

**Mahlon G. Wright Interview**

Cannon Company, 317th Inf Reg

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

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

00:00:01 Speaker 1

Robert Griffin and my partners. Melissa. Napkin. We're from the West Virginia University school, journalism. And we're Capitol Hill, and it's May 28th. And I am interviewing.

00:00:17 Speaker 2

Malin Gene Wright.

00:00:20 Speaker 1

Right.

00:00:22 Speaker 1

What's your address?

00:00:23 Speaker 2

11-2.

00:00:25 Speaker 2

Tamaran Dr. Waldwick, NJ.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

What war did you serve in?

00:00:31 Speaker 2

World War 2.

00:00:32 Speaker 1

What branches service?

00:00:34 Speaker 2

Amy.

00:00:36 Speaker 1

Army.

00:00:36 Speaker 2

80th Infantry Division.

00:00:41 Speaker 2

Cannon company.

00:00:44 Speaker 2

And also 313 field lights. Sorry.

00:00:48 Speaker 2

Where I was known as Hambone dog 64. That was my call letters.

00:00:53 Speaker 3

Oh.

00:00:56 Speaker 2

My first day of combat was the bulge.

00:00:59 Speaker 3

Really.

00:01:02 Speaker 2

That was an interesting.

00:01:05 Speaker 2

Today I lost.

00:01:08 Speaker 2

So we liaison officer and the.

00:01:13 Speaker 2

Radio operator with him.

00:01:17 Speaker 2

I made it. I was lucky I got out.

00:01:18 Speaker 2

Of it, but.

00:01:21 Speaker 2

I finally lost it in the middle of the Rhine River.

00:01:24 Speaker 2

I got shot.

00:01:26 Speaker 2

Norian river.

00:01:28 Speaker 2

For us and at minds.

00:01:33 Speaker 2

And I survived that by.

00:01:36 Speaker 2

Swimming with the bolt over to the island.

00:01:40 Speaker 2

And they.

00:01:42 Speaker 2

Finally got my radio going.

00:01:45 Speaker 2

Come back to our regiment. They've sent the Navy was.

00:01:49 Speaker 2

Instrumental and they picked up the survivors of the assault group that went across the river and I was one of them.

00:01:59 Speaker 2

I have baby and I mean to thank for somebody of survival.

00:02:05 Speaker 2

How interesting that many people had the Navy, but they moved them in with the same boats as the Higgins boats that they used to assault on D-Day. They just moved them over land and put a whole bunch of them in the river to pick up.

00:02:22 Speaker 2

People.

00:02:23 Speaker 2

So it worked out.

00:02:24 Speaker 2

Pretty good.

00:02:25 Speaker 2

Nice, Ben.

00:02:28 Speaker 2

3.

00:02:29 Speaker 2

For the BJ no VE Day.

00:02:32 Speaker 2

In hospital in Verdun, France.

00:02:37 Speaker 2

And then I finally got out and rejoined my regiment.

00:02:42 Speaker 2

And went back to the states.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

Through camp.

00:02:48 Speaker 2

Where do I go to camp?

00:02:51 Speaker 3

I don't know. I thought they'd send to my phone, to the house.

00:02:56 Speaker 3

Well, I was mad, they said.

00:02:57 Speaker 2

Where?

00:03:00 Speaker 2

Yeah, but where? Where they get?

00:03:03 Speaker 2

What? Well, the one in Massachusetts. Port Devon. Yeah, I I cleaned out of four. Devon. Cold. Ohh.

00:03:13 Speaker 2

I went to the Quartermaster Sales office, salvage yard, and I was able to pick up a pair of over shoes.

00:03:20 Speaker 2

Lucky I did.

00:03:23 Speaker 2

And I had a privilege ship going back to bluebells with my grandson.

00:03:29 Speaker 2

Two years ago, he had, she said. I heard so much about it. Grandpa, I wanted.

00:03:34 Speaker 2

Wonder if we could see it. And I said sure, that's all I needed was an excuse because she didn't want to go back over there.

00:03:41 Speaker 2

And so we spent a week touring the bulge and Bastone and up in that area.

