

Donald J. Breen Interview

319th Infantry Regiment

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Francis M. Prokop)

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

00:00:01 Speaker 1

This interview is being conducted on Thursday.

00:00:07 Speaker 1

July 6, 2017 at the home of Donald J. Green. My name is Fran Prokup, and I'm speaking with Mr. Breen, who served in the United States Army and is a veteran of World War 2.

00:00:25 Speaker 1

Mr. Breen learned of the veteran's history project through his daughter, who contacted me and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans History Project. Here is his story.

00:00:44 Speaker 1

OK, Donald, when and where were you born? Give the date and the city.

00:00:52 Speaker 2

I was born in.

00:00:55 Speaker 2

Surely up and lived in a fire mountain Manhattan.

00:00:59 Speaker 1

So you're born in Joliet, IL and what date was that?

00:01:02 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:01:04 Speaker 2

That would be August 10th, 1920.

00:01:07 Speaker 1

OK and.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

Some family details. What did your parents do?

00:01:13 Speaker 2

My dad is a farmer.

00:01:15 Speaker 1

OK.

00:01:16 Speaker 1

And your mother?

00:01:17 Speaker 2

But this is just a.

00:01:18 Speaker 1

Housewife and how many sisters and brothers did you have?

00:01:23 Speaker 2

I had two sisters and four brothers.

00:01:27 Speaker 1

Ohh four brothers and OK.

00:01:28 Speaker 2

Seven family.

00:01:31 Speaker 1

Brothers did any of your brothers or any of your brothers in the service?

00:01:35 Speaker 2

My brother Grant, he was in the.

00:01:39 Speaker 1

Grant he was in the tank tank core in World War 2.

00:01:40 Speaker 2

Yeah, World War 2.

00:01:44 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:01:44 Speaker 2

OK.

00:01:45 Speaker 2

3rd Armored Division.

00:01:46 Speaker 1

Ohh, he was like General Patton. That's the third Armored Division, I think Patton.

00:01:51 Speaker 2

Ohh.

00:01:52 Speaker 1

OK.

00:01:52 Speaker 2

Wait a minute.

00:01:56 Speaker 1

The 3rd army? Yeah, 3rd army. That's different. OK.

00:01:58 Speaker 2

Yeah, obviously. Yeah. I think he was. I don't know what was they was in.

00:02:03 Speaker 1

OK, that's OK what did you do before entering the service?

00:02:10 Speaker 2

I was worked in.

00:02:13 Speaker 2

Construction. And then I was at ammunition.

00:02:17 Speaker 2

I worked at the ammunition plant out there, bloating bombs.

00:02:22 Speaker 1

Where, where was that plant?

00:02:23 Speaker 2

At Albert Albert arsenal.

00:02:26 Speaker 1

Ohh did that become finally the regular arsenal out?

00:02:30 Speaker 2

Eventually that wouldn't Wilmington and.

00:02:31 Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah. Wilmington. Uh-huh. That that was an arsenal. OK.

00:02:37 Speaker 2

Yeah. What's the construction there? And that was done. We went inside and the bomb loaded the line. I was working the night it blew up.

00:02:46 Speaker 1

Really one was that that was before you went into the service, right?

00:02:52 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:52 Speaker 1

Why? What happened?

00:02:54 Speaker 2

I think.

00:02:58 Speaker 2

On the minor of the line that was in another building away from us.

00:03:03 Speaker 2

Blew up the one of the mines must have slipped off the thing and blew up.

00:03:07 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:03:08 Speaker 2

And I think there was about 48 killed.

00:03:11 Speaker 1

Casualties. What year was that? Do you remember? Roughly just roughly.

00:03:15 Speaker 2

Alright.

00:03:19 Speaker 1

OK, Mr. Breen said that date is June 5th, 1942, and he has the actual newspaper from the Joliet Herald News that tells adored US whole story about this explosion. 56 dead or missing and 41 hurt in Elwood ordinance blast. That's the headline.

00:03:38 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:03:40 Speaker 1

That's great that you still have that they have a casualty list here.

00:03:45 Speaker 1

Were you injured at all in this?

00:03:47 Speaker 2

No, I wasn't. I was in the bottom loading line and it was mine loading line that blew up.

00:03:48 Speaker 1

So.

00:03:51 Speaker 1

Wow, OK.

00:03:53 Speaker 2

But they just came down. I was up in the.

00:03:56 Speaker 2

Platform 404,000 LB. Bomb.

00:04:01 Speaker 2

And still with amatol mixture of the ammonia nitrate.

00:04:05

MHM.

00:04:08 Speaker 2

And.

00:04:10 Speaker 2

I just got through 4:00 to 3:00 in the morning.

00:04:13 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:04:15 Speaker 2

Just get through Portland and come down off the steps.

00:04:19 Speaker 2

Send the lights out.

00:04:24 Speaker 1

Oh, you had a bomb shelter there?

00:04:26 Speaker 2

Well, yeah, it was like where we changed our clothes. We couldn't wear the same clothes working in around the powder and stuff.

00:04:28 Speaker 1

Uh-huh.

00:04:30 Speaker 1

Ohh.

00:04:32 Speaker 1

Oh, I see.

00:04:34 Speaker 1

Wow. So how old were you then?

00:04:38 Speaker 2

Was about 21 I guess.

00:04:40 Speaker 1

21 so.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

When did you go into the army? I I know you have the details here. How old were you when you went into?

00:04:49 Speaker 1

The army.

00:04:50 Speaker 2

I was.

00:04:52 Speaker 2

22 I think.

00:04:53 Speaker 1

Oh, OK. You entered the army November 12, 1942, army and. And you said you were drafted.

00:04:53 Speaker 2

I went in at 42.

00:05:04 Speaker 1

111242 and.

00:05:13 Speaker 1

When you were drafted, they just put you directly in the army. You didn't choose the army or could you choose any other branch of service or?

00:05:20 Speaker 2

No, and they just crashed again. What you wear? They want to do it.

00:05:23 Speaker 1

When when they draft you, generally they do. What if you enlist? Then you can choose what branch you go into.

00:05:30 Speaker 1

So where did you did you did you enlist right in Joliet was there?

00:05:36 Speaker 2

I was trapped in Joliet and I went up to Camp Cramp camp.

00:05:37 Speaker 1

Crafted better.

00:05:41 Speaker 1

Well, when you was there was there like a recruiting office in Joliet that you had to go to and sign papers and stuff?

00:05:48 Speaker 1

To get him to get drafted.

00:05:51 Speaker 1

How did they contact you? But yeah, I know you got a letter by mail. I know. But where did you go once you got that letter?

00:05:59 Speaker 1

Did you go to an office and Juliet that? That's what I'm asking. Just was there a special office there?

00:06:04 Speaker 2

For I got a letter that told me to report for service.

00:06:11 Speaker 1

Where did you report? Is what I'm asking. Where did you?

00:06:13 Speaker 1

Go.

00:06:14 Speaker 1

Do you remember?

00:06:18 Speaker 2

I think it was here at Joliet and then we had a train and later on and to go, we went to camp.

00:06:19 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:06:21 Speaker 1

Frame OK.

00:06:25 Speaker 1

Grant was was Camp Grant near Chicago someplace. Where was it?

00:06:25

OK.

00:06:32 Speaker 1

Or was it in Wisconsin, where where was campgrounds?

00:06:34 Speaker 2

Illinois. Yeah, and.

00:06:35 Speaker 1

It was in Illinois, but he took a train there then, too, from Chicago to Camp Grant.

00:06:42 Speaker 1

I never heard of Camp Grant.

00:06:44 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, Gabriel, get discharged from there too.

00:06:47 Speaker 1

So it must have been.

00:06:50 Speaker 1

Yeah, it must have been somewhere near, you know, near Chicago or somewhere.

00:06:55 Speaker 2

They said they had campground up there and then they had the Navy yards up there and the Navy.

00:06:56 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:07:01 Speaker 2

Training station up there too.

00:07:03 Speaker 1

Well, near Great Lakes.

00:07:06 Speaker 1

Was it around Great Lakes? No, I mean, this is World War 2. So I mean, so I wasn't around and I don't know where. Where there was. I'm just wondering where this camp grant was.

00:07:15 Speaker 3

Looking it up.

00:07:16 Speaker 1

OK, could have been the north near around.

00:07:20 Speaker 1

Ohh Rockford.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

Camp grant. Rockford. Wow, that's news to me. I never heard of it.

00:07:28 Speaker 1

In Rockford. OK, that's good.

00:07:32 Speaker 1

So what did you do in your early days of training? First of all, how long were you at Camp Grant?

00:07:39 Speaker 1

How many weeks or months or however long?

00:07:43 Speaker 2

I don't know, I think.

00:07:45 Speaker 1

Roughly just 8 weeks, a couple of months of.

00:07:47 Speaker 2

Maybe two weeks in Camp Grant.

00:07:50 Speaker 1

OK.

00:07:51 Speaker 2

And then we went out to Campon, California.

00:07:54 Speaker 1

Camp hang it.

00:07:57 Speaker 1

HHN Han, are you saying California? Well, what did you do at Camp Grant for the two weeks that you were there? How did they? What did they show you?

00:07:59 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:08:06 Speaker 1

How did you train?

00:08:08 Speaker 2

Oh, it was mostly try. It was just.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

Cleaning up around the barracks and stuff like that, we really didn't. It wasn't really a training camp. It was.

00:08:18

Uh.

00:08:20 Speaker 2

Deploy where they send them.

00:08:22 Speaker 1

OK, depots. So you went really out to Camp Han and you probably had some basic training out there then. OK, fine. What did you do? That's where I'm interested in. What was your basic training? What did that consist of?

00:08:28 Speaker 2

Ohh yeah, we got to make some training there.

00:08:36 Speaker 2

I was in.

00:08:38 Speaker 2

Headquarters company.

00:08:39 Speaker 1

OK.

00:08:41 Speaker 2

And headquarters supply.

00:08:45 Speaker 2

And we would drive and driving the truck around with supplies, picking up ammunition and picking up food and bring it back to the company. And then they.

00:08:50 Speaker 1

OK.

00:08:57 Speaker 2

Separated.

00:08:59 Speaker 1

OK. Well, didn't you ever get basic training on marching and military stuff? Did that all happen at camp? Huh. OK, OK, so and how did you? How did you adapt to that? How did you feel being away from home and stuff like that? The food and the barracks. How did you adjust?

00:09:02 Speaker 2

Oh yeah, we've had marching hip.

00:09:06 Speaker 2

Can't have fun? Yeah.

00:09:19 Speaker 2

Didn't really like it, but much you.

00:09:21 Speaker 1

Could do so you just sort of grin and bear it, huh?

00:09:26 Speaker 2

You told me, yes.

00:09:29 Speaker 1

While you were with other guys your age and they all were, was this the first time you were away from home?

00:09:35 Speaker 1

Yes, OK.

00:09:38 Speaker 1

OK, so how long did you stay there at Camp, Hon?

00:09:51 Speaker 1

A couple of months or.

00:09:52 Speaker 2

Something. Yeah, it's about 6 months at least.

00:09:55 Speaker 1

Only six months, OK.

00:09:58 Speaker 1

So you got your training and you were driving the truck and supply truck around in camp Pan.

00:10:04 Speaker 1

All right and.

00:10:06 Speaker 1

You more or less.

00:10:07 Speaker 2

Is the protection.

00:10:08 Speaker 2

Of March fields that was right across the highway from the we was an anti aircraft and they it was the Air Force and their.

00:10:20 Speaker 2

Fields and they was protecting the southern part of California.

00:10:23 Speaker 1

OK, Southern California.

00:10:30 Speaker 1

OK, so you were there for six months. So now what happened after six months?

00:10:35 Speaker 2

Then we was.

00:10:39 Speaker 2

I think we went down to.

00:10:45 Speaker 2

Florida to Camp Gordon Johnson.

00:10:48 Speaker 1

Wow, Gordon Johnson. That's the name of a camp there. You're saying all new camps that I never heard of? Camp Gordon Johnson in Florida. What part of Florida was it?

00:10:52 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:10:59 Speaker 1

Do you think?

00:11:00 Speaker 2

And it goes up around the pan pan and.

00:11:03 Speaker 1

OK.

00:11:06 Speaker 2

We got more amphibious training, the stuff there.

00:11:09 Speaker 1

OK. Oh, OK. Would would that be considered any kind of specialized training amphibious?

00:11:17 Speaker 1

Or not just regular training.

00:11:20 Speaker 2

No, just regular training.

00:11:21 Speaker 1

OK. Did you ever get any classroom training, any teaching about stuff about during this whole period?

00:11:27 Speaker 2

No.

00:11:27 Speaker 1

No classroom.

00:11:30 Speaker 1

OK.

00:11:33 Speaker 1

So, alright, you're in. You're in Florida now. How long? How long period were you there, do you think?

00:11:41 Speaker 2

Not too long maybe.

00:11:47 Speaker 2

Couple of weeks.

00:11:48 Speaker 1

Oh OK so.

00:11:50 Speaker 2

And then we went up in Tennessee and ran maneuvers.

00:11:54 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:11:55 Speaker 2

Blue and the Gray army was.

00:11:57 Speaker 1

Maneuvers in Tennessee.

00:11:58 Speaker 2

Again.

00:12:00 Speaker 1

Blue and Gray.

00:12:01 Speaker 2

Packs and rubbers.

00:12:03 Speaker 1

OK. And then what?

00:12:07 Speaker 1

What happened after that?

00:12:09 Speaker 2

And I think we went to.

00:12:13 Speaker 2

For ***** for amphibious training.

00:12:16 Speaker 1

Fort Dix, NJ That's New Jersey.

00:12:18 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:12:20 Speaker 1

For amphibious training, OK and after you were finished with that then then what did you do? Did they ship you out overseas?

00:12:28 Speaker 2

They shipped this up to camp Miles Standish.

00:12:32 Speaker 2

In Massachusetts, I think it was.

00:12:34 Speaker 1

OK, after New Jersey.

00:12:36 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:12:37 Speaker 1

Miles Standish OK and.

00:12:40 Speaker 1

What did you do with these camps? You just got more training and stuff, different kind of training. Well.

00:12:47 Speaker 2

Mile Standage without a camp of Impartation to.

00:12:51 Speaker 1

Oh, I see. But they're leaving.

00:12:53 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:12:54 Speaker 1

OK.

00:12:55 Speaker 1

So you finally did leave then from Camp Miles Standish.

00:13:00 Speaker 2

Yeah. When the convoy over to.

00:13:03 Speaker 2

You come into Scotland.

00:13:06 Speaker 1

How did you get? What kind did you go on a liberty ship or a regular?

00:13:09 Speaker 1

Troop ship or.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

Kaiser.

00:13:11 Speaker 1

Kaiser ship OK.

00:13:12 Speaker 2

There's billing them in the pack this like sardines.

00:13:16 Speaker 1

How was your travel across the ocean? How was this? Was it? Was there a storm? Did you? How did you fare?

00:13:23 Speaker 2

Well, we had we had to move around.

00:13:27 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah.

00:13:29 Speaker 2

And went to the big convoy.

00:13:32 Speaker 1

So.

00:13:32 Speaker 2

Just quite a while to get over there, I don't know.

00:13:34 Speaker 1

And did you have? Did you run into any rough weather while you were sailing?

00:13:39 Speaker 1

To Europe.

00:13:40 Speaker 2

It's kind of rough there.

00:13:42 Speaker 1

That people get sick on that.

00:13:44 Speaker 2

Yeah, well, yeah. You got sick there.

00:13:47 Speaker 2

Stand up to the tree going one way and.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

Going the other way, I get over there. He's never coming back.

00:13:57 Speaker 1

So it was not not too pleasant all the time, huh? Alright. So how long did that trip take you?

00:14:03 Speaker 1

On the water, do you remember?

00:14:06 Speaker 1

Probably a couple of weeks if.

00:14:07 Speaker 2

You think it's going to?

00:14:08 Speaker 2

Take a couple of weeks, yeah.

00:14:11 Speaker 1

So you know big convoy.

00:14:13 Speaker 1

Do you remember how many ships there were roughly in that convoy?

00:14:17 Speaker 1

OK.

00:14:18 Speaker 1

Quite a few Mr. if there was a kind of and I'll go into Europe. So where did you finally land when you got to Europe?

00:14:26 Speaker 1

OK.

00:14:27 Speaker 2

And then we went to.

00:14:31 Speaker 2

Whales.

00:14:33 Speaker 1

Whales, OK.

00:14:36 Speaker 1

Did you get off and do anything there or you just moved on to other places?

00:14:42 Speaker 2

In Wales we could add more training.

00:14:46 Speaker 1

Or more, what kind of training?

00:14:49 Speaker 1

And what else?

00:14:50 Speaker 2

Well, like, yeah.

00:14:52 Speaker 2

Ever. Life. Yeah, we had, right.

00:14:54 Speaker 1

How about shooting and stuff? You know, rifle practice.

00:14:57 Speaker 1

And stuff like that.

00:15:01 Speaker 1

So was any of this considered specialized training or this was all just into regular regular training?

00:15:05 Speaker 2

Regular training.

00:15:09 Speaker 1

OK, so you trained in Wales for like how long? Another couple of weeks or something?

00:15:16 Speaker 2

Yeah, we must have been there a month or so.

00:15:19 Speaker 1

OK.

00:15:21 Speaker 1

Month.

00:15:22 Speaker 1

All right. And then what happened after whales?

00:15:28 Speaker 2

Well then, the whales there, that's when I had to go to the hospital and come mark the whales.

00:15:32 Speaker 1

Oh, tell me about your, OK?

00:15:35 Speaker 1

And where are whales?

00:15:37 Speaker 2

Carmarthen.

00:15:38 Speaker 1

Carmarthen.

00:15:40 Speaker 1

All right, tell me the circumstances that.

00:15:43 Speaker 2

It was a big hospital.

00:15:44 Speaker 1

There, huh. Is that an army?

00:15:46 Speaker 1

Hospital, yes.

00:15:48 Speaker 1

And what did you what did they find out?

00:15:51 Speaker 2

I had a hernia operation.

00:15:53 Speaker 1

Hernia surgery.

00:15:55 Speaker 1

And how long were you hospitalized?

00:15:59 Speaker 2

Well.

00:16:01 Speaker 2

At that time it is end of a hernia operation is from 15 days in bed.

00:16:06 Speaker 1

Right. Uh-huh. I know today. No. But yes. Yes. Yeah. Right. So you were. And you were a healthy young man, I'm sure at that time. So 15 days, huh? Well, they cut you up pretty good, you know, with that, then.

00:16:09 Speaker 2

Today.

00:16:21 Speaker 1

OK, so you're in hospital 15 days. And then what happened after that?

00:16:25 Speaker 2

Then then there.

00:16:40 Speaker 2

Believe.

00:16:42 Speaker 1

Well, you're talking in Wales, so from Wales to Normandy. I mean, like, when did you get to Wales? You went in in November. So when did you finally get to Wales? Do you remember? Like what month? That.

00:16:52 Speaker 1

Would.

00:16:52 Speaker 1

Have been how long were you already in the in the army before you got to Wales?

00:16:58 Speaker 1

Are you there?

00:16:58 Speaker 2

Today, about 11 months.

00:17:00 Speaker 1

11 months.

00:17:01 Speaker 1

Almost a year.

00:17:02 Speaker 2

11 months in the States and.

00:17:06 Speaker 2

The time was overseas.

00:17:07 Speaker 1

OK, eleven months in the states. All right, that's good.

00:17:10 Speaker 1

So it was 1943. Now you were you were in Wales.

00:17:15 Speaker 1

What is the highest rank you ever achieved in the service?

00:17:19 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:17:19 Speaker 2

Buck Sergeant Buck, Sergeant.

00:17:23 Speaker 1

All right, so.

00:17:28 Speaker 1

Tell me now what happened after you got out of the hospital and you're in good shape. Assuming they assume you're in good shape again.

00:17:36 Speaker 2

What is the new replacement tempo?

00:17:38 Speaker 1

OK, replacement depot.

00:17:41 Speaker 2

Yeah, they transferred us all around different places there.

00:17:46 Speaker 1

Now what? What unit or what branch were you in this whole time? What was your battalion or whatever?

00:17:56 Speaker 2

462nd in the aircraft.

00:17:59 Speaker 1

Or 62nd anti aircraft.

00:18:03 Speaker 1

Battalion. OK. So where did your whole battalion go? Or were you with them the whole time? Like after you got out of the hospital, did you go? You joined, you rejoined your battalion?

00:18:13 Speaker 2

No, I didn't get back with the replacement depot.

00:18:16 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:18:16 Speaker 1

OK.

00:18:19 Speaker 1

So what happened then?

00:18:21 Speaker 2

And then the invasion.

00:18:25 Speaker 1

So you went with who were you? Who were you joined with when you were in the replacement depot? What was your battalion?

00:18:34 Speaker 1

You said you didn't rejoin your same battalion. You were just in the replacement depot, but were you still considered belonging to that Italian?

00:18:43 Speaker 2

I suppose, but they was. They had the guys in there from all different outfits.

00:18:48 Speaker 1

OK.

00:18:49 Speaker 1

All over.

00:18:50 Speaker 2

Some of some of that.

00:18:52 Speaker 2

Texas, Oklahoma Division or something, the Victory Division.

00:18:56 Speaker 1

All different divisions.

00:18:58 Speaker 2

Couple guys in there, they look like ghosts. They have the.

00:19:03 Speaker 2

Mask on their face and there was a there was cooked, but the gas stove would blow.

00:19:08 Speaker 2

Up and burn them and.

00:19:10 Speaker 1

Really.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

They look terrible.

00:19:13 Speaker 1

Huh.

00:19:14 Speaker 1

So when did you finally get to go into battle into into actually into the front or wherever you were?

00:19:24 Speaker 2

We was over there with.

00:19:27 Speaker 2

Before the breakthrough at Saint Louis, we was in the hedgerows. Over there, there wasn't the battle, but maybe it was right.

00:19:36 Speaker 2

Other than that big chick, Charlie, come over that night about twilight and boy, the first time they he come over there.

00:19:48 Speaker 2

Flying this airplane, there was, yes, any aircraft behind the US and 90s and 40s and 50s and 60s and.

00:19:59 Speaker 2

They all started shooting. We was didn't even know what was going on.

00:20:03 Speaker 1

Well, where were you? What were you doing while this was going on?

00:20:07 Speaker 2

It was in the replacement temple, but we had this one area we was.

00:20:12 Speaker 2

Station.

00:20:12 Speaker 1

So you were attacked, is what you're saying.

00:20:17 Speaker 1

What were you doing in the replacement depot?

00:20:20 Speaker 2

Waiting to be as 7.

00:20:22 Speaker 2

Assign some other place.

00:20:23 Speaker 1

OK.

00:20:25 Speaker 1

All right. And when you finally did, you get reassigned to some other place?

00:20:33 Speaker 2

It's quite a while before they got into the 80th Infantry.

00:20:37 Speaker 1

80 attention trail.

00:20:40 Speaker 2

Company K 31950 interior.

00:20:43 Speaker 1

Company K.

00:20:45 Speaker 1

319.

00:20:49 Speaker 1

OK, now so. So what happened between the time that you were in this replacement depot?

00:20:56 Speaker 1

When you're talking about these planes coming in and shooting where they shooting?

00:21:00 Speaker 1

The depot there.

00:21:03 Speaker 2

It seemed like he was just flying around and I don't know why.

00:21:10 Speaker 2

If you do it, I mean.

00:21:12 Speaker 2

What airplane isn't going to help much?

00:21:14 Speaker 1

You're talking about the enemy or the enemy was coming in OK?

00:21:15 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:21:19 Speaker 1

And they they, like, attacked the depot.

00:21:23 Speaker 1

The enemy planes.

00:21:23 Speaker 2

Alright.

00:21:24 Speaker 2

He didn't see me, was that he wasn't attacking anybody. He was just flying around Observably, yes.

00:21:29 Speaker 1

Oh, oh, observation. Claims like reporting. Reconnaissance. These things reconnaissance.

00:21:35 Speaker 1

OK, so let me get back to you. When when you when you got into the infantry and you were shipped?

00:21:42 Speaker 3

Where?

00:21:52 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:21:54 Speaker 2

Well, for a while when I was in the.

00:22:03 Speaker 2

Replacement there for there.

00:22:06 Speaker 2

I was in the post office.

00:22:09

OK.

00:22:09 Speaker 2

They said they needed some help there and asked me if I could.

00:22:13 Speaker 2

MHM.

00:22:14 Speaker 2

Would want to be interested, I said. I didn't care.

00:22:18 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:22:19 Speaker 2

So I was there for a while.

00:22:21 Speaker 1

OK, for months.

00:22:24 Speaker 2

Yeah, I suppose.

00:22:26 Speaker 1

OK, So what? When did when were you shipped out? When? When did you go into the 80th Infantry?

00:22:32 Speaker 1

Company K.

00:22:43 Speaker 1

Well, which one which which? Which unit is the one that was at the Battle of boats?

00:22:47 Speaker 1

Because you said you were there. Where were you with the bad luck? The balls? That was 1940.

00:22:51 Speaker 2

Four, OK. Yeah. 85th St. Division then.

00:22:55 Speaker 1

OK, that's what I'm asking you now. When you finally after the post office and after you were working there, they finally got you into this 80th Infantry and then and they shipped you to.

00:23:04

Yes.

00:23:07 Speaker 1

Where with the 80th Infantry, I want you to tell me in your words.

00:23:24 Speaker 3

How did you get to?

00:23:27 Speaker 3

This point, Dad, how did you get to be with General Patton in the infantry?

00:23:28 Speaker 1

Right.

00:23:35 Speaker 3

That just they just told you to.

00:23:37 Speaker 3

Go there.

00:23:42 Speaker 2

Pack your stuff up in the on the 85th St. OK?

00:23:46 Speaker 3

Do you remember what city it was?

00:23:50 Speaker 3

Or were they sent you 2 from Wales? Was it over Germany or Austria or?

00:24:00 Speaker 2

It would have been.

00:24:02 Speaker 2

Probably your friends and.

00:24:03 Speaker 3

Police. OK, so you went to France. And what happened when you got there?

00:24:04 Speaker 1

OK.

00:24:11 Speaker 2

It's.

00:24:16 Speaker 1

Well, that what happened in France, I mean, can you describe what you did there in France?

00:24:25 Speaker 3

Were there a lot of battles? Were you fighting?

00:24:30 Speaker 2

It was.

00:24:34 Speaker 2

Was with the mortar squad machine gun. The mortar squad OK?

00:24:36 Speaker 1

OK.

00:24:40 Speaker 1

And what happened?

00:24:43 Speaker 2

And.

00:24:45 Speaker 2

And they just.

00:24:49 Speaker 2

Whoever they sent us there.

00:24:52 Speaker 2

And I don't.

00:24:56 Speaker 1

Well, can you describe what you were doing? What what, what did you do? What did you actually do when you were?

00:25:01 Speaker 1

There you were. You've got in the border section.

00:25:03 Speaker 1

And the martyr, martyr, or second, and what was your job in the martyr section?

00:25:12 Speaker 1

What did you do with the mortars?

00:25:15 Speaker 2

I.

00:25:18 Speaker 2

And the mortars fund carry one of the mortars. OK. And then there is another men carrying ammunition stuff for that.

00:25:27 Speaker 1

OK.

00:25:29 Speaker 1

And what did you load? Loading guns? Big guns or what? What did you do with the martyrs?

00:25:35 Speaker 1

Did you load them into the gun?

00:25:37 Speaker 2

Yeah, but it was a.

00:25:41 Speaker 2

Doing the great big borders, it was a small.

00:25:44 Speaker 1

OK.

00:25:45 Speaker 2

Certain mortars or dead infantry.

00:25:45 Speaker 1

Small orders.

00:25:48 Speaker 1

OK, for infantry, well, describe your your duties. What did you do? What was your reaction? What? What were you doing there when you were in the? You say you say here you were in the battle of the bulge from December 16th of 44.

00:26:03 Speaker 1

To January 25th of 1945.

00:26:07 Speaker 1

So could you describe any of the battles that you were in during that time?

00:26:15 Speaker 1

What happened?

00:26:20 Speaker 2

The daughters and.

00:26:22 Speaker 2

Traction. That's when the battle of the balls, they couldn't get any supplies or anything and there was rainy and foggy weather.

00:26:30 Speaker 2

There.

00:26:32 Speaker 2

We was loaded on trucks.

00:26:34

And.

00:26:35 Speaker 2

Set up north to where the metal divulge was OK.

00:26:40 Speaker 2

And we was with.

00:26:45 Speaker 2

The 18th was the first one to make contact with the.

00:26:49 Speaker 2

Battle of the balls in the regiment.

00:26:51 Speaker 2

For 3/19.

00:26:53 Speaker 1

You were 39.

00:26:57 Speaker 1

So you were fighting the the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge, which that was in Belgium. Wasn't that close to France? Yeah.

00:27:07 Speaker 1

All right. Can you describe some of the some of the scenes, what was going on? Can you picture describe what you saw there and what was going on there with?

00:27:14 Speaker 1

The Battle of the Bulge.

00:27:16 Speaker 1

What did you see? You yourself personally?

00:27:21 Speaker 2

They know the damn fold.

00:27:22 Speaker 1

OK, it was winter, right? It was winter time was December. It was around Christmas time.

00:27:30 Speaker 2

Yeah, around Christmas time.

00:27:33 Speaker 2

Some patterns that he could move the whole damn army up there in 24 hours.

00:27:41 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:27:44 Speaker 1

So you were in, you were in patterns. You were with Pat, General Patton in the infantry.

00:27:50 Speaker 2

And 3rd army.

00:27:51 Speaker 1

3rd Army, right?

00:27:53 Speaker 1

Alright. Can you can you tell me some more about what did you have to dig? Foxholes? Did you? Well, that's what I want to hear.

00:27:57 Speaker 2

Oh yeah.

00:27:58 Speaker 2

Every time we stopped, we dig Fox Song.

00:28:00 Speaker 1

That's what I want to hear every time you stop. What else? How about your weapons? Did you have enough? Do you have enough equipment? Did you have enough bullets and everything else or whatever?

00:28:10 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:28:12 Speaker 1

Where you get resupplied? Resupplied.

00:28:16 Speaker 1

With the other things. So how long were you yourself there in the battle of the bulge? How long did you participate in that?

00:28:23 Speaker 1

Do you remember?

00:28:30 Speaker 2

And I think we left there and went back down to.

00:28:32 Speaker 1

France, but I still want to talk about when you were still in the battle. What happened? Did you witness a lot of destruction? And how did you feel? Did you see people getting killed? Your friends being killed, the enemy being killed? Did you see it personally?

00:28:47 Speaker 2

Some of the dead Germans lay there in.

00:28:50 Speaker 1

The. Yeah, well, that's what I'm saying. How did you feel about witnessing casualties?

00:28:56 Speaker 1

And how about Americans who died too? I know. Are your buddies?

00:29:00 Speaker 2

Well, no, I didn't see any.

00:29:03 Speaker 2

That was it.

00:29:05 Speaker 1

You saw mostly dead German, so yeah, OK.

00:29:09 Speaker 1

So did you have?

00:29:09 Speaker 1

Any.

00:29:10 Speaker 1

Feeling about them being there dead or didn't care.

00:29:22 Speaker 1

Well, exactly. Exactly. Right. Well, that's what I'm asking. I'm asking for your personal opinion of what you saw, what you witnessed there in the service.

00:29:34 Speaker 1

And how about buddies that you've made friends with when you were there, do you? Do you still stay in touch with them at all today or anything? Any men from were still living on the service or are they are?

00:29:44 Speaker 2

Yeah, I think they're all young.

00:29:45 Speaker 1

Well now, but I mean, after you came back home and they were young men then did you were you in contact with any of your buddies after the war?

00:29:53 Speaker 2

A couple of them come down from Chicago.

00:29:56 Speaker 1

Oh, OK.

00:30:00 Speaker 1

All right, so now.

00:30:02 Speaker 1

Go ahead.

00:30:05 Speaker 1

You're.

00:30:07 Speaker 1

You're after the battle of the Bulge. What? Where did you go after? After the battle was over?

00:30:13 Speaker 1

And you survived. Where did you go?

00:30:18 Speaker 2

We stayed in the infantry there, but then they went back down to.

00:30:22 Speaker 2

France and Louis.

00:30:25 Speaker 1

OK.

00:30:27 Speaker 1

You went to France?

00:30:31 Speaker 1

Remember, you don't remember what part of France that was what cities names or anything like that.

00:30:47 Speaker 1

OK, so that battle of the bulge ended.

00:30:51 Speaker 1

They have information about the battle was over like January 25th of 1945 and what happened after after January of 1945. We have a map here of Donald's daughter Susan. Susan is.

00:31:09 Speaker 1

They we're looking at a map.

00:31:14 Speaker 1

Where did you get?

00:31:14 Speaker 1

This path season.

00:31:15 Speaker 3

That's. That's his war, man.

00:31:16 Speaker 1

The Blue Ridge path. It's called through France, Luxembourg, Germany and Austria and.

00:31:24 Speaker 1

Here this is.

00:31:25 Speaker 1

Passed by the AEF Field press sensor for mailing home. Ohh, this was a map that.

00:31:32 Speaker 1

You.

00:31:32 Speaker 1

Could mail home to your family? That's what it looks like. Compiled and drawn in the G3 section of headquarters, 80th Infantry Division, 22nd of May.

00:31:43 Speaker 1

1945 this was up.

00:31:47 Speaker 1

Map. I take it that.

00:31:49 Speaker 1

You can either keep on your own or send to your send home if you want to to show to show your family where you were at or where.

00:31:56 Speaker 1

You had been.

00:31:57 Speaker 1

Wow, interesting. It shows all the beaches and Omaha Beach.

00:32:03 Speaker 2

We.

00:32:04 Speaker 2

Have another.

00:32:05 Speaker 2

Map 2.

00:32:07 Speaker 2

It was the.

00:32:13 Speaker 2

Infantry regiment, where they were that this was the whole thing.

00:32:17 Speaker 1

This is like a general yeah. This is a general general map showing the rivers in France and in Belgium.

00:32:26 Speaker 1

And all the.

00:32:31 Speaker 1

Showing on.

00:32:32 Speaker 2

That's still this is where.

00:32:33 Speaker 1

That's done, yeah.

00:32:36 Speaker 1

Yeah. What is this? What is this? Indicate this is where you you went?

00:32:40 Speaker 2

Now this is.

00:32:42 Speaker 2

Maybe that's the Rhine river.

00:32:44 Speaker 1

All of the Siegfried Line or something SIG freed line. This is the Rhine River. This here.

00:32:47 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:32:51 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:32:53 Speaker 1

OK, we're trying to.

00:33:02 Speaker 1

Unless this helps and we bring some stuff.

00:33:05

Oh.

00:33:11 Speaker 1

There's a little legend on this map. It's showing the SIG freed line. That's what he was talking about.

00:33:17 Speaker 1

And the attack route with the arrows. Here's the attack route and the return route route.

00:33:26 Speaker 1

And imagine no line which is this little hook thing. Oh, I see. The Maginot Line was here. And the Siegfried line. Wow. International boundaries. As of one September 1939. This is a large map. It's probably 2 feet by three feet.

00:33:45 Speaker 1

Down the.

00:33:47 Speaker 1

You could see it's an old old Napa. The more the more area. The whole European theater here and where the troops went. Interesting shows Germany doing shows the cities and yeah, see it's where where they attacked and then where they returned to their.

00:34:05 Speaker 1

Interesting. Yeah. And then back. They didn't go into Czechoslovakia, though. No, they just in Germany and Poland. Poland is in here.

00:34:05 Speaker 2

Here is the check.

00:34:15 Speaker 1

Harris, Poland, up here.

00:34:17 Speaker 1

And Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy.

00:34:22 Speaker 1

Most of this is Germany. Germany. Yeah, all Germany, all Germany.

00:34:25 Speaker 2

This is the. Let's see.

00:34:28 Speaker 2

This.

00:34:29 Speaker 1

Go then up there. Way up there. Yeah. So this is Poland here, because it's Czechoslovakian. It goes further.

00:34:35 Speaker 1

Wow. Interesting.

00:34:35 Speaker 2

Because I know we will check with Slovakia because we got.

00:34:38

Oh.

00:34:39 Speaker 2

Time that we went into.

00:34:42 Speaker 1

Yeah, well, OK, and this, this map's got great figure. It's called the Blue Ridge Path, and that's through France, Luxembourg, Germany and Asheville.

00:34:42 Speaker 2

You kept to a frog.

00:34:52 Speaker 1

Interesting. They're going to close this up. That's it's in sections here. I don't want to. It's delicate. We don't want to RIP it.

00:34:58 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:35:01 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:35:02

Yeah.

00:35:03 Speaker 1

We have some written here by Susan and now they've got her book inwald April of 1945. Tell me about that now I after you got back from France.

00:35:14 Speaker 1

War, that part of the war was over.

00:35:19 Speaker 1

What happened in Buchenwald?

00:35:19 Speaker 2

Hello.

00:35:22 Speaker 2

If we commit to that.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

They're in the.

00:35:29 Speaker 2

People would have starved to come.

00:35:31 Speaker 2

Out to see us?

00:35:33 Speaker 2

And.

00:35:35 Speaker 1

Where were you? Where were you? Were you in Germany then?

00:35:39 Speaker 1

Was that camp in Germany broken world?

00:35:44 Speaker 1

I'm not sure I know the other. A lot of them were in Poland and stuff, so I was just wondering if you were up there.

00:35:48

Yeah.

00:35:52 Speaker 1

OK so.

00:35:54 Speaker 1

What the war?

00:35:56 Speaker 1

Was over. Well, D-Day was over in 1944.

00:36:01 Speaker 1

D-Day was June 6, 1944. Now you're talking 1945.

00:36:07 Speaker 1

A year later.

00:36:09 Speaker 1

No, can't be were they still in those prisons a year later?

00:36:15 Speaker 1

The people, Susan.

00:36:19 Speaker 3

It booking Wald was in.

00:36:23 Speaker 3

Weimar Germany.

00:36:24 Speaker 1

Why am I OK? But what we're looking at, we're thinking about the dates, you know, when they were attacked.

00:36:25

Yeah.

00:36:29 Speaker 1

It was well.

00:36:31 Speaker 1

OK, so those people were still in the prison camps, even though the actual war itself was over.

00:36:38 Speaker 1

But they were not released yet or they didn't know or they didn't tell them or something. So.

00:36:43 Speaker 1

So OK, you.

00:36:44 Speaker 2

I don't.

00:36:49 Speaker 2

All the way around the room.

00:36:50 Speaker 1

Ohh my goodness.

00:36:52 Speaker 2

Quick line going on top of them.

00:36:56 Speaker 1

Mr. Breen has original photos that he took, I guess, who took these pictures? Ohh, one of the soldiers that took pictures. These are small pictures which his daughter had blown up into 8 by 10.

00:37:01 Speaker 2

Brendan mine.

00:37:05 Speaker 2

And give them to me.

00:37:12 Speaker 1

Black and white, you know, gloss these horrible, horrible pictures of Buchenwald. And it says right here that they were liberated and.

00:37:20 Speaker 1

Evidence of Nazi atrocities etched forever in the faces of the living dead. At Buchenwald, the camp liberated in April of 1945, and here's pictures of Ben standing in striped.

00:37:34 Speaker 1

Uniform, not uniform, just outfits. You know that they had look looked terrible. Looked like, you know, wearing rags and stuff.

00:37:42 Speaker 1

Goodness skeletons. This man is a skeleton laying on, and another one laying on the table was just the skeleton. Horrible.

00:37:49 Speaker 2

Yeah, they they will. They will. And they golden their teeth, they take out their.

00:37:54 Speaker 1

MHM.

00:37:55 Speaker 2

Silver stuff.

00:37:56 Speaker 1

Yeah. So how did you?

00:38:01 Speaker 1

You. You went in there with your with the army, with the 319th Infantry.

00:38:07 Speaker 1

You wanted to broken world and what you describe, but what else did you see there?

00:38:15 Speaker 2

Should be in there.

00:38:17 Speaker 1

Ovens.

00:38:20 Speaker 2

Bones and stuff in there.

00:38:22 Speaker 1

Wow.

00:38:24 Speaker 2

And one camp we was in there, they had these.

00:38:30 Speaker 2

Like these cold hopper cars you see on the trains, but they were smaller because their tracks were smaller when they're in Europe.

00:38:34

Hmm.

00:38:40 Speaker 2

And they have skeletons in there. There's item where they send them out to.

00:38:44 Speaker 2

Skelet.

00:38:45 Speaker 1

In the in the in the coal hopper car.

00:38:50 Speaker 1

What did you guys do there? Did you? What? How did you help them or what did you do when you got there?

00:38:55 Speaker 2

Will you?

00:38:57 Speaker 2

Come in there and we would went around and we kept on going. And then the other outfits come in like the Red Cross or the army.

00:39:07 Speaker 2

Comes in and they take care of all that stuff and register them all.

00:39:09 Speaker 1

1:00 and 2:00.

00:39:12 Speaker 2

If.

00:39:14 Speaker 1

So you you actually didn't do anything for it then you just witnessed this and then you had to keep going on to, to, to finish your your job. But other organizations came in and helped to take care of them and do stuff for them.

00:39:18 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:39:27 Speaker 1

Wow. Well, how? What did you think about that after you were there?

00:39:32 Speaker 2

We was a very happy bunch.

00:39:35

Uh.

00:39:37 Speaker 1

Well.

00:39:41 Speaker 1

So where were you going after you left after you left booking? Well, where did you guys continue on to?

00:39:51 Speaker 2

I think we went on to.

00:39:56 Speaker 2

Hello.

00:39:57 Speaker 1

OK. Oh, that's why it's you've got pictures of yourself and he's got some photographs of himself in Czechoslovakia in Prague.

00:40:07 Speaker 1

So you were just like a what were you, like a mop up operation or something? Well.

00:40:12 Speaker 2

Well, we come in and take the town and then we move in on the outside and then like.

00:40:19 Speaker 2

Headquarters Company and the supply company to come in.

00:40:23 Speaker 2

Take our place in town there.

00:40:24 Speaker 1

OK.

00:40:26 Speaker 2

We we, we've run the Germans out and they take over Old Town.

00:40:29 Speaker 1

OK. Oh, I see. So you were like a frontline defense thing. You would chase the Germans. You were, like, chasing the Germans back into Germany, where you were in Germany. Yeah, but back to there. You were going after Hitler, I guess.

00:40:47 Speaker 1

OK.

00:40:49 Speaker 1

To take the town and then others would come in and hold the town.

00:40:54 Speaker 1

All right. So how long did that go on after 1945? How?

00:40:59 Speaker 1

While you were discharged, I see here January 3rd, 1946.

00:41:05 Speaker 1

So from April.

00:41:08 Speaker 1

45.

00:41:11 Speaker 1

And you're still going through Germany?

00:41:14 Speaker 1

Where were you? Where were you when the war ended? Do you remember? Well, you were out.

00:41:21 Speaker 1

If you got out in January, ohh you got out in 46. Where were you when the war ended? Where were you when the bomb fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

00:41:29 Speaker 1

That you heard about?

00:41:35 Speaker 2

I think we're back in France. We heard about that. I think we didn't.

00:41:38 Speaker 1

OK.

00:41:44 Speaker 2

I can get some window.

00:41:46 Speaker 2

When the Germans were rich.

00:41:46 Speaker 1

Your.

00:41:49 Speaker 2

Surrendered.

00:41:54 Speaker 1

Ohh, but how about when the atomic bomb fell? Don't you remember where you were when that happened?

00:42:01 Speaker 1

Because everybody in the worldwide, everybody knew that the bomb fell in August of 1945. Where were you when the war ended?

00:42:09 Speaker 1

That's officially they call that the end of the war. So I'm just wondering where you were in August the 45?

00:42:17 Speaker 1

After buchenwald.

00:42:30 Speaker 2

I know before they.

00:42:34 Speaker 2

Dropped a bomb.

00:42:36 Speaker 1

Uh-huh.

00:42:38 Speaker 2

Somebody.

00:42:41 Speaker 2

Started a rumor over there.

00:42:43 Speaker 2

He was going to send.

00:42:47 Speaker 2

Patton's Third Army down the.

00:42:51 Speaker 2

The South Pacific, they wanted to just start to.

00:43:01 Speaker 1

But that never.

00:43:01 Speaker 2

Happened. It spread real fast, you know.

00:43:03 Speaker 1

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

00:43:08 Speaker 1

OK, so but that never happened. OK, so anyway.

00:43:16 Speaker 1

You how? How did you? When did you finally start coming back home? When did you?

00:43:21 Speaker 1

When did you come back home?

00:43:30 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:43:33 Speaker 1

I'm just saying, like, what month, August, September, October. And how did you get home by ship? Did you come back over again by ship back to the USA?

00:43:40 Speaker 2

Yeah, we come back by ship.

00:43:42 Speaker 1

You don't remember which one.

00:43:45 Speaker 2

I think it was the the German luxury liner EB Alexander.

00:43:50 Speaker 1

Alexander.

00:43:51 Speaker 2

Yeah, that Americans are confiscated it the whole troops.

00:43:55 Speaker 1

That was a German liner, huh? Confiscