

### **James L. Swindell Interview #3**

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

Before I begin my formal introduction of our featured speaker, I want to call your attention.

00:00:09 Speaker 1

To some Flyers I brought to this meeting, they relate to one of the subjects our speaker will cover today at 7:30 this evening. Mr. Kirk Klein, survivor American soldier and Liberator, will be giving a talk entitled Liberation rebirth of personal reflection at Congregation Beth LZ, Deck 600 W 70th St.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

Here in Indianapolis in conjunction.

00:00:31 Speaker 1

With Yom Hashoah memorial observance and all of you here today are invited to attend Mr. Klein's talk, and again I want to also want to give a special service club. Welcome to the wife of our speaker, welcome Mr. Swindell. Sorry. The conversation did get a little rough from time to time, but we're pleased you could join.

00:00:51 Speaker 1

Us here today.

00:00:53 Speaker 1

I first became aware of our speaker, Mr. Jim Swindell, in a newspaper article that appeared almost a year ago in the Alexandria Times Tribune. I made some extra copies of this article and some of the audience might like to take a copy home. In the article, Mr. Swindell discussed his role in the liberation of the book and Wall concentration camp on April 11th 19.

00:01:14 Speaker 1

4551 years ago last Thursday I made contact with Mr. Swindell and interviewed him for the historical record last July.

00:01:24 Speaker 1

Then we invited him to speak at a memorable session at the Indiana Historical Society's annual meeting last November. In the audience that day was Omer Faust. He suggested to me that Mister Swindell be invited to speak at a service club meeting. I thank Omer for getting the ball rolling.

00:01:42 Speaker 1

Jim Swindell was born in Alexandria, Madison County, Indiana and had attended the local schools. He's been engaged in farming near Alexandria for over 50 years.

00:01:51 Speaker 1

Years.

00:01:52 Speaker 1

During the war, he was primarily a scout in company K, 317th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division. This division participated in four major campaigns and ranks #11 among all U.S. Army divisions of World War 2. In the official list of combat casualties.

00:02:10 Speaker 1

Our speaker distinguished himself on in combat on many occasions.

00:02:14 Speaker 1

As an example, I would like to quote an extract from the citation to the Silver Star. It was presented to him quote to private First class James L Swindell for gallantry in action in Germany on 10 April 1945 in the vicinity of Benders Laban, Germany. PSC Swindell volunteered to eliminate an enemy machine gun.

00:02:34 Speaker 1

After crawling through intense fire and destroying the gun, he aggressively continued on to capture another gun and 21 soldier.

00:02:42 Speaker 1

By using a prisoner to expose other enemy troops, he captured 41 additional Germans. His courage and aggressiveness exemplified the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. Over the course of thirteen years, I've interviewed over 400 men and women who participated in the.

00:03:00 Speaker 1

Second World War.

00:03:01 Speaker 1

But I have a special place in my heart and head for the US Army and U.S. Marine Combat Rifleman who served in that largest of all human.

00:03:09 Speaker 1

Conflicts because men like Jim Swindell opened up their homes and their often painful memories to me. I gained a greater appreciation of what their gallant service has meant to our country and to the world.

00:03:23 Speaker 1

I now fully understand what Ernie Pyle was saying when he wrote the following in Tunisia on May 2nd, 1943. Quote I love the infantry because they are the underdogs. They are the mud, rain, frost

and wind boys. They have no comforts and they even learn to live without the necessities and in the end they are the guise of wars. Can't be won.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

Without UN quote.

00:03:44 Speaker 1

Gentlemen is indeed a great honor and privilege for me to present to you, one of Bernie's guys, Mr. Jim Swindell.

00:04:02 Speaker 3

Don't get excited. This is not all full of stuff for just a few notes. Whenever a speaker gets up and I'm around, I didn't look see, well, how many papers are caring. So I know.

00:04:10 Speaker 3

How long I have to listen to it?

00:04:12 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:04:13 Speaker 3

I thank you.

00:04:14 Speaker 3

Thank you, Doug.

00:04:15 Speaker 3

And thank the service club here for the lovely lunch, which couldn't have come at a more appropriate time. I just paid my taxes. Yes, and I wonder where my next meal was going to come from.

00:04:31 Speaker 3

I agreed to talk to today and to to other people because there's a therapeutic healing for me. For over 40 years I never told anything that happened to me during the service, and then I was encouraged to start.

00:04:46 Speaker 3

Speaking about it.

00:04:47 Speaker 3

And some of the horrible memories that I had through the years at night and wake up screaming, Holling has went away. So if there's anybody out there that is still in having these problems, I would certainly encourage you to speak about them because it certainly has helped me.

00:05:03 Speaker 3

I also do this as I feel like I'm doing in a memorial to those comrades of mine who were killed and wounded ahead of me. They're the true heroes of this war. They were the ones that made it possible for me to do my job because they gave up.

00:05:20 Speaker 3

Of life and I'm going to tell you what the war was like through the eyes of of a a country boy, an 18 year old country boy, as a company sniper and 1st Scout in general. Patton's third Army aids division infantryman.

00:05:38 Speaker 3

I was in training at Fort Hood, Texas, when Hitler's General Rommel made his push and it was finally stopped at Bastone.

00:05:46 Speaker 3

They cut my training to 12 weeks. I only had 12 weeks of training. It took about a month to get from the front lines to to get from Texas to the front lines. That included a three day delay route in route at home, which was around the latter part of December. During that time, my sister.

00:06:06 Speaker 3

They made a rather large first aid kit and she said said you may get a hang nail someday. You said you you take this with you. Well, it bothered me. I thought why should give me home first aid kit? She thinks I'm going to get hurt or.

00:06:20 Speaker 3

You know, but I took the kit and we got ready to ship overseas. We had such large packs, 80 or 90 lbs on her.

00:06:27 Speaker 3

Back.

00:06:28 Speaker 3

I looked at this first aid kit and I started to throw it down and I couldn't let loose of it, so I packed it in my bag and I went overseas with it. We when we landed, when we came across the English.

00:06:40 Speaker 3

Channel it in the France. We were still packing these 80 or 90 LB gears on our back and I noticed because of probably because of the battle of the bulge and the bastone and which by the way, the history tells us we lost 68,000 men in that encounter up there.

00:06:57 Speaker 3

They didn't have any trucks or any transportation for us, so we walked basically all the way from the English Channel to the front lines. And I noticed as it was walking along, we get a break and guys

start throwing stuff out of their packs. You know, they lightening their load. So then I started doing that and I do that and I throw away something come to this first egg kitten. I just couldn't let loose, so I kept it on.

00:07:18 Speaker 3

I got to the front lines on the last of January 1945. I wanted to relate to you a little bit my my experience on the first day they gave me to some Sergeant and he takes me to this little house. They apparently had just captured this little taking over this little small town.

00:07:37 Speaker 3

It takes me to a doorway there and he said these boys and I, we're going to go back here and we're going to rest, you know I said. And here's an Army 45, he said. And the password is so. And so if anybody approaches, yes, the password. If they don't give it, just shoot them. That's all. It's so and and then.

00:07:55 Speaker 3

He and about six of the meanest looking guys I've ever seen in my life walk.

00:07:59 Speaker 3

Back.

00:07:59 Speaker 3

Beside me to go back there and sleep.

00:08:02 Speaker 3

They had huge big beards all over and they was black. They would look like walking ammunition dumps. They they had ammunition slings on their shoulders and grenades clicked along everywhere. And I was wearing big heavy overcoats and and some of them. And they were dirty and muddy and and and some of them even had dried blood on their coats and.

00:08:23 Speaker 3

And little did I realize it at the time that when just to show a few short time, I was going to be looking just like that.

00:08:30 Speaker 3

I had two changes of clothes from January to May.

00:08:34 Speaker 3

And believe me, you get pretty early. My first day actually on the front line, they put me in with a with another man and we was in a bomb crater and pinned down and couldn't move and long in the day. I've seen guys are crawling across like that and going down in a bomb crater. And that's this fella I said, well, them guys going, he said, well, they ran out of water. They're going over the bomb.

00:08:53 Speaker 3

Later and fill their canteens, I said no way man, am I going to and fill my canteen out of that slop water out of.

00:08:59 Speaker 3

That bomb crater.

00:09:01 Speaker 3

Well, we were still pinned down the next morning and and being a young soldier not knowing how to rush it in my.

00:09:06 Speaker 3

My water. I was living over there in Philly. Cantina was a bomb crater like the rest of them. And water always seemed to be a a problem was we was always running out of water in one particular time. But I hadn't had any water for five days. And when we first went over there, they give us a little bottle of. I'm going to say.

00:09:26 Speaker 3

Chlorine pills. I'm not sure what they was. It said when you find water, you put the two pills in. You shake it up, you wait 30 minutes and you do.

00:09:33 Speaker 3

Well, I hadn't had any water for five days and I was starting to dehydrate and was really thirsty. My lips are puckering up and and so we we come across this dried stream bed. There was no water running in it, but an investigation. I found a sump hole over here was a little stagnated water in there so I was so thirsty I went over there and fill my canteen.

00:09:53 Speaker 3

I thought, man, I'm so thirsty. I can't wait on these pills. I popped the two pills in my mouth and drinks the water. I thought, man, I'm going to kill myself now, you know. But I didn't get sickle and I did it on other occasions too.

00:10:05 Speaker 3

Then, then later on, we were we were sitting on the top of 1 Hill and the Germans was on the other side. We couldn't move, they couldn't move. We'd pot, shot at them. Well, they'd pot shot at us. Just have something to do, I think. And we went out of food up there.

00:10:24 Speaker 3

Five days and the German artillery had the backside of the hills he rode in. They couldn't get any supplies up to us, so they kept saying, well, tomorrow the Air Force is going to come in and going to blast them off this other hill over over here. So just hang in there.

00:10:39 Speaker 3

So this went on with excuses for about 5 days and then on the 5th day I look up and here comes the aircrafts about 5 fighter pilot pilots and during this five days I'm sharing a foxhole with another buddy. We're laying side by side at night and try to keep from freezing to death, you know, and starving to death in the daytime. And I find out something about his family and his life history and so forth and what he wants to do when he gets home.

00:11:04 Speaker 3

So we both get out of the hole and we're looking at these aircraft coming in on. They were our aircrafts with red noses. That may mean something to somebody. I heard later they was probably French, I don't know, but.

00:11:15 Speaker 3

He's standing in relation to the plane of coming in probably 10 inches in front of me. These fighter planes opened up on us with our 50 gallon machine guns and the bullets shot right across my feet. They hit him in the leg and and the last bullet went on his head and he dropped in front of me. So I have no animosity to the Air Force, but I just wanted to know that that all Americans wasn't killed by the enemy.

00:11:35 Speaker 3

Over there and.

00:11:38 Speaker 3

Today.

00:11:44 Speaker 3

I'm going to try to relate to you some things today that that maybe you've never heard before or or maybe you don't want to hear them. I don't know. But but a lot of men that that when they died, they start calling for their mothers, their wives, their sweethearts or something like that. On this one particular occasion we was in a partially wooded area of of of a forest.

00:12:02 Speaker 3

We were taking a lot of artillery slamming and we were taking a beating and on out in front of me. I hear this voice start calling for his mother and he says mother, help me help help me and.

00:12:13 Speaker 3

He said said help me, mother. Well, I couldn't take it any longer and I jumped up to go for help for him and off to my right. None. But notice there was a Sergeant Robbie over there. He couldn't apparently take it any further either. So he jumped up and we both ran for him by an artillery shell. Come in about that time.

00:12:31 Speaker 3

And it it hit close to shojin Robbie and it completely decapitated his head. His body fell forward and his helmet and his head rolled out there. Well, that's one of the horrors I've had for years at which I don't have anymore. Now at night and and that stayed with me for a long time.

00:12:48 Speaker 3

You want to hear a little about Beckham booking well? Well, the day I went into booking wall, it was like an 8:00 in the morning, most calmest day I've ever seen on the front over there. No air, no moving. And on up ahead I could see columns of smoke rising up into the sky that be building me. I I didn't know what that was and I didn't understand it.

00:13:08 Speaker 3

And then before we got into the camp, I could smell the stench of burning bodies. I'd been over long enough, and I knew what what it smelled like when somebody was burning.

00:13:18 Speaker 3

So I I approached it by being the first scout I was probably the first one in the leading the group was following me because in the infantry it's it's just the economics is to sacrifice one man, save the other 150. You can always find one man. 150 is a little harder to.

00:13:36 Speaker 3

Ordered to do well, I didn't. By the infantry, we don't travel on the road. I didn't know there was roads for years over there. We go through the woods.

00:13:44 Speaker 3

There's a man shaking his head. He knows.

00:13:46 Speaker 3

What I'm talking about?

00:13:47 Speaker 3

We go through the woods and through the forest and they all meet places where where I come into Brooklyn Wall was a gate on down by the crematorium which is where they burn the bodies. There was a a column of gates there. A post there. There was no gate up at the time. I just walked in. The first thing I seen was a crematorium.

00:14:04 Speaker 3

I go in the back door of the crematorium and and in one area there there's a a tiled area where it looks like they've been doing some kind of surgery or something on them and then I go on up a little bit further and there's where the where the crematorium is and it's it's still hot and.

00:14:23 Speaker 3



They weren't very neat with cleaning up afterwards, there was ashes laying outside the door and parts of bodies that that burner fell out of the furnace while he was burning them. Then there was bodies laying around all outside along the walls.

00:14:40 Speaker 3

Nobody that was alive. I didn't see any alive person anywhere when I went through there. I see. No, we had no resistance at all. Nobody was. I didn't see anybody.

00:14:49 Speaker 3

Then, as my duties first scout, I was continuing on my investigation. I come across this steel building which was rather large. They had taken the clothes off of these people and they lined they'd throw them in this building and they was lined up like 10 feet high. And this huge big building for clothing. The stench in that building was worse than the dead people. It was so terrible. I couldn't stand it in it.

00:15:09 Speaker 3

Standing in there any longer than.

00:15:12

And.

00:15:13 Speaker 3

Then I on my maneuver and on around booking ball there I could see the buildings on up the head and what the the white smoke was. The little stoves that they had in these buildings where they paid, they would get a little cold or something, try to keep them warm besides the smoke that was coming out of the crematorium.

00:15:29 Speaker 3

Then I got to seeing a German insignias and metals and stuff thrown on the ground.

00:15:36 Speaker 3

And so that was my job to chase them. So I was started going out that direction and I went on down towards the railroad track. But I was chasing the Germans by their metals. They was going around. They was guarded by Hitler's elite elite group and their s s men. But they still didn't want to be caught in that place when we took it because they was.

00:15:56 Speaker 3

Getting out of there when I got on down by the railroad station, which is on.

00:15:59 Speaker 3

The.

00:15:59 Speaker 3

Bottom of there was railroad cars down there with bodies just stacked on them like he would card wood or pulp. Factory would ship in in card wood. What their procedure was. I found out and later in later days they had a a.

00:16:14 Speaker 3

A A gas chamber at Dachau out. They would take the prisoners from a book on wall and March them to Dachau. They'd they'd gas them in the gas chamber and then they'd ship them back on box cars and so forth to be burned there at at booking wall. And I found out later when I was back over there last April that the reason we had such a backlog of prisoners.

00:16:34 Speaker 3

Piled up there was because they ran out of coal. The human body won't burn by itself. It's too much moisture and you have to fuel it with with wood or coal or something like that. And that's the reason they had such a backlog of bodies. But prior to me getting there, they had started burning the bodies again.

00:16:50 Speaker 3

On the plane, Bolivia, go over there. I met a a pastor and a Deacon from Canton. OH, and they was bringing back a a fellow by the name of Joe. He was one of the survivors of the book and Ball camp. But he lived in the United States now. And by the way, there's many survivors of the of the concentration camps that live in this part of the country now.

00:17:09 Speaker 3

So they had rented a car. So the first day we went out to the book and while we had the privilege of walking around with this Joe and he related a lot of a lot of instances that happened during the war and his job during the war was he had a little wagon there, not a little wagon. He had a big.

00:17:23 Speaker 3

He'd go around to the barracks and he'd he'd gather up the dead at night, bring him back to the furnace, or dead in the morning and bring him.

00:17:29 Speaker 3

Back to the.

00:17:30 Speaker 3

Furnace to be burned. Well, I seen Joe go over there at this fence and he's going to shoot his shoulders and he backed up and he couldn't take it. And so I said well.

00:17:38 Speaker 3

What's?

00:17:38 Speaker 3

The matter, Joe? He said. Well, on the outside of the compound fence, there was a bear pit.

00:17:43 Speaker 3

Over there, where like you'd see in the surface a cement with a water hole and and that's where they kept the bear.

00:17:49 Speaker 3

And he said he didn't want to talk about it first, and then he finally said, well, that's a bear pit over there. And he said they had live bears in there. He said on Sunday the s s men would bring their wives out there and they get around the bear pit and they'd throw children in there to let the Bears RIP and tear them up for their entertainment.

00:18:08 Speaker 3

And then he said also that if they had a young boy there, or why they marched out a few prisons and they let him shoot a few of them like that, that was that was one way for their entertainment.

00:18:19 Speaker 3

But what? What disturbs me so much about Buchenwald is after we liberated in 1945, the Russians stayed there for five more years and they it's estimated that they killed from 8 to 13,000 Germans in the time that they was there after that.

00:18:38 Speaker 3

I've had people say to me, well, restate that well, I was talking to this pastor Chuck from Canton, OH. Which being the survivor over. And I'd had some interviews and he knew what was going on. And he said to me one time he said, he said, how did you, how did you maintain your sanity?

00:18:55 Speaker 3

People there doing it through all that.

00:18:58 Speaker 3

And I thought, well, if I can't tell a pastor of a church just what I've never said to anybody before in my life, I said, I guess I I don't know what to do. So I said I'd, I'd tell him.

00:19:08 Speaker 3

I said, well, you name it, Chuck and I said, Chuck, I talked to the moon at night. I said I got, I got great, great pleasure in talking to the moon because I was mesmerized with the fact that just 12 hours ago, probably that was looking back on Indiana and Alexander in my hometown, my family and something like.

00:19:25 Speaker 3

I said it was just like getting a letter to me and I said I'd talk to the moon and I'd say, well, how? Thing back home, you know, and I'd I'd talked to her and this Patrick got a big grin on his face. And I said, oh, oh, he thinks I've done flipped over. And he said, well, you know, he said, said, Jim, you've been talking to the Lord and didn't know it. He said the Lord, to communicate, visit with us to the to the.

00:19:45 Speaker 3

Stars.

00:19:47 Speaker 3

So he he understood that, but to me it was great, great comfort to talk to the moon if I didn't see it for two or three nights. I said, hey, what you been? I've been looking for you and all like that and talk to it, you know. And I'd ask thing and I really believe this has been something wrong back home somehow. I don't know that but nothing ever really happened. On one occasion there in relation to the moon.

00:20:07 Speaker 3

We moved at night. We didn't have to generally move too much at night, but on one occasion there we we moved at night. But being a private nobody told me what was going on. I just followed the crowd and done what was.

00:20:17 Speaker 3

Told to do. Apparently they knew we was going to be getting close to the to the enemy. So. So they before we went into this forest there area they said hang on to the man's belt in front of you. They said that's the only way you're going to be able to keep up. No way to know where we're at. So I was the last man on to call him. I had to hold the man's belt in front of me.

00:20:37 Speaker 3

Moving along and we went into this forest and it was black. I mean, it was so black. You couldn't see? No.

00:20:43 Speaker 3

Well, as near as I can figure out today, they went down a ravine in the Creek and walked up the Creek. And as this man in front of me, he went down the runny ravine. He slipped.

00:20:53 Speaker 3

He slipped and when he did, I jerked lost contact with him and I lost hold of his belt. Well, I assumed that they went up the bank on the other side, so I went up the bank on the other side that my my buddies went up the Creek. I'm walking around out there and I didn't want to dare scream or holler or notify him because I didn't told him not to do that, you know? And then you didn't want to attract attention.

00:21:13 Speaker 3

So I'm walking around in this forest up there.

00:21:17 Speaker 3

And suddenly I stumble over something. A whole bunch of German language speaks up, and I apparently had fallen, had walked into a A German encampment. Well, I just froze. I didn't move. I just stood there. And then this guy talking germanism in there and then pretty soon they settled all

down, you know. And they wasn't talking very. It's going quite loud. I guess somebody was mad because somebody was up walking around or something.

00:21:38 Speaker 3

So when they settled down, I walked on a little.

00:21:40 Speaker 3

Bit.

00:21:40 Speaker 3

Further further and I stumbled over another farm. Well, the German chatter all started up again and I've just froze and stayed there. So then when it's died down, I walked on out of them and when I got far enough I thought out of there. Then my speech picked up. I spent the rest that night out there in that forest, leaned up against the tree, wondering what's going to happen when when daylight.

00:21:59 Speaker 3

Come. I thought. I hated to see daylight come because I might be sitting in the middle of German encampment. I don't know where all night. You know when daylight come. Fortunately, there was nobody.

00:22:07 Speaker 3

Around.

00:22:07 Speaker 3

There was nothing there, so I spent the rest of that day trying to find my way out.

00:22:13 Speaker 3

Well, and it got night again the next night at dark as all get out. I couldn't move. Next day I spent trying to find my way out of that forest. In the meantime, I'd run out of food on the second day, and then on the and then on the night of the third day, the moon come out lit up the forest. It's real bright. I could see what I was doing.

00:22:32 Speaker 3

I thought, Lord, I said moon. Where have you been? I sure need you, I said. I gotta get out of this thing, and I don't know how to.

00:22:38 Speaker 3

You know, so I had enough foresight to think, well, the moon kind of comes up in the east and goes down the West. I don't want to. I don't want to use that as a coordinator and go West with him because I might end up in Russia, China someplace. So I basically that night, the third night, I could see to get around, I basically used the moon as a, as a grid to find my way out of there.

00:22:57 Speaker 3

So I kept walking towards the moon until the moon got to my back, and then I kept it to my back. And lo and behold, 1 morning come. I walked out of the woods so that so the moon helped me again in that particular location, and to get out of that wood, I really thought I was going to die in that wood. I was running. I run out of food and this survival thing says eat bugs.

00:23:16 Speaker 3

Some berries, man. You don't find no bumps and berries in in December or January, December or March in the woods, you know.

00:23:23 Speaker 3

You start getting, putting, putting, putting hungry, but the only thing that kept me going during that time was you see, I was only 15 years old in December when we bomb Pearl Harbor. So I knew what civilian life was for about a year and a half during the war.

00:23:42 Speaker 3

And I knew what it was like when that when that olive grab vehicle come to Alexandria, you know, hunting somebody to tell them that they had been killed or.

00:23:49 Speaker 3

Died.

00:23:49 Speaker 3

Or something. So the only thing that kept stirring me to to keep it going was I thought at one time I thought, no, this ain't too bad. I ain't had nobody shoot at me now for two.

00:23:57 Speaker 3

Days I'm feeling.

00:23:58 Speaker 3

Pretty safe. I'm getting awful hungry. But I didn't want my mother and my.

00:24:02 Speaker 3

Father to get a missing in action notice.

00:24:05 Speaker 3

Which which would have happened eventually. So I tipped trying to find my way out of out of there because I didn't want them to to to find that then.

00:24:19 Speaker 3

Then later, when the war was over, they deactivated the 80th Division and by being young and not being overseas only from January till well, my combat time was from January to May and I was in combat all that time. Except they say for about 3 days we was in Nuremberg on a rest, but I don't really remember that.

00:24:39 Speaker 3

But anyway, I didn't have enough points to go back, so they sent. They deactivated the 80s division over there and sent them home as as individual and they sent me to an outpost somewhere. I don't even know the name of it now, but the first day what they done was the American forces set up checkpoints on the road and we check the civilian passes. This is after the war.

00:25:00 Speaker 3

Which sect civilian passes on about 203 hundred feet on down the road. The Russians had a checkpoint where they'd.

00:25:06 Speaker 3

Check check passes, you know. Well, my first day out there along about evening, I heard there was Russians getting a little boyish Bush just down there and it's getting kind of loud. Well, long. Even along towards evening. It was later in the evening. It was kind of a moonlight night. And I guess the Russians decided they wanted to declare war on the United States. So they fired into our camp.

00:25:27 Speaker 3

The first one that killed was the Sergeant in charge and wounded the buddy, so that left five of us there and this out. Check post. And so I said, well, what are we going to do? And I said, well, I'm fighting back. I'm not going to let him annihilate me. So during the night, we plunked back and forth and and and I had our own private little war with the.

00:25:44 Speaker 3

Well, they got as the night got on and on they got a little more tankered up and got a little bit braver. Well, by morning come there wasn't there wasn't any, wasn't any Russians left down there? At least nobody was moving. Well, they sent. They sent a detail out from the headquarters and we told them what happened. There was five of us left. They separated us. Five men. We never got to talk to each other.

00:26:04 Speaker 3

They put me in a Jeep and said you go back to headquarters and he said you report to captain so and so at headquarters.

00:26:09 Speaker 3

So I did that and then reality hit me. You know, I thought what's going to happen here? We've had our own private little war. We've annihilated a few Russians. You know, there's going to be a court martial over this. I said I'm going to jail. I'm never going to get out. I'll never get home. I'm. I'm doomed, you know, so and. And so they took me right up to the captains, the captain's office.

00:26:29 Speaker 3

And I remember stepping on stopping on the step. And I said this is the last free breath I'm going to ever have because I'll be in jail in an hour from.

00:26:35 Speaker 3

Well, I go in and shoot the captain and the captain gets up out of his chair, walks around in front of me. He hands me a carton of cigarettes, and I don't even smoke.

00:26:42 Speaker 3

But he gives.

00:26:43 Speaker 3

Me a carton of cigarettes and he had his hands, me paper. And she said you're going to Nurnberg. Never once ever mentioned that. I never seen any of the other four fellows that was involved in it. So.

00:26:56 Speaker 3

That was another little instant, and that's how I come to be sent to Nirn, sent to the Nuremberg whether was conducting the Nuremberg trial for the war criminals.

00:27:05 Speaker 3

First thing they've done, they took me down. They gave me a white helmet strapped to a white white belt and a white pistol on me and shined up my clothes and give me new boots and slipped me all up and took me out there and and in a Jeep. And they said now Supreme Court Justice Jackson is staying in this house there. He's he's a prosecutor for the American forces.

00:27:24 Speaker 3

He said you're to be a house guard gate guard here for swimming Court Justice Jackson. That was a kind of a red brick. Three story house with a a big iron fence around it. Well, long towards the evening. I'm sitting out there standing out there myself at Gate Garden. Here comes this big black limousine down the road.

00:27:40 Speaker 3

I thought it might have been, might have been Justice Jackson, but I didn't know. But anyway, the chauffeur drove right through me. He didn't stop to be acknowledged. I didn't know Justice Jackson or the chauffeur or the automobile from anybody else. So I fired 2 quick shots over the head of Justice Jackson's limousine.

00:28:01 Speaker 3

And I think about that now. I think I'm glad I had the foresight to shoot over his head because my when I was.

00:28:07 Speaker 3

Boy, MY2 oldest brother is 1516 years older than I was and they taught me how to hunt rabbits and shoot a gun. That type of stuff. And they said now you don't shoot until you see for sure what you shoot and onions. You don't shoot a a rabbit and that's because he sitting because he might be



infected. And he said you want to, you want to give him a sporting chance? Well, I found out that was all right.

00:28:28 Speaker 3

Shooting Rabbit back in Indiana, but he didn't survive too well over in the front lines. You shot or what moved you shot at what moved and you asked later what it was. So. But I didn't have the foresight to shoot over.

00:28:36 Speaker 3

Had Justice Jackson out on the floor, the briefcase down there, and when he looked up he was looking to the back window and I had. I had him, him and the chauffeur and in the sights of my rifle. Well, the chauffeur, he's a he's a talking 900 words of men. He said this is Justice Jackson. Don't shoot. Don't shoot. It says my fault. He said I should have stopped. He said said I'm sorry. As I said said that's justice.

00:28:57 Speaker 3

And I said, well, prove it. Show me who they are. Under the shower. He gave me some. Yep. Sure. No, Sergeant. So and so at some point. And the judge, he gave me a piece of. He gave me a piece of paper. Said he was Justice Robert Jackson.

00:29:09 Speaker 3

So I said, OK, you can pass, well, the the Justice Jackson stuck his hand out to win and he said said I want to thank you, soldier said I'm glad you're out here and we over there where the judge was a stand there was a volleyball court volleyball court.

00:29:28 Speaker 3

Were there and some of the officers and men know off duty would go there and play volleyball and Justice Jackson would come out there and play volleyball ball with us and we we more or less kind of choose up size and the judge always wanted me on his side for some reason not only what he thought.

00:29:44 Speaker 3

Always, always a little safer that.

00:29:47 Speaker 3

Pay for that way or what?

00:29:49 Speaker 3

But but but I wasn't involved with it, but the unit that I was, which is the 1st Army at that time, the big grid one. We also was holding the prisoners and we had Goring in incarcerated down there too. And I wasn't my duty to guard him, but I was allowed to go down and see him and I was going to go down there and see old Goring pinned up in that cage.

00:30:10 Speaker 3

And that's the night that supper took. The poison killed himself, and I've always held that against him too, because I want to.

00:30:17 Speaker 3

I found out later there was a there was a an English speaking German down there. So I I in meantime I picked up a a German light meter which at that time.

00:30:29 Speaker 3

At that time, the cameras wasn't sophisticated as they are are now, and if you want a good picture, you had a light mute. You read a light, mute and set your camera accordingly. Well, I went down under this, found this English speaking present we had there and I told him, would he translate this into English? He said he would not give him packs of cigarettes for it. Well, I go back the next day and.

00:30:50 Speaker 3

And he'd have a little more translate translated and I'll give you another pack of cigars.

00:30:55 Speaker 3

And I found out this is Vernon Vernon von Brown.

00:31:00 Speaker 3

There was 22 of these people that were going to prosecute it. Prosecute was getting amnesty to come over to the United States and and they were brains and then on helping our in our space program. Well, that's the same \*\*\*\* and gone brown that ended up ahead of our space program, which over here in this country over there in this.

00:31:17 Speaker 3

Country.

00:31:23 Speaker 3

March the 13th was the only day I really remember what day it was that I had. Any idea what conception the day was on the night of the 12th.

00:31:31 Speaker 3

We'd set up a perimeter and we we was in foxholes and another company was off to my off to my right. Of course it wasn't. Not unusual for me to spend the night in the foxhole because from January till May I spent less than less than 10 days with the roof under over my head. The rest of the time I spent in the foxhole.

00:31:48 Speaker 3

Well, when you set up a perimeter like that with the firepower, nobody supposed to sleep at all time, you know, supposed to be somebody always awake.

00:31:58 Speaker 3

Well, my guard duty at that particular night was around 2:00 in the morning and off to my right. I heard some shuffling down in that way, but I couldn't see any. It was really dark night.

00:32:07 Speaker 3

And then the next morning, when it got daylight, everybody got up at daylight and wondered where you going to live another day and who was out there going to bang you today. You know, I looked off to my right and I didn't see any movement down there in this other area. It was another company. So I walked on down there. And during that night, we got about two inches of fresh snow on the ground.

00:32:24 Speaker 3

Two inches of fresh snow on the ground.

00:32:26 Speaker 3

And before I got down there, I seen these big red spots in the snow. I thought that's not going to be good. And I got down there. The Germans had slipped through it.

00:32:34 Speaker 3

Slip to our lines that, that, that night and they cut the throats of about five guys down there. Then later that later that that's not a pretty sight the next that that same morning we advanced off into into attack. And soon after that we'd taken some prisoners and for some reason.

00:32:54 Speaker 3

Which I generally never got that job, but I was sent to the rear with a bunch of prisoners with another thaw.

00:33:00 Speaker 3

And we got back down the hill to the rear and it had a it had more or less set of encampment up down there and.

00:33:09 Speaker 3

We put the prisoners in the compound and probably because they knew of somebody, knew I was the first scout and the sniper or something. I was leading about another 100 and some men back up the hill to go back up to the front and from this encampment there was a near a road that goes up there like like that. Well, the Germans weren't dumb. They waited till I got to the top of that and they still had.

00:33:29 Speaker 3

Artillery out there someplace and they laid everything in on as they had. They just slaughtered everybody from, including me, from all the way.

00:33:35 Speaker 3

Yeah.

00:33:36 Speaker 3

Well, what it did was the artillery shell to come in close to me and would knock me unconscious. This is like in mid.

00:33:43 Speaker 3

Morning.

00:33:45 Speaker 3

Mid afternoon I've become, I've become conscious again. I woke up and and when you live with a rifle in your hand and you live with it and you sleep with it and you do everything with it, you never let down. And the first thing I do, I start flushing around for my rifle.

00:33:57 Speaker 3

I'll find my rifle over there. This artillery piece shell had splintered all the wood off of it. There was, the stalk was gone, the wood. The four piece was all gone. And my buddy, he's still laying down there. He can't. He, he's out. He's still out.

00:34:09 Speaker 3

But I didn't see any visual damage to it, so I turned him over and there in the back and his rib cage in his back, he looked like he took a giant ice cream scoop, and justice took a big chunk out like that. Meat bones, skin and everything just as smooth as any surgeon could ever do it. I look into this hole and I see pulsation in there. I thought, well, he's still alive. Well, they issue you a little two by three pack that you're supposed to.

00:34:30 Speaker 3

Used for first aid. Well, I knew that mine and his together wouldn't patch that thing. So then I was still carrying the first aid kit. I didn't have anything else. I didn't have no toiletries and basically anything else. So everything we had was in.

00:34:41 Speaker 3

Our.

00:34:42 Speaker 3

Jacket I took the first day.

00:34:44 Speaker 3

Kit.

00:34:45 Speaker 3

And put a patch on that and then took ours and his and eyes and put made it heavier because I felt like he shouldn't be sucking air through that now. I think, well, what am I going to do with him now? And just like, as if the Lord had answered my question up popped 2 German soldiers out there about 100 feet from me. They've been in a bomb crater. Well, they didn't fire on me and I didn't fire on them because I want.

00:35:07 Speaker 3

Of them. So they looked like they wanted to surrender. So I went out there and got those two soldiers and first thing I done was take their gun away from and took the shells out of them and bring them back up here to my friend. I took their two rifles and made a a sling out of out of my blanket and his blanket and I. And we have this universal language that that if you point a gun at somebody's head and you make motion, they get a pretty good idea what you're talking about, you know.

00:35:29 Speaker 3

Everybody pretty well understands it. I don't care what nationality, so I motioned to him that they were going to carry him back down the hill. Well, we got about 100 feet back down, down the hill. And there was still a German artillery piece sitting over there. He dropped the shell in on us.

00:35:43 Speaker 3

They dropped him on the roadway and I did. And jumping aside, it's that same as I did, but they were just doing one at a time and then it got them back up, started down the hill again, got about another 150 feet and flopped another. And then also we did the same thing and got up again and got him another 100 feet down the road and they flopped another then on I tried to get the germs up the next time said 9/9.

00:36:03 Speaker 3

9 They're not going no more. They've had it. They wouldn't going no more.

00:36:06 Speaker 3

I thought, well, what am I going to do now? You know? So like I said, we have as universal language. I fired two shots of defeat and the next one at the head and they figured their chances of carrying the soldier was better than than the other route because they did drop a couple more lobs of shells in on us before we got back down the hill.

00:36:21 Speaker 3

Put the put the prisoners in the compound. Took him to A to an aid station and I later found out that that that he did live and he survived. But if I contribute the fact that this first aid kit that I just couldn't throw away all those all those times that my sister had given.

00:36:41 Speaker 3

And more or less contribute that to the fact that.

00:36:43 Speaker 3

Saved his life.

00:36:45 Speaker 3

Now my sister is not a nun, but her name is Teresa's sister Teresa, named, named after the Catholic named Teresa.

00:37:04 Speaker 3

I think I pretty well covered what I've got time involved here.

00:37:10 Speaker 3

I came back to the United States on my 20th birthday, June the 26th, 1946, went over when I was 18.

00:37:19 Speaker 3

I thank you for your time.

00:37:37 Speaker 4

Jim Swindell, I can guarantee you in this group there are very few standing ovations that I have seen in some 30 years here. You received one.

00:37:52 Speaker 4

And let me say thank you, Jim. It's men like you men in this room.

00:37:58 Speaker 4

Who enabled us to celebrate VE Day and VJ day, the salt of the Earth Day? John Q. Citizen from the farmlands of Indiana, the cities of Brooklyn, wherever they may be. It's men like you and men in this room who allowed us to celebrate VE and VJ day.

00:38:18 Speaker 4

Congratulations and thank you very much. Again, I do have a couple of a couple of notes here.

00:38:26 Speaker 4

Jim Green says the Red Committee will be meeting right under the flag.

00:38:30 Speaker 4

I don't know what's that indicative of, but something and Johnny Kleinstein. But you have something that you'd like to say yes.

00:38:38 Speaker 2

Flu.

00:38:39 Speaker 2

Not going to meet today at all. I would. I would like to see Andy Baker at the meeting.

00:38:44 Speaker 2

I like.

00:38:48 Speaker 3

Right.

00:38:49 Speaker 4

Thank you, Johnny.

00:38:51 Speaker 4

Mrs. Wendell, we thank you for joining us today. We're honored by your presence, Jim Swindell. Thank you again for an outstanding program. Gentlemen, we are adjourned.

00:39:02

Yeah.

00:39:14 Speaker 4

Here are those sheets.