00:03:49 Speaker 2

And we have since put all of our pictures on slides and now he gives the slide presentation. In fact, just two weeks ago, we gave, I gave one to his school.

00:04:02 Speaker 2

So it was very well received. I was.

00:04:06 Speaker 2

Didn't know how it was going to take off with a bunch of high school kids. I guess they're younger than my high school or younger high school.

00:04:15 Speaker 2

But they were very appreciative and he said that they talked to me afterwards. It was all over.

00:04:22 Speaker 2

So it was a nice experience for everybody.

00:04:26 Speaker 2

They'll be able to sit here and talk.

00:04:28 Speaker 1

That's right.

00:04:29 Speaker 2

83 years ago.

00:04:33 Speaker 2

Well, sixty years, 60 years ago.

00:04:35 Speaker 1

How old were you when you did you enlist?

00:04:38 Speaker 2

No, I was. I came out of college as a second Lieutenant. ROTC.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

Oh, OK.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

No, I went right in. I went to Benning School for Boys, as we call it in those days.

00:04:53 Speaker 2

By the OCS was and the basic.

00:04:58 Speaker 2

And then from there I went.

00:05:01 Speaker 2

The Camp house, Texas.

00:05:04 Speaker 2

Where the 84th Division we activated the regiments down there.

00:05:10

I.

00:05:12 Speaker 2

Had my ticket for flying home on Christmas and going to sign out.

00:05:17 Speaker 2

Big notice. All leaves canceled. Fellas will be in tomorrow. That wash that one out.

00:05:27 Speaker 2

But it was.

00:05:28 Speaker 2

Been uh, I've been in the reserves.

00:05:31 Speaker 2

I was in the act of for four years and I've been in the reserves for.

00:05:37 Speaker 3

38.

00:05:37 Speaker 2

32.

00:05:38 Speaker 3

38.

00:05:39 Speaker 2

38 years. OK. You keep track of the years, I don't know.

00:05:44 Speaker 2

But I had. I went through Leavenworth school out there, and the Industrial College young forces here in Washington. But that was the correspondence voice.

00:05:57 Speaker 2

And then I wound up as a as a commandant of the 1156 Usai school.

00:06:06 Speaker 2

I had 150 instructors and about 1200 students and.

00:06:11 Speaker 2

The north part of New Jersey.

00:06:14 Speaker 2

I couldn't inspect them all in the year's time with too much too much traveling around, but made a lot of friends.

00:06:23 Speaker 2

Lot of headaches now.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

There's not too many of us left.

00:06:29 Speaker 2

Not too many was left.

00:06:30 Speaker 1

Did you used to have reunions? Where do you?

00:06:33 Speaker 2

Yeah, we we have, well, we have a meeting of the VBI of the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge up at Picatinny Arsenal in Dover, NJ and we got what about 5050 people? And we, Bob, how many people in bebop, about 50.

00:06:50 Speaker 2

And we can get maybe 25 or 30 out for a meeting once a month and then we have another one I belong to with MOA, the military Officers Association had just changed from.

00:07:08 Speaker 2

Troa to lower so I can't remember all of your.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Abbreviations in these things.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

So is there anything else I can tell you? You'll pick my brain.

00:07:17 Speaker 1

What do you think about the memorial?

00:07:20 Speaker 2

I don't have any idea. It's it's six years too late.

00:07:24 Speaker 4

That's what every.

00:07:25 Speaker 2

Why? Why? We never had one before. I don't have any knowledge.

00:07:28 Speaker 4

You're not better tomorrow. After if you see it. No, you haven't been done. No, we haven't seen it. Yeah, it's it's pretty amazing.

00:07:33 Speaker 2

Now.

00:07:36 Speaker 2

Where is it down?

00:07:37 Speaker 2

This.

00:07:37 Speaker 4

Down that way all.

00:07:38

The way make sure you take the.



00:07:39 Speaker 4

Shuttle long long walk.

00:07:40 Speaker 2

Done that way. Yeah, well.

00:07:42 Speaker 3

But they have free shuttles and we have three. Yeah, sure.

00:07:48 Speaker 3

So we should come by our.

00:07:52 Speaker 1

I'm sorry I didn't introduce you. What's your name? Jacqueline, right.

00:07:59 Speaker 3

Were you married when I was not married? When he I was not married till he came back. Oh.

00:08:01 Speaker 4

You were.

00:08:02 Speaker 4

Was more.

00:08:06 Speaker 4

How long was?

00:08:07 Speaker 3

It when he got back before you married him.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

During this, this sister found the Prophet.

00:08:14 Speaker 3

Department store. You got no excuse. Now we got an apartment. You know, I had a long engagement. I was engaged for four years.

00:08:23 Speaker 1

Yeah. So you waited for it then?

00:08:24 Speaker 3

That doesn't it. That doesn't happen too often. I waited. I worked at a canteen in Providence seven days a week. It was open that that was after my regular job.

00:08:28 Speaker 2

Well, tell them what you did.

00:08:33 Speaker 3

Ohh.

00:08:39 Speaker 3

I worked at Westinghouse Electric, but my mother and father ran a canteen for servicemen.

00:08:45 Speaker 3

And.

00:08:47 Speaker 3

That live music every night and live girls, and they're all registered. And it was very.

00:08:52 Speaker 3

And they had a free snack bar. My mother cooked a ham or a Turkey every single day for three years.

00:09:00 Speaker 4

Wow.

00:09:02 Speaker 3

That was where I spent the three years waiting anyway.

00:09:06 Speaker 3

That was busy.

00:09:07 Speaker 4

Not like waiting for him.

00:09:08 Speaker 3

Yeah, I was. Wait.

00:09:10 Speaker 3

There was a lot of Navy because in one Navy and Rhode Island that was Quonset Point in Newport.

00:09:17 Speaker 3

Had lots of sailors there every night. It was fun. We had fun. Yeah.

00:09:20 Speaker 4

Right.

00:09:23 Speaker 3

What did you do when you were there?

00:09:25 Speaker 4

Specifically, did you just help out everywhere or?

00:09:27 Speaker 3

Yeah. Behind the snack bar or just talk to play cards or dance.

00:09:34 Speaker 3

Anything.

00:09:36 Speaker 3

That's why you had a long engagement, huh? You don't even know? Hurry to get married. She's having a good time.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

A second of them in the infantry is life expectancy of 30 seconds.

00:09:47 Speaker 3

We couldn't get married till we get back.

00:09:50

Right.

00:09:50 Speaker 2

I was lucky to get back.

00:09:53 Speaker 4

So when did you find out that he was injured? Did you?

00:09:56 Speaker 3

Find out right away or no, that two days afterwards his mother got the telegram.

00:10:06 Speaker 3

It was in the hospital and all. I thought this is great because now he can come home.

00:10:12 Speaker 3

Right.

00:10:12 Speaker 3

I heard from him and he wrote right away after that. And then.

00:10:17 Speaker 3

Said he was going back with his unit somewhere.

00:10:21 Speaker 3

That was a.

00:10:21 Speaker 2

I had to go back. I left all my personal effects back there.

00:10:24 Speaker 3

Yeah. Yeah. He didn't even have any shoes. No goodness.

00:10:30 Speaker 2

No, that was never. Again, if I get hit, give up all my clothes without my shoes.

00:10:38 Speaker 2

When you got back to the hospital, they they had no shoes. Dishes to you.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

So what we used to do, we put down about 3 pairs of sock.

00:10:48 Speaker 2

Make those two for shoes to go to the movie and PX.

00:10:53 Speaker 4

I've heard that a lot that shoes are a big, big problem.

00:10:56 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:10:58 Speaker 4

Lot of cold feet over there.

00:11:00 Speaker 2

And then we're in the winter time.

00:11:01 Speaker 3

Yeah.

00:11:05 Speaker 4

Oh my God. Well.

00:11:07 Speaker 1

Yeah. Thank you very much.

00:11:08 Speaker 2

OK. You're welcome.