

Nathan T. Tagmeyer Interview #1

Company B, 319th Inf Reg

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Andrew M. Mapes)

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

00:00:00 Speaker 1

World War 2, Victory Museum in Auburn IN.

00:00:02 Speaker 1

I'm with Nate. Nathan L Tag Meyer of Fort Wayne IN who is a World War 2.

00:00:07 Speaker 1

That served in the European theater with the 80th Infantry Division, three 19th Regiment of Bee Company, from June 30th, 1942 until his honorable discharge on June 8th, 1946.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

At the rank of staff Sergeant. All right, Nate, can you tell me about your early life of?

00:00:27 Speaker 1

And where you were born.

00:00:29 Speaker 2

I was born on the.

00:00:31 Speaker 2

3212 Broadway at Park Lane.

00:00:36 Speaker 2

And that July, the 4th, 1921.

00:00:39 Speaker 1

OK. Is the is the half still there?

00:00:41 Speaker 2

The house is still there.

00:00:43 Speaker 1

OK.

00:00:43 Speaker 2

There's no plaque on the door, but the house is.

00:00:48 Speaker 1

Can you tell me your parents names?

00:00:51 Speaker 2

My.

00:00:51 Speaker 2

My dad was Leonard Nagmeer and my mother was Velma genre tegg.

00:00:57 Speaker 1

OK.

00:00:58 Speaker 1

And they're eventually divorced.

00:01:01 Speaker 2

They were divorced in August of 1933, if I'm not mistaken, or 303434.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

OK.

00:01:12 Speaker 1

Alright. Do you or them remarry?

00:01:15 Speaker 2

Did.

00:01:15 Speaker 1

He of them get married again.

00:01:18 Speaker 2

Yes, my dad remarried, had a son, Daniel, and then his wife died, and he remarried again and had these other children * ****.

00:01:32 Speaker 2

And four daughters.

00:01:34 Speaker 1

OK.

00:01:35 Speaker 1

What about your mother?

00:01:36 Speaker 2

She never remarried you.

00:01:38 Speaker 1

When we married, OK.

00:01:42 Speaker 1

Now you live with your.

00:01:44 Speaker 2

My mother and I live with her sister and brother-in-law and Jacob.

00:01:50 Speaker 2

Lived there for a long time.

00:01:52 Speaker 1

It just in four way in there, OK.

00:01:53 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:01:57 Speaker 1

Well, divorces weren't very common at that time.

00:01:59 Speaker 2

No, it was not very common.

00:02:02 Speaker 2

For sure.

00:02:03 Speaker 1

OK.

00:02:04 Speaker 2

It.

00:02:04 Speaker 2

There was kind of a stigma attached to it at that time.

00:02:10 Speaker 1

What did your father do for a living?

00:02:12 Speaker 2

Well, that was the one of the reasons for the divorce. She didn't do much of anything.

00:02:18 Speaker 2

Our boys joked that he saw the Depression common and lost his job before the depression.

00:02:26 Speaker 2

Now, after their divorce, he got a job at International Harvester and worked there for 25 years. I think until his death he almost worked up to the day died.

00:02:35 Speaker 1

OK.

00:02:39 Speaker 2

Think he?

00:02:40 Speaker 2

We found him dead on a sunny morning.

00:02:43 Speaker 2

And I think he had not gone to work that Friday.

00:02:48 Speaker 2

But that's only that was the only indication that he was hail like that.

00:02:54 Speaker 1

And your.

00:02:55 Speaker 1

You said your mother worked for Pollock brothers.

00:02:58 Speaker 2

Brother said it was a.

00:03:01 Speaker 2

She used when she first.

00:03:03 Speaker 2

They made mostly smocks, I think, but it was on a corner of Pearl and Main St.

00:03:11 Speaker 2

A vacant lot now right across from the.

00:03:16 Speaker 2

Senior Center, OK.

00:03:19 Speaker 1

And your father was in the military.

00:03:21 Speaker 1

Well.

00:03:22 Speaker 2

Yeah, he was a Navy man.

00:03:23 Speaker 2

I come from a whole family of Navy men.

00:03:26 Speaker 2

I'm the only black.

00:03:27 Speaker 1

That's OK.

00:03:30 Speaker 2

He was in the Navy during World War One, in a little while after.

00:03:38 Speaker 2

And then he went back.

00:03:39 Speaker 2

At World War.

00:03:40 Speaker 2

He couldn't stand them, having a war, not being in it. So he went back in the Navy and served down there at Bunker Hill Naval Air Station.

00:03:52 Speaker 2

Asian.

00:03:53 Speaker 2

I think he was scheduled then. That was his title, but he really taught a class in seamanship to these young squirre.

00:04:01

OK.

00:04:06 Speaker 2

Just in the name.

00:04:08 Speaker 1

Well, at least there was one army guy in the family. I'm wrong.

00:04:10 Speaker 1

Got myself so.

00:04:13 Speaker 1

Can you tell me about your siblings?

00:04:16 Speaker 2

Well, my brother, my oldest brother Dan, is 18 years younger than I am.

00:04:21 Speaker 2

He lives up in Wisconsin as.

00:04:25 Speaker 2

He's a house painter, an interior painter, you know, and also has a small farm. And in ****, ** best brother.

00:04:35 Speaker 2

Worked for. He was in the wire build business.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

Worked. Started it.

00:04:40 Speaker 2

You'd have to talk to him about that. But he started with JE.

00:04:44 Speaker 2

But he got me a wire engine engineer.

00:04:48 Speaker 2

He just retired a couple.

00:04:51 Speaker 2

Years ago and he he lives over on Park Ave.

00:04:54 Speaker 2

Fort Wayne.

00:04:55 Speaker 1

OK.

00:04:56 Speaker 2

And then the.

00:04:58 Speaker 2

My Sister Nancy, she was born down in.

00:05:04 Speaker 2

Kokomo that was close to that Bunker Hill Naval Air Station after dad lived and she was born down there.

00:05:09 Speaker 1

OK.

00:05:11 Speaker 2

She lives in Richmond IN.

00:05:14 Speaker 2

And Sigrid was the next one.

00:05:20 Speaker 2

And she now lives.

00:05:22 Speaker 2

I think it's called cop.

00:05:26 Speaker 2

Collegeville or someplace like that in in.

00:05:32 Speaker 2

Pennsylvania. And I think she's an ordained minister.

00:05:35 Speaker 2

Know her husband is.

00:05:38 Speaker 1

YouTube.

00:05:39 Speaker 2

And.

00:05:42 Speaker 2

And Peggy, the Peggy lives in.

00:05:44 Speaker 2

She lives not too far from **** and the rest of them and.

00:05:51 Speaker 2

The youngest one, Jane, lives over on Packard not far from the house we lived in to human depression.

00:05:59 Speaker 1

Cheer.

00:06:01 Speaker 2

She has four.

00:06:01 Speaker 2

There's a bunch of children.

00:06:06 Speaker 2

She had two * **** had three, and.

00:06:12 Speaker 2

Sigrid had two Peggy had two and.

00:06:19 Speaker 2

Dean has four and I think, well, no, I don't think I know darn well. Danny had four boys.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

I.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

We thought they could walk through the Grand Canyon that bust something, they.

00:06:33 Speaker 1

Well, even even though the divorce your family kept close then.

00:06:40 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:06:42 Speaker 2

I soon after.

00:06:45 Speaker 2

The divorce it wasn't.

00:06:46 Speaker 2

It wasn't a thing that the court had ordered, but my parents decided I would visit my dad every.

00:06:55 Speaker 2

Wednesday night. So I would go over there every Wednesday night to have dinner with them, and that went on. And when the war was over, I continued with that. And then when when the.

00:06:56

Hmm.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Kids, mother.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Dad died when he was 60.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

And.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

They were like Jane was a Jane was only nine years old, as I recall.

00:07:20

Mm.

00:07:20 Speaker 2

And then.

00:07:23 Speaker 2

Their mother died in 1964 or.

00:07:28 Speaker 2

She was only 55 years old, so they had been orphans for quite.

00:07:32 Speaker 2

Long time.

00:07:34 Speaker 2

And dad? So my wife and.

00:07:37 Speaker 2

We never adopted them or lived with them. But you know we.

00:07:42 Speaker 2

Close to.

00:07:44 Speaker 1

OK, you said you went to quite a few elementary schools.

00:07:48 Speaker 1

You can you tell me about?

00:07:51 Speaker 2

That.

00:07:52 Speaker 2

A little bit.

00:07:52 Speaker 2

I.

00:07:53 Speaker 2

We lived on Fairfield right across the street from the fire station.

00:07:57 Speaker 1

There.

00:07:58 Speaker 2

And.

00:07:59 Speaker 2

I started to hold in school.

00:08:01 Speaker 2

I went to school, started as the word.

00:08:04

I.

00:08:04 Speaker 2

Went for one week and then they moved over to 628 W.

00:08:10 Speaker 2

Street.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

And I went to Jefferson School.

00:08:15 Speaker 2

All of.

00:08:16 Speaker 2

The rest of kindergarten, and I think perhaps all of the 1st grade.

00:08:22 Speaker 2

Then we moved on to 1111 W.

00:08:25 Speaker 2

And I went to Washington school.

00:08:30 Speaker 2

And then I think it must have been 1932. We moved to this House on.

00:08:38 Speaker 2

On Packard and I went to sell plain school.

00:08:43 Speaker 2

Until the divorce and, well, not until the divorce.

00:08:47 Speaker 2

They broke up housekeeping in 1932.

00:08:52 Speaker 2

And then that's when I moved with my uncle and we.

00:08:58 Speaker 2

I went to South Lane, then until I think I the 7th grade, I went to Harrison Hill and finished up.

00:09:08 Speaker 2

School at Harrison Hill and then my aunt and uncle bought a house on.

00:09:14 Speaker 2

Lexington court. And so I went to South.

00:09:18

I.

00:09:19 Speaker 2

All the rest of I didn't have to change High Street.

00:09:24 Speaker 1

Well, arts always been something in your life. I did.

00:09:29 Speaker 1

Did you actually start getting?

00:09:31 Speaker 1

Doing art. It was that during school or was it just something you did on your own or?

00:09:35 Speaker 2

Well, it's doing artwork.

00:09:37 Speaker 1

Yeah. Was it kind of?

00:09:38 Speaker 2

So my my.

00:09:39 Speaker 2

Could draw my mother could.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

Just never entered my head that I couldn't.

00:09:43 Speaker 2

I just drew.

00:09:46 Speaker 1

You just drew.

00:09:47

Yeah.

00:09:48 Speaker 1

Did did anything in high school.

00:09:50 Speaker 1

Of push that along or.

00:09:51 Speaker 2

No, I didn't take art in high school and I can't explain why, except that I thought that I would be put in a position where.

00:10:00 Speaker 2

I would be compared to other people and I just didn't want to do that.

00:10:03 Speaker 1

Hmm, just don't want.

00:10:06 Speaker 1

Did you do any sports or other extra cricket activities?

00:10:09 Speaker 2

No, I'm. I'm the least athletic man in North America.

00:10:16 Speaker 1

So what else did you do in your leisure time then?

00:10:20 Speaker 2

Well, I was.

00:10:23 Speaker 2

I was.

00:10:24 Speaker 2

I had gone from the time I was a.

00:10:26 Speaker 2

Boy, about 3 years old, I'd gone to the South main United Brother Church and I was involved in all their activities.

00:10:35 Speaker 2

Would be their the minister's son Al shoulder was my.

00:10:39 Speaker 2

Closest friend and so.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

What we did together was pretty much what I did all the time.

00:10:46 Speaker 1

OK. Umm.

00:10:48 Speaker 1

And so then you graduated from high school.

00:10:51 Speaker 1

Didn't go on to college or anything.

00:10:54 Speaker 1

You started an art school at Regal CIG.

00:10:57 Speaker 1

Was above Regal cigar store?

00:10:58 Speaker 2

Upon Regal Cigar store he has.

00:11:00 Speaker 1

When you're when you're 18 years.

00:11:02 Speaker 1

Can you tell me?

00:11:02 Speaker 2

I was about 18, I think, yeah.

00:11:06 Speaker 2

The strange thing there was a boy who's dead, now named.

00:11:11 Speaker 2

Well, shouldn't stirred there, because I can't think about his name. But but he had to be a really.

00:11:17 Speaker 2

A successful watercolor artist.

00:11:18 Speaker 1

Oh really?

00:11:19 Speaker 2

Was.

00:11:19 Speaker 2

He and I were together at that school.

00:11:23 Speaker 2

I don't know of anybody else who went there that.

00:11:27 Speaker 2

Went into artwork professionally but.

00:11:30 Speaker 1

Now, is it any particular medium that they offered?

00:11:33 Speaker 1

It just kind of.

00:11:34 Speaker 2

Well, no, he this Mr. Dodge. He would give you lessons in cartooning, and that's what I took.

00:11:42 Speaker 2

Or watercolor or lettering, or anything you wanted to know.

00:11:46 Speaker 2

OK.

00:11:47 Speaker 1

So he was kind of Jack of all trades then when he.

00:11:49 Speaker 1

Our all right. Well.

00:11:54 Speaker 1

Let's see. Can we go back a little bit to the depression?

00:12:00 Speaker 1

What moment did you really notice the depression start to start to set in or was there any particular moment?

00:12:09 Speaker 1

What time will tell them about?

00:12:09 Speaker 2

People, people at one time I would be an interview. Did that girl ask me what pleasant memories you have or what memories have you ever your childhood?

00:12:19 Speaker 2

And then all truth.

00:12:20 Speaker 2

I don't have any. My between my parents not getting along and the depression. That's what I remember being.

00:12:28 Speaker 1

Oh really?

00:12:31 Speaker 2

My folks are doing all the time.

00:12:34 Speaker 1

Did you notice anything in community then?

00:12:39 Speaker 1

Banks closing any of that?

00:12:41 Speaker 2

Well, other than the fact that Dad was always out of work, I don't.

00:12:46 Speaker 2

Never had any money in the bank.

00:12:48 Speaker 2

Don't know.

00:12:49 Speaker 2

Never had any money to put in the bank so I could close the banks and made no difference to him.

00:12:52

She's.

00:12:56 Speaker 1

All right.

00:12:58 Speaker 1

Well then.

00:13:00 Speaker 1

What did you know about what?

00:13:01 Speaker 1

Going on in Europe?

00:13:04 Speaker 1

Hitler's invasion of Poland 90 years.

00:13:06 Speaker 2

Newspapers were full of that.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

I can remember when I was working at the General Electric, when President Roosevelt said that he assured the mothers that their sons wouldn't fight.

00:13:20

Yeah.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

Oh, the irony.

00:13:23 Speaker 2

I took not a comfort from that.

00:13:26 Speaker 1

Uh huh.

00:13:28 Speaker 1

So that was kind of a question I had before Pearl Harbor, did you?

00:13:33 Speaker 1

You even come to your mind that eventually you would be over there.

00:13:36 Speaker 2

Well, not over there I.

00:13:38 Speaker 2

Sure, I'd be drafted, but I can remember my mother got to worry and I said, oh, don't worry about that.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

80% of the guys in the army never see the enemy anyway.

00:13:49 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

I didn't know I'd be one of the other 20%.

00:13:55 Speaker 1

So you knew quiet Bill was going on in Europe then, but.

00:14:00 Speaker 1

Did you did it concern you at all?

00:14:03 Speaker 1

Just another thing in the news.

00:14:05

Who are?

00:14:05 Speaker 2

Well, I.

00:14:06 Speaker 2

I would think it concerned me, but it wasn't.

00:14:10 Speaker 2

Was the budget posture I didn't worry about it that much, you know.

00:14:12

Read it.

00:14:15 Speaker 1

And then Pearl Harbor came.

00:14:19 Speaker 2

Well, I was laying on the living room floor listening to the Chicago Bears football game on the radio, and they interrupted the broadcast and said Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

00:14:32 Speaker 2

And that was a concern because **** and I had an uncle who was a Chief Warrant Officer on the Arizona.

00:14:41 Speaker 2

Fortunately, it was his weekend off and he was he immediately rushed to the ship and he wasn't there when it was sun.

00:14:45 Speaker 1

Huh.

00:14:52 Speaker 1

How about that?

00:14:54 Speaker 1

So what was your reaction to hearing that other than worrying about your uncle?

00:15:00 Speaker 1

You.

00:15:00 Speaker 1

Oh, no, here we go.

00:15:01 Speaker 2

Well, I I.

00:15:02 Speaker 2

Was aware that we were at war and I was 20 years old.

00:15:06 Speaker 2

It looked obvious that I'd have to go in.

00:15:12 Speaker 1

So you registered on the 16th of February 42 and not not too much long after about four months, you were actually sworn in.

00:15:24 Speaker 2

On on the 30th of June, I was actually sworn in, yes.

00:15:29 Speaker 1

So not quite 21 yet. These this guy here for your birthday.

00:15:33 Speaker 1

So what was your mindset at this time?

00:15:39 Speaker 2

I don't I I don't know that I was worried.

00:15:43 Speaker 2

I'd always played more and played with.

00:15:45 Speaker 2

I suppose I was kind of excited about it and yeah.

00:15:48 Speaker 1

Yeah. So it was kind of an adventure maybe.

00:15:56 Speaker 2

Yeah, that's what it amounted to at that time, yeah.

00:15:58 Speaker 1

It's.

00:15:59 Speaker 1

Kind of the romanticism of going off the war and all that, the.

00:16:03 Speaker 2

First time I was ever actually afraid.

00:16:07 Speaker 2

Was on the 15th of September in 1944 and it dawned on me these guys are shooting back at us.

00:16:19 Speaker 1

It's not playing war anymore, yeah.

00:16:25 Speaker 1

Did you know?

00:16:26 Speaker 1

Quite a few other of your friends. People back from Fort Wayne that had been drafted.

00:16:31 Speaker 2

There were five of us.

00:16:35 Speaker 2

The.

00:16:37 Speaker 2

Army to that induction center the first time, and **** Zig and I and Calvin Schultz all ended up in the 319th Infantry.

00:16:49 Speaker 1

Can't carry where you're inducted at.

00:16:52 Speaker 1

OK.

00:16:52

And when?

00:16:53 Speaker 2

But when they shipped us off, we went to the 80th. The three of us went to the three of 19th.

00:17:00 Speaker 1

OK.

00:17:04 Speaker 1

Now, what was your family's reaction to you being drafted in people within the community where they kind of upset or they understand that, you know, this is something that needed to happen.

00:17:15 Speaker 2

I don't.

00:17:15 Speaker 2

I I would be reluctant to answer.

00:17:18 Speaker 2

I know you'd have to ask them about it.

00:17:20 Speaker 1

OK. And what did you think of FDR as a president?

00:17:26 Speaker 2

At the time, Dad, everybody I knew pretty much for Republicans, and we weren't all that.

00:17:34 Speaker 2

Enthusiastic. But in retrospect, I guess he was very good but.

00:17:42 Speaker 2

There's there's an erroneous assumption that he ended the depression and he did Hitler.

00:17:51 Speaker 1

Kind ofated from a external sources but.

00:17:53 Speaker 1

Up.

00:17:55 Speaker 1

Then you went to a Camp Forest, Tennessee.

00:17:57 Speaker 2

They have forest and sea.

00:17:58 Speaker 1

Can you say exactly what you did there?

00:18:01 Speaker 2

Or, well, that was that was what was the basic training we just learned.

00:18:09 Speaker 2

Those shorter drilling and to hike long distances without collapsing and all that kind of stuff.

00:18:16 Speaker 2

And then in 1943, in June, I think of 43 we went on.

00:18:25 Speaker 2

The division maneuvers and.

00:18:29 Speaker 2

And then sometime in September 43, the rest of them moved to Camp Phillips.

00:18:36 Speaker 2

But I was an umpire, so I didn't move with the rest of when I rejoined the company, they were in Camp Phillips, Kansas.

00:18:45 Speaker 1

Can you explain what what exactly?

00:18:47 Speaker 1

Umpire is.

00:18:48 Speaker 2

Well, you know, they they had a Red Army like blue Army.

00:18:52 Speaker 1

Mm.

00:18:54 Speaker 2

I can't explain much what I'm fighting because I there again, I lucked out of the luckiest guy ever lit it. I.

00:19:02 Speaker 2

I joined another non come from B company and I joined three other enlisted men.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

And a second Lieutenant.

00:19:13 Speaker 2

And we were an umpire team with a Canon company. Each regiment has a cannon company had little guns in our anti tank guns.

00:19:23 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:19:25 Speaker 2

Well, it was early in the war and we were so unprepared.

00:19:29 Speaker 2

This Canon company didn't have any cannons, so we didn't have too much on fire.

00:19:35 Speaker 2

The only upfront I did, they were also supposed to lay anti tank mines.

00:19:42 Speaker 2

And they had simulated a laying and I tank mines and I was just.

00:19:47 Speaker 2

Stay by the side of the road and hold anybody that come along and tell them they had to wait 1/2 an hour 'cause we figured that's how long it take to.

00:19:57 Speaker 2

The minefield.

00:20:00 Speaker 2

And a major come along.

00:20:01 Speaker 2

And he's cheap with whoever was working.

00:20:04 Speaker 2

I wouldn't let him pass it through half an hour.

00:20:08 Speaker 2

No, my Lord. He was mad.

00:20:09 Speaker 2

He just ran and ran, but in that particular situation, I outranked him.

00:20:18 Speaker 2

July 20.

00:20:19 Speaker 2

I had a lot of fun doing that.

00:20:21 Speaker 1

So that's what an umpire does.

00:20:23 Speaker 2

And then I also.

00:20:26 Speaker 2

Own my skills as a wood Carver because I didn't have anything else to do. Sit along the road.

00:20:28 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:20:34 Speaker 1

So you are outraged, majors, and you carved wood.

00:20:37 Speaker 2

Yeah, as long as you don't per band on, you can.

00:20:42 Speaker 2

All the other guys got to do.

00:20:44 Speaker 1

How about that?

00:20:46 Speaker 1

So you are met up with everybody.

00:20:48 Speaker 1

Fill up.

00:20:48 Speaker 1

This then or everybody, everybody from.

00:20:52 Speaker 2

We all came together there Camp Phillips and while I was away, a bunch of new guys joined us and a lot of my really close friends were in that bunch.

00:20:55 Speaker 1

OK.

00:21:06 Speaker 1

OK.

00:21:07 Speaker 2

You guys.

00:21:08 Speaker 1

And so then you went to Laguna, Arizona.

00:21:11 Speaker 2

Camp Laguna.

00:21:14 Speaker 1

Camp Laguna.

00:21:16 Speaker 2

GONA.

00:21:16 Speaker 2

And it was a tent city out in the desert.

00:21:23 Speaker 2

I think I was about 25 miles from you as I remember.

00:21:27 Speaker 1

OK, you say.

00:21:29 Speaker 1

What was was life like in the tent?

00:21:32 Speaker 1

Out in the middle of Arizona.

00:21:33 Speaker 2

Well, I tried from a side from.

00:21:38 Speaker 2

It was wasn't very exciting if we would go up, there was some little.

00:21:45 Speaker 2

Mountain like stole me Rocky Mountains.

00:21:50 Speaker 2

And we go back there and you can pick up.

00:21:54 Speaker 2

Petrified wood. I've got several pieces of petrified wood just laying there on the ground, you know.

00:21:56 Speaker 1

Oh really?

00:22:00 Speaker 1

Huh.

00:22:02 Speaker 2

I'm well, actually, the fighting, the fighting in the desert was over.

00:22:08 Speaker 2

Were just out there, just kind of warehousing.

00:22:11 Speaker 1

So it is supposed to be training for North Africa.

00:22:14 Speaker 2

Yeah, we we were.

00:22:15

OK.

00:22:16 Speaker 2

We were just there keeping it.

00:22:20 Speaker 2

In storage, until they needed us for the invasion, you know?

00:22:25 Speaker 1

Nokia.

00:22:26 Speaker 1

And from there they moved into Fort Dix, NJ.

00:22:29 Speaker 2

Or it's there? Yeah.

00:22:30 Speaker 1

And then you off, you did you fly? Did you take a boat over to Scotland?

00:22:36 Speaker 2

Oh, we went on the Queen Mary.

00:22:39 Speaker 1

You on the Queen Mary, OK?

00:22:39 Speaker 2

Yeah, I was really surprised that.

00:22:43 Speaker 2

They drove us to the troop ship and it was the Queen Mary.

00:22:48 Speaker 1

So what was the what was the trip over like?

00:22:51 Speaker 1

There any fear you boats or?

00:22:53 Speaker 2

Well, they the only thing is I didn't know it at the time, but I understand that Hitler had told any U boat commander that could sink the Queen Mary.

00:23:03 Speaker 2

Did 25,000 marks.

00:23:06 Speaker 2

Bonus or something?

00:23:08 Speaker 2

Fortunately, I didn't know that.

00:23:08 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:23:12 Speaker 2

But we didn't do a SIG SAG. You know, they had to sweat straight.

00:23:15 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:23:16 Speaker 2

Did Zigzag all the time and we weren't supposed to throw any.

00:23:22 Speaker 2

Debris over the side because they didn't want the new boats to follow a trail of wrappers and stuff like that.

00:23:28 Speaker 1

Yep.

00:23:33 Speaker 2

The thing I remember most about going over there I there was so darn many of us. The whole division plus the crew and nurses and all kind of personnel. There was about 20 thousand of us on that.

00:23:49 Speaker 1

Oh wow.

00:23:49 Speaker 2

I have heard that that was the most people.

00:23:53 Speaker 2

It was ever on of moving object when they took those divisions across.

00:23:56

Yeah.

00:23:59 Speaker 1

It.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

And the only fat is twice a day.

00:24:04 Speaker 2

They served a lot more than twice a day, but they, you know, we'd have to take turns and they gave us big buttons.

00:24:11 Speaker 2

Gee that big around, it's one, said a one said B and one was red and one was blue, and they'd say.

00:24:17 Speaker 1

Huh.

00:24:19 Speaker 2

Men with blue B buttons will mess with this Sammy, so that meant I had a blue B button.

00:24:26 Speaker 2

I'd go down.

00:24:27 Speaker 1

No, no. Was the food pretty good?

00:24:30 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, except that it was English food, and they'd have some darn thing like kidney pie or something. No human being would eat that general thing.

00:24:36 Speaker 1

Oh wow.

00:24:39 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:24:41 Speaker 2

And I I slept.

00:24:42 Speaker 2

I'd like to go out and see the Queen Mary again because I slept in the tourist lecture lounge.

00:24:48 Speaker 2

That's when I we took turns, which sleep on the.

00:24:53 Speaker 2

Deck one night, men honor in our bunks the next night because there are too many others to.

00:24:54 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:24:58 Speaker 1

They just kind of rotate then.

00:24:58

Get down the floor.

00:25:00 Speaker 2

And I mean, my bunk was in the tourist lecture lounge.

00:25:03 Speaker 1

OK.

00:25:04 Speaker 2

I just love to get a lead out there to that Queen Marian shower where my bunk was cuz I can remember real good.

00:25:11 Speaker 1

Really, huh?

00:25:13 Speaker 1

So they had the whole division on that ship.

00:25:15 Speaker 2

The whole damn division was on it at one time.

00:25:18 Speaker 1

Yeah, that's that's amazing.

00:25:20 Speaker 1

And so.

00:25:23 Speaker 1

Finally, you get to Scotland.

00:25:25 Speaker 1

Right. OK. And.

00:25:29

So.

00:25:29 Speaker 1

What exactly was it like to get into there and actually be away from the United States?

00:25:36 Speaker 2

The only thing I can remember about that.

00:25:40 Speaker 2

When we got within sight of Scotland, there were some stones, big stones sticking out of the.

00:25:48 Speaker 2

Water before you got to the mainland, somebody said.

00:25:51 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:25:52 Speaker 2

Looking like the Prudential Insurance Company.

00:25:57 Speaker 2

And then when we landed, my feet started getting there.

00:26:02 Speaker 2

We had all the stuff we could carry.

00:26:05

Do you know?

00:26:06 Speaker 2

You know, packs and all.

00:26:08 Speaker 2

Kind everything we owned, we had to carry.

00:26:12 Speaker 2

And we were such a motley crew of draftees, sharp guys and tall guys.

00:26:18 Speaker 2

We came carrying all this junk and there was.

00:26:21 Speaker 2

Lot.

00:26:22 Speaker 2

People, local citizens lying in the route watching us. And there was a guy.

00:26:29 Speaker 2

From Wingate IN named Mitchell, and he said, I know what they're saying said this is the last of them and they brought everything with.

00:26:40 Speaker 1

Now, how much gear did you actually have with?

00:26:42 Speaker 2

You then. Oh geez.

00:26:45 Speaker 2

Fulfill our packs, of course. And our gas masks and bandoliers and or at least I suspect.

00:26:53 Speaker 2

Then we we.

00:26:54 Speaker 2

I'm not sure, but I think we carried our double bags or our barracks bags. I don't think we had all of that stuff.

00:27:02 Speaker 2

Wouldn't have been able to carry it.

00:27:05 Speaker 2

We we may not have had the duffel bag, but I do think we may have had this.

00:27:12 Speaker 2

Bags with.

00:27:13 Speaker 2

We had an awful lot of.

00:27:14 Speaker 2

We must have been an awful sight to.

00:27:16 Speaker 2

It coming down.

00:27:17 Speaker 1

You mentioned the gas.

00:27:18 Speaker 1

Did you have much chemical warfare training with the mask then or?

00:27:23 Speaker 2

The first one of the first things that they had us do when we landed in France was to flares, gas masks in a big pile.

00:27:33 Speaker 2

Never, never took them with us.

00:27:34 Speaker 1

Never.

00:27:36 Speaker 1

Did you ever actually wear and train with it or?

00:27:38 Speaker 2

In trading we.

00:27:40 Speaker 2

Yeah, they had gash masterlist in train.

00:27:43 Speaker 1

OK.

00:27:44

Good.

00:27:45 Speaker 1

So it didn't amount to much though. Once you got actually got over there.

00:27:47 Speaker 2

No, they must have had the gentleman's agreement because we just put them in a big file.

00:27:53 Speaker 2

Can remember that real well walking by and.

00:27:54

Cool.

00:27:56 Speaker 2

Them on.

00:27:56 Speaker 2

A big pile.

00:27:58 Speaker 1

And from Scotland then you took a train to Moberly Hall, England, we.

00:28:04 Speaker 2

Went down to Southampton.

00:28:06 Speaker 1

OK.

00:28:07 Speaker 2

We went to South Africa, we shipped up from Southampton and the only thing I can remember about that train ride.

00:28:15 Speaker 2

Was one of those German B1.

00:28:20 Speaker 2

Or V1 or.

00:28:21 Speaker 1

No.

00:28:22 Speaker 2

They call.

00:28:22 Speaker 2

Bob, Buzz, Bob spread over the train.

00:28:27 Speaker 2

That's all. All I can remember and I don't remember where it landed or if it landed or anything, and I can remember looking off the wind and seeing that darn thing go over there.

00:28:38 Speaker 1

Did you know what it was right then?

00:28:39 Speaker 2

Yeah, I do want to wash.

00:28:41 Speaker 1

That kind of that kind of put things in perspective.

00:28:44 Speaker 2

Well, no. I knew that well wasn't going to hit us.

00:28:47 Speaker 2

Was behind us and going over.

00:28:51 Speaker 1

So from there.

00:28:54 Speaker 1

You went to France then?

00:28:56 Speaker 2

Yeah, we went to French on a ship of Indian.

00:28:57 Speaker 1

OK.

00:29:01 Speaker 2

You know these these dark skinned guys with whiskers and they're that and and you talk about food. Bowling, bowling fortunately didn't have to eat much on that thing.

00:29:04 Speaker 1

OK.

00:29:14 Speaker 2

It was awful.

00:29:16 Speaker 1

And so this was was this around September then?

00:29:20 Speaker 2

I beg your pardon.

00:29:20 Speaker 1

Was this around September then?

00:29:22 Speaker 2

No, it was August. The 6th was when we landed in France.

00:29:27 Speaker 1

OK.

00:29:29 Speaker 1

And so then once you got to France, did did you immediately start?

00:29:36 Speaker 1

Going into combat or.

00:29:39 Speaker 2

No, we were very, very fortunate in the 319th.

00:29:46 Speaker 2

On, I think on the we on August the 7th, I think a day after we got there, Hitler launched an attack.

00:29:54 Speaker 2

Between two towns, Argentina and Philippines trying to cut patents supply line.

00:30:04 Speaker 2

And the attack was stopped, and Patton started to try to surround them, advancing army. And so the 317th and the 318th regiments were taken up.

00:30:21 Speaker 2

To try to stop those people from escaping.

00:30:24 Speaker 2

But we were in reserve.

00:30:27 Speaker 2

We didn't.

00:30:28 Speaker 2

Not much of anything to act like we were soldier and we guard.

00:30:35 Speaker 2

Crossroads and go on patrols to no darn part. That's just to keep it from going crazy, I suppose.

00:30:39 Speaker 1

Work.

00:30:43 Speaker 1

Now this was after D-Day.

00:30:46 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, I was 60 days after D-Day.

00:30:49 Speaker 1

Uh, huh. So what did you?

00:30:52 Speaker 1

What went on there or what kind of impact did that?

00:30:54 Speaker 2

No, the only the.

00:30:56 Speaker 2

The only impact that had on us?

00:31:00 Speaker 2

We were.

00:31:01 Speaker 2

They always had us in trucks taking us someplace and we were in these trucks and.

00:31:07 Speaker 2

And be company especially and maybe all of.

00:31:09 Speaker 2

But it was a bunch of crazy guys McKinney and I was leading them, singing stout hearted man and everything, you know having.

00:31:19 Speaker 2

Of a time.

00:31:20 Speaker 2

And we passed one of the cemeteries.

00:31:23 Speaker 2

Where all the guys were buried from D-Day and boy, you talk about a sobering sight.

00:31:29 Speaker 2

That's saying in them, yell and stop immediately.

00:31:34 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:31:35 Speaker 1

And so you're in France and when did?

00:31:41 Speaker 1

When did you actually start actually seeing combat then?

00:31:46 Speaker 2

Well, 1st I never did.

00:31:51 Speaker 2

I wouldn't call it combat, but about the 14th of August I was commanding.

00:31:59 Speaker 2

An outpost of three guys, me and two other fellas, and I worked out a guardry detail.

00:32:08 Speaker 2

And about 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning.

00:32:11 Speaker 2

It.

00:32:12 Speaker 2

It's getting light.

00:32:14 Speaker 2

They shook me.

00:32:15 Speaker 2

Henry Margulik had taken 3 prisoners.

00:32:19 Speaker 2

They were unarmed guys who just trying to get back to their lives, but that was the first time I'd ever actually seen a German soldier.

00:32:21

Yeah.

00:32:28

Mm.

00:32:30 Speaker 2

And then we never really got into combat that I was aware of until the 15th of September.

00:32:39 Speaker 2

And we.

00:32:40 Speaker 2

We crossed a Little River.

00:32:43 Speaker 2

And I really, in all candor, I have no idea what the name.

00:32:46 Speaker 2

It was.

00:32:47 Speaker 2

Wasn't very wide, but we crossed on pontoon.

00:32:52 Speaker 1

Pontoon bridge.

00:32:53 Speaker 2

Boone and each one of those boats at this bridge was made-up of a big bunch of dynamite in it so they could blow it up, since they had to retreat.

00:33:03 Speaker 2

Well, that wasn't us reassuring.

00:33:05 Speaker 2

My great.

00:33:06

Yeah.

00:33:07 Speaker 2

And then there was a MP or somebody standing at the other end of it. When we got across, he said.

00:33:14 Speaker 2

Be careful, they counter attacked every morning.

00:33:19 Speaker 2

So we got across there and and they started shelling us with our children.

00:33:24 Speaker 2

Laid down in a field and.

00:33:27 Speaker 2

They weren't coming close to us, but that was the first time I ever felt as really under attack. And then we got up and went into a little town.

00:33:38 Speaker 2

Little French town called Laos A.

00:33:42 Speaker 2

Now the Frenchman may not pronounce it loudly, but that's close enough for me.

00:33:48 Speaker 2

It was really something.

00:33:51 Speaker 2

And that one? That night they started insulinate us and they were coming close. And that's when I started getting afraid because I thought, holy moly, these guys are trying to kill me.

00:34:04 Speaker 1

Huh. Well.

00:34:08 Speaker 1

You said you took three German prisoners.

00:34:13 Speaker 1

Your encounter with them like where they.

00:34:17 Speaker 2

The funny thing about that this boy that took them prisoner, the one that stopped them? Henry Marshall, like, just a little fella.

00:34:26 Speaker 2

When it got light, I sat him down, leaning up against a fence, and searched him and everything.

00:34:32 Speaker 2

Didn't have anything except that some scrawny little apples and some extra socks and some coins.

00:34:41 Speaker 2

And that Henry discovered that he hadn't cocked his rifle.

00:34:48 Speaker 2

And so we got this right.

00:34:50 Speaker 2

Well, you know those three guys thought, sure he's gonna shoot him right on the spot.

00:34:56 Speaker 1

Yeah. Wow.

00:34:58 Speaker 2

But we did.

00:35:00 Speaker 1

That's that's good to know. Apology conventions.

00:35:03 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:35:05 Speaker 1

What was your rank at this time?

00:35:08 Speaker 2

I was just a buck.

00:35:09 Speaker 1

Mr. Buck, sorry. So. So you you went in as a private and you're already a Sergeant, was there?

00:35:17 Speaker 1

There a reason for going up so fast or?

00:35:21 Speaker 2

It was just darn foolish to you can't hardly imagine my luck.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

We we lined up the when they were finally enough of us in the company that they had to.

00:35:32 Speaker 2

Choose noncoms we fell.

00:35:35 Speaker 2

I was in the 1st or the 1st squad of the second platoon.

00:35:40 Speaker 2

I just took a position I had about fourth from the right. I was trying to be as inconspicuous as possible.

00:35:48 Speaker 2

And the, the officer said our our platoon leader said. Have any of you guys had previous military training?

00:35:57 Speaker 2

And one guy said, well, I was in ROTC and he said, well, you'll be a squad leader of the third squad. And then another fella said, oh, I was in a little old guy said I was in post artillery for eight years.

00:36:12 Speaker 2

He.

00:36:13 Speaker 2

Well, you'll be the platoon guy.

00:36:14 Speaker 2

So he took that job, and each time I was moving further to the right, you know? And then they asked about another guy, and I really don't know who that was or what he his experience was.

00:36:28 Speaker 2

That he was made the squad leader of the second squad.

00:36:31 Speaker 2

Well, now I'm stamped. If the squad leader spot, they run out of guys, the previous military coup, so they say they're squad leader.

00:36:40 Speaker 2

They are.

00:36:42 Speaker 1

So automatically just putting up the five then.

00:36:45 Speaker 1

How about that?

00:36:45 Speaker 2

I got to be an acting corporal. I think in October.

00:36:50 Speaker 2

I made. I was actually given corporal stripes and.

00:36:55 Speaker 2

And I I got to be a staff Sergeant there in lasi because.

00:37:03 Speaker 2

On that one, we got there in the 15th on.

00:37:04 Speaker 2

16th they really start showing us in May of my squad leader was killed and so I.

00:37:13 Speaker 1

So.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

They they had Captain Williams had demoted me to assistant squad leader and give the job to Sonny Oak.

00:37:22 Speaker 2

And then there are mousy oaks was killed by that. Our children.

00:37:26 Speaker 2

So I got to be squad leader again.

00:37:28 Speaker 2

That's when I became a staff Sergeant.

00:37:30

OK.

00:37:32 Speaker 1

When did?

00:37:32 Speaker 1

When did you actually start taking casualties?

00:37:36 Speaker 2

That that the 15th, my very best friend George McKinney and another guy were wounded by that artillery that night.

00:37:47 Speaker 2

And I think George was the first man in the company to be wounded, and I was the last.

00:37:54 Speaker 1

Close.

00:37:54 Speaker 2

But George and Jake Lusitas were both hit and McKinney, my other best friend, was a little short guy named Jimmy Pradieri.

00:38:06 Speaker 2

And they were sharing a slip trench.

00:38:10 Speaker 2

George was a big, tall guy.

00:38:12 Speaker 2

And Jimmy was a little short fell. And George always said he was wounded because Jimmy didn't dig the hole long enough for him.

00:38:21 Speaker 2

Feet stuck out.

00:38:23 Speaker 1

In the foot.

00:38:26 Speaker 2

Leg.

00:38:30 Speaker 1

So then.

00:38:32 Speaker 1

You're still in France and you're starting to see a little more and more combat.

00:38:37 Speaker 1

Then you get to lick Sierra's France Lick Sierra's France.

00:38:41 Speaker 2

I made time licks years, yeah.

00:38:44 Speaker 1

And.

00:38:46 Speaker 1

8th of October 1944.

00:38:47 Speaker 2

Yeah, the first time, yeah.

00:38:48 Speaker 1

And that's when you're wounded the first time.

00:38:52 Speaker 1

Can.

00:38:52 Speaker 1

Can you kind of elaborate about that?

00:38:54 Speaker 1

What happened where you wounded 12?

00:38:58 Speaker 2

We've moved into this town, toward this town in Mega platoon, Sergeant was killed.

00:39:06 Speaker 2

When we got into town, they of course divided it up into sectors, and each platoon had a sector to search out and we found no enemy I can remember from being in a garage and the guy with the Frenchman was glad to see us and shook hands and.

00:39:23 Speaker 2

Everything.

00:39:24 Speaker 2

And then somebody said tag tag, they've got some prisoners down the lane.

00:39:31 Speaker 2

Like a big dummy. I had been in combat long enough to have any sense to take care of myself.

00:39:37 Speaker 2

Went running down the standing right in the middle of the crossroads and I heard an explosion.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

And my arm shook and I thought, my gosh, my rifle's gone off accidentally, and I looked.

00:39:51

Huh.

00:39:52 Speaker 2

And.

00:39:52 Speaker 2

My field jacket sleeve was all torn up.

00:39:56 Speaker 2

I realized that I'd been wounded.

00:40:00

Up.

00:40:00 Speaker 2

And then and they took me back then to aid stations, and it was a big place.

00:40:07 Speaker 2

And every age station I went to, they'd say, well, you've got to have a skin graft.

00:40:12 Speaker 2

Can't do that here, so I ended up in a hospital in Paris.

00:40:18 Speaker 2

And the doctor there said, oh, I'm not going to give you a skin graft said.

00:40:24 Speaker 2

You just have two sore places instead of 1, and you know he just drew that real, real tight and sewed it up and.

00:40:34 Speaker 2

It was actually so tight they would pucker on the end.

00:40:37 Speaker 1

Oh really?

00:40:38 Speaker 2

And my hand all swelled up, so they sent me back to.

00:40:42 Speaker 2

England to a hospital?

00:40:46 Speaker 2

And then I can't recall now exactly how long I was in.

00:40:51 Speaker 2

Then they sent me to another place in Birmingham, England. That was a rehabilitation hospital and there we.

00:41:01 Speaker 2

Would do calisthenics and see if you're wounded in your right arm.

00:41:05 Speaker 2

This and things like that and I stayed there.

00:41:11 Speaker 2

Oh, I don't know exactly how when they moved me out of there, I went to a place called the 10th grade.

00:41:19 Speaker 2

If you ever have opportunity to read about 10th replacement, it was run by a man named Killian Colonel Killian, who was kind of the saddest. I was fortunate in that I didn't stay.

00:41:31

Hmm.

00:41:33 Speaker 2

They sued, sent me back to overseas.

00:41:36 Speaker 1

Now how?

00:41:36 Speaker 1

How much function did you lose in your hand then? If any, like for temporarily before?

00:41:42 Speaker 2

Well, it would.

00:41:44 Speaker 2

It swelled real up, up real bad.

00:41:48 Speaker 2

I just couldn't use it for a while, but.

00:41:50 Speaker 2

Was it was not a.

00:41:53 Speaker 2

Terrible bad.

00:41:54 Speaker 2

I was shooting back.

00:41:56 Speaker 1

Now you.

00:41:57 Speaker 2

Good shape. It was just good enough to get me back to England.

00:42:01 Speaker 1

Now you're.

00:42:04 Speaker 1

You were out of.

00:42:07 Speaker 1

Out of.

00:42:09 Speaker 1

You weren't able to fight for a while, and you were.

00:42:13 Speaker 1

You were in different.

00:42:14 Speaker 1

What did you do to pass the time while you were there?

00:42:17 Speaker 2

Well, mostly I would read and they had.

00:42:21

A.

00:42:22 Speaker 2

We had a push, had a recreation room.

00:42:26 Speaker 2

There were no.

00:42:27 Speaker 2

I don't think there were Red Cross girls or USO or somebody would play an activities for you and there was a couple guys who could play a piano.

00:42:38 Speaker 2

Play the piano.

00:42:40 Speaker 1

Did you?

00:42:41 Speaker 1

Did you get to go out on the town in Paris much?

00:42:44 Speaker 1

Was the city like?

00:42:44 Speaker 2

Well, we I think I would get.

00:42:48 Speaker 2

Passes, but I you know, truth. I can't remember what town that was close to. I just can't.

00:42:55 Speaker 1

OK. And so how long were you laid off then?

00:42:59 Speaker 2

Well, I did. I didn't leave.

00:43:04 Speaker 2

To go back to France until the New Year's Eve in 1945.

00:43:12

OK.

00:43:12 Speaker 2

Now I left that 10th replacement and.

00:43:16 Speaker 2

What the guy has told you that go tell your good story about how the army is hurry up and rate. Yeah, yeah.

00:43:23 Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah.

00:43:25 Speaker 1

FY.

00:43:25 Speaker 2

They got us to the ship that we were going to cross the channel and there was a naval vessel and I don't know what kind it was, but it was in the United States Navy ship laying alongside and they converged at all you army guys.

00:43:41 Speaker 2

Would like. We're going to show a movie and if you want to come over, watch the movie.

00:43:46 Speaker 2

So we went over there was three or four of us, I suppose, and it was one of those old Saint mist mystery movies.

00:43:57 Speaker 2

Tom Conway was the same way watching the movie.

00:44:01 Speaker 2

And they got right down to where he was going to say who the murderer was. That they said, OK all.

00:44:08 Speaker 2

Are the guys back on the ship?

00:44:10 Speaker 2

So we had to leave and we got back on that ship and I'll bet you it was an hour before the darn thing took off.

00:44:17 Speaker 2

Could have watched a movie and.

00:44:20 Speaker 2

Several select short subjects at a time and dying thing moved. I so discussed it.

00:44:26 Speaker 1

Have you ever figured out who did it?

00:44:28 Speaker 2

I've watched all of them.

00:44:29 Speaker 2

Movies on TV, but I never can remember exactly which one.

00:44:35 Speaker 1

Well, you've watched it sometime in there.

00:44:36 Speaker 1

Get out. Which one it was.

00:44:37 Speaker 2

I'm sure I've seen it.

00:44:39 Speaker 2

I just don't remember.

00:44:42 Speaker 1

Well, let's see.

00:44:47 Speaker 1

So did you keep in contact with people in your company while you're while you were in the hospital then or?

00:44:54 Speaker 2

No way of communicating with them. Had no way of knowing where they were or anything.

00:45:00 Speaker 1

So, but did you keep pretty well informed on what?

00:45:02 Speaker 1

Going on in the war, then?

00:45:06 Speaker 2

I would.

00:45:07 Speaker 2

I would not want to say.

00:45:09 Speaker 2

I don't recall that I was informed at all or at any particular interest.

00:45:16 Speaker 1

Now, did they go ahead?

00:45:18 Speaker 2

Hi.

00:45:21 Speaker 2

And.

00:45:25 Speaker 2

I don't remember much about.

00:45:26

It.

00:45:27 Speaker 1

OK.

00:45:29 Speaker 1

Before, before they send you back. Did they give you any kind?

00:45:32 Speaker 1

Reinforcement training. Or they just kind of say, hey, you going back and just make you go.

00:45:36 Speaker 2

It was just a matter of going back.

00:45:41 Speaker 2

Oh, it was a long.

00:45:42 Speaker 2

And the funny one, because we would.

00:45:45 Speaker 2

We would ride on box.

00:45:47 Speaker 2

We were in those forty and eights that you hear about and we were on trains and oh that ****.

00:45:51

Mm.

00:45:56 Speaker 2

Trucks every darn thing you could think of to get.

00:45:59 Speaker 2

I don't know how you could go from France to Luxembourg and take 21 days, but they stop and we'd be someplace for couple days and then go.

00:46:11 Speaker 1

Huh. Now, were you apprehensive at all about going back?

00:46:16 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:46:19 Speaker 2

No, I you know, they always talk about.

00:46:23 Speaker 2

The baptism of.

00:46:24 Speaker 2

I think they're a lot braver before you're shot at than afterwards.

00:46:28 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:46:28 Speaker 2

Especially if you've been hit once.

00:46:31 Speaker 2

Of makes it often.

00:46:32 Speaker 1

That kind of does make sense, you know.

00:46:35 Speaker 1

Again, so your family finally 21 days later after you leave.

00:46:42 Speaker 1

Your back in Luxembourg with your company.

00:46:45 Speaker 1

21st of January 45.

00:46:48 Speaker 2

And they immediately gave me my old squad back.

00:46:51 Speaker 1

OK.

00:46:51 Speaker 2

Then we come the 1st that I was where we were under fire. We got hit again with our chill ray and one of the men in my squad.

00:47:01 Speaker 2

Was was hit in his right hand and I don't know if he ever.

00:47:06 Speaker 2

They invented reuse of that hand or not. I couldn't tell. It was crossed the back of his hand.

00:47:14 Speaker 2

And I I tried to reassure.

00:47:16 Speaker 2

I'd say well, now you're out of it. They'll you'll get medical attention and get better and you're out of the war and all of that.

00:47:23 Speaker 2

But whether or not that worked out, I don't know.

00:47:25 Speaker 2

Never heard of him anymore.

00:47:27 Speaker 1

Now.

00:47:30 Speaker 1

Did you meet a lot of people that were prior listed before the war or?

00:47:34 Speaker 1

Was it was.

00:47:35 Speaker 1

Majority of the people that you encountered really drafted.

00:47:39 Speaker 2

Most all of them are drafted.

00:47:42 Speaker 1

OK.

00:47:42 Speaker 2

There was a little guy named.

00:47:46 Speaker 2

Virgil Thornton. I think he had enlisted.

00:47:51 Speaker 2

I have a three reason I think I know that because he always got paid before the rest of.

00:47:58 Speaker 2

You know the guys got paid before the drafting.

00:48:02 Speaker 1

Huh. Now you talk about pay. Was was there any difference that you knew of? People that were prior enlisted or those who were drafted? Did the did those who had already enlisted were they, were they higher ranking or?

00:48:18 Speaker 2

No, I when I went in the army, they had raised the privates, paid a \$50.

00:48:28 Speaker 2

A month from 21, it had been 21 for years.

00:48:30 Speaker 1

Hmm.

00:48:32 Speaker 2

Got \$50.00 a month and then when I made Corporal.

00:48:38 Speaker 2

I think I got \$66 a month and when I made Buck Sergeant, I got \$78 a month.

00:48:47 Speaker 2

And then it seems to me that a staff sergeants pay was \$96 a month.

00:48:53 Speaker 2

But then I was overseas and I got combat pay on top of that up, but I really don't remember what it's called.

00:49:00 Speaker 1

OK.

00:49:02 Speaker 1

No, it was there is there.

00:49:06 Speaker 1

I don't want to say resentment, but was there kind of a distrust between the people who are already enlisted and the people who are drafted?

00:49:16 Speaker 2

No, I didn't. I never noticed that, you know. But I only knew one guy that I was pretty sure he left.

00:49:18 Speaker 1

OK.

00:49:23 Speaker 1

So you'd never experienced combat before that had the maneuvers that you did before you got over where they pretty sufficient in training you or was.

00:49:32 Speaker 2

I think that the maneuver should be dead were basically to toughen us up.

00:49:40 Speaker 2

And to train the officers, it seems to me.

00:49:42 Speaker 1

OK.

00:49:44 Speaker 2

Would be.

00:49:45 Speaker 2

Because all we learned to do was dig fat holes and.

00:49:52 Speaker 2

It was.

00:49:53 Speaker 2

You couldn't learn tactics.

00:49:56 Speaker 2

They even told the officers that officers candid school.

00:50:01 Speaker 2

You're faced with the problem.

00:50:04 Speaker 2

Do something. You can't say that one thing is right and one's wrong until the battle is over.

00:50:10 Speaker 2

You succeeded. You did the right thing.

00:50:12 Speaker 1

Yeah. So how how did you?

00:50:16 Speaker 1

It.

00:50:17 Speaker 1

Was it difficult to get the experience because you were? You were an NCO and you had never really experienced battle?

00:50:23 Speaker 1

How did? How did you come up with the ability to make the decisions that you needed to make in the heat of battle?

00:50:32 Speaker 2

Well.

00:50:32 Speaker 2

Well, I don't know that.

00:50:34 Speaker 2

You were in a war and you realize it and you just did.

00:50:39 Speaker 2

I've always said I just went forward when the rest of them did. Somebody else decided when we were to go.

00:50:46 Speaker 1

Yeah, alright.

00:50:48 Speaker 1

And so you met back with your your company in Luxembourg and?

00:50:56 Speaker 1

What did you do that?

00:50:58 Speaker 1

Where did you go straight from there and how did you kind of get back into everyday life and every soldier?

00:51:05 Speaker 2

When we moved from wherever they were shelling us that night.

00:51:11 Speaker 2

We moved to this little town called Bettendorf and we didn't do a great deal there for for several days.

00:51:18 Speaker 2

Were just there and.

00:51:24 Speaker 2

There, were we.

00:51:26 Speaker 2

There was a big German tank that had been abandoned sitting in the in a kind of a courtyard and.

00:51:33 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:51:35 Speaker 2

And if it must have the thing I remember doing there more than anything else was they couldn't get a bridge across the river, you know, because it was always shallow in them.

00:51:45

****.

00:51:49 Speaker 2

So at night they we had to do anything we was going to do, but.

00:51:54 Speaker 2

The engineers.

00:51:55 Speaker 2

The bridge across.

00:51:58 Speaker 2

And they had great big.

00:52:01 Speaker 2

I bees great big long eyed beams and instead of the engineers carrying them down the head.

00:52:07 Speaker 2

Guys carrying them out.

00:52:09 Speaker 2

I'll never forget. One night there were six of us, two guys on each end and another fell and I.

00:52:17 Speaker 2

The middle.

00:52:18 Speaker 2

And I thought, Jesus.

00:52:21 Speaker 2

This is a heavy shot of a gun and I thought, well, it's I've been hired and sparse and Sammy, but when we got down to the riverbank and dropped it, I realized I was about two inches taller than everybody else.

00:52:36 Speaker 2

I was carrying the.

00:52:38 Speaker 2

Those guys were just kind of balancing the farm.

00:52:43 Speaker 1

So how often did bridges or rivers and bridge building pose a problem for you guys?

00:52:50 Speaker 1

Often, did you have to actually go about putting up pontoon bridge or?

00:52:54 Speaker 2

Oh, we we went.

00:52:56 Speaker 2

That's most interesting story. We went each squad we went at night the night of February the 7th.

00:53:05 Speaker 2

And each night, each squad had its own boat.

00:53:09 Speaker 2

And by that time, my friend McKinney had rejoined the company.

00:53:15 Speaker 2

And he would made my assistant squad leader and he and I got our squad.

00:53:20 Speaker 2

Our boat.

00:53:22 Speaker 2

Down to the river.

00:53:26 Speaker 2

And across before anybody else, we were the first American soldiers across there.

00:53:32

Yeah.

00:53:34 Speaker 2

And and we'd been up so much all the time. We went lay down, went to sleep.

00:53:41 Speaker 2

A German with a big rock could have.

00:53:43 Speaker 2

His.

00:53:44 Speaker 2

It was just a miracle that and that was a river, you know, when I'd rejoined the company, Luxembourg was just covered with snow wheels.

00:53:55 Speaker 2

No.

00:53:57 Speaker 2

And in those couple weeks, it all had melded and that river was at least three times its normal wind and a lot faster. And I've been told that some of the boats capsized. And I don't think any of us landed where we were supposed to. We went down.

00:54:04 Speaker 1

Hello.

00:54:16 Speaker 1

A long way.

00:54:17

Oh.

00:54:18 Speaker 1

And so.

00:54:19 Speaker 1

You had you had been with your company for a while and your company was involved in the Battle of the Bulge.

00:54:26 Speaker 2

Oh yes will when is.

00:54:27 Speaker 1

And in the harsh winter.

00:54:30 Speaker 1

Now, had quite a few people. Had you lost anybody or you really?

00:54:34 Speaker 2

Oh.

00:54:34 Speaker 2

A lot of my friends there were very few of the old company still there.

00:54:41 Speaker 2

One of my friends was one of the only I think there were two guys in 80th Division that got the Medal of Honor.

00:54:51 Speaker 2

And the day Turner did for his fighting in in Luxembourg during the Battle of the Bulge.

00:54:56 Speaker 1

From from your company.

00:54:59 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:55:00 Speaker 2

As a matter of fact, I think if you go to Luxembourg today, there be a there's a monument to him in the building that he.

00:55:08 Speaker 2

Save from the Germans, I said to him after I got back, I said day. I hear you.

00:55:14 Speaker 2

A hero and he's old.

00:55:16 Speaker 2

The Germans wanted that house and I wanted it and I just didn't let him come in.

00:55:21 Speaker 1

And so. So he was still with.

00:55:23 Speaker 1

Company. Then at that time.

00:55:23 Speaker 2

Yeah, but he was killed later.

00:55:25 Speaker 2

Was.

00:55:26 Speaker 2

I think that when either the 7th or 8th.

00:55:29 Speaker 2

February, when we went across the river.

00:55:33 Speaker 1

OK.

00:55:33 Speaker 2

I think that that kind of emboldened.

00:55:38 Speaker 2

I think he's got the notion he was invincible because he tried to attack one of these pill boxes.

00:55:45 Speaker 2

Armed with a pistol and of course he was.

00:55:48 Speaker 1

Oh my and so.

00:55:51 Speaker 1

7th of February is at the time when you want to cross the river and fall asleep.

00:55:57 Speaker 1

So.

00:55:58 Speaker 1

What did you do once you got across the river there other than sleep?

00:56:02 Speaker 2

The thing I can remember when they find and I don't know how.

00:56:08 Speaker 2

I have no tendency towards heroics, but when we got everybody got together and they we've got to go up the hill toward these pill boxes, I said come on, gentlemen, enjoy yourselves.

00:56:11

I.

00:56:24 Speaker 2

Now we're that kind of smart, Alec, he talked.

00:56:26 Speaker 2

Come from I'll never.

00:56:30 Speaker 2

Remember.

00:56:32 Speaker 1

Now the fighting with the pill box is what exactly was that like?

00:56:37 Speaker 2

That.

00:56:38 Speaker 2

That didn't seem to be very severe. They had told us that the most of those the Germans were so undermanned in the most of them wanted to surrender.

00:56:50 Speaker 2

But after we were there, we couldn't get out of those pill boxes in the daytime.

00:56:55 Speaker 2

They were still in the German territ.

00:56:59 Speaker 1

Mm.

00:57:00 Speaker 2

Ory we would stay in the pill boxes in the daytime or in the trenches.

00:57:06 Speaker 2

They had the Germans themselves had built trenches out from the field boxes and we.

00:57:11 Speaker 2

We occupy those and then at night, if there was anything that they wanted.

00:57:18 Speaker 2

Done.

00:57:19 Speaker 2

She just read anything McKinney and I were always called on.

00:57:25 Speaker 2

To run those air.

00:57:27 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:57:28 Speaker 2

And I told our company commander at the time, as command US first Lieutenant named.

00:57:37 Speaker 2

Of McGrath and I said, Lieutenant, I wish you'd get it out of your head that McKinney and I can do anything.

00:57:46 Speaker 2

He said well, until you screw up, I'm forced to use you. So we.

00:57:53 Speaker 2

Run. We was out every night running around and we couldn't see.

00:57:57 Speaker 2

We would go down a path until you come and you'd fall off of a thing about this far under the road. You know where you were falling, falling into the road.

00:58:05 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:58:08 Speaker 2

Couldn't see that.

00:58:11 Speaker 1

Well, I'm going to go ahead and change tapes and I will start back.

00:58:14 Speaker 1

After we do that.

00:58:16

Use glass of water.