

01:27:34 Speaker 1

For those men, and for yourself, for that length of time.

01:27:38 Speaker 1

And give him that much more time in life.

01:27:42 Speaker 2

Because listen now we had deadmen.

01:27:48 Speaker 2

Never said it wasn't right, but I don't regret it.

01:27:56 Speaker 2

I just wish I could.

01:28:00 Speaker 2

Sit there forever, but it didn't work there.

01:28:04 Speaker 1

I think anybody was ever awarded the Combat Infantry Event badge. Could understanding why why you felt the way.

01:28:09 Speaker 1

You.

01:28:09 Speaker 1

Did anybody who was?

01:28:12 Speaker 1

Given that.

01:28:15 Speaker 1

Signing her honor as being able to wear that combat infantry with badge will understand why you want to stop the war. Everybody I've talked to was a Rifleman in World War 2, felt that way. Sure, at one time or another.

01:28:28 Speaker 2

Yeah. But you know what? When I was in Brooklyn, all this last time, and I was talking to basically this one man that was in the artillery. And then there was another.

01:28:36 Speaker 2

A couple of others I talked to that they both told me the same story.

01:28:41 Speaker 2

They said they'd have rear echelon officers.

01:28:45 Speaker 2

That was really the the brains of this thing. The the operations officers and that type of stuff.

01:28:52 Speaker 2

They come up at the front once in a while and of course we knew, they said we only knew when it was coming. We kept them in a pretty secure, secure area and they come up and look around and maybe be gone an hour or so the next time we see him, maybe wearing combat infantry, his badges.

01:29:09 Speaker 1

So even that got cheapened along the way.

01:29:13 Speaker 1

That's too bad. It should have been.

01:29:14 Speaker 1

Only for those.

01:29:15 Speaker 1

Who were actually under enemy fire? Direct fire.

01:29:16 Speaker 2

So much time or something.

01:29:19 Speaker 2

And he said, I've even seen someone medals gone wrong.

01:29:28 Speaker 1

Checking the whole thing.

01:29:29

Yeah.

01:29:30 Speaker 1

I know for the fact that.

01:29:32 Speaker 1

The decorations you received you earned and then some.

01:29:37 Speaker 1

Well, one final question to ask you is your wife's full maiden name?

01:29:44 Speaker 1

And I know in the form that you were married in 1982.

01:29:50 Speaker 1

In Summitville IN and married either November 3rd, possibly 1982.

01:29:54 Speaker 2

My day was what day was we married, dear?

01:29:58 Speaker 1

And.

01:29:59 Speaker 2

Her maiden name was was right.

01:30:02 Speaker 1

RIGHT.

01:30:04 Speaker 2

Yeah.

01:30:05 Speaker 1

And her first name is.

01:30:08 Speaker 1

Your wife, first name. Barbara. Barbara. Right. And you married March 2nd, 1982 in Summitville. And what's your son's name?

01:30:15 Speaker 2

Danny.

01:30:17 Speaker 2

Danielle Danny Lee Danielle.

01:30:19 Speaker 1

And do you have any grandchildren?

01:30:21 Speaker 2

I have one grandson, Mark. OK, he's 21.

01:30:26 Speaker 1

Right.

01:30:27 Speaker 1

Well, thanks very much. I appreciate it very much. I know this is this has gone on, but I want to get your full story and we have and I do appreciate Mr. Swindell, OK channel. Thanks so much for talking to me this.

01:30:36 Speaker 2

Jim.

01:30:40 Speaker 1

Evening. Appreciate it.

01:30:41 Speaker 2

Well, I I hope I haven't ever done it.

01:30:43 Speaker 1

No.

01:30:44 Speaker 2

When I thought.

01:30:46 Speaker 2

If this is going to go for somebody else to listen to someday, I won't tell it like it is.

01:30:50

Right.

01:30:52 Speaker 1

That's right. Well, this this will get a wide audience, I'm sure in years to come. Thanks very much, Sir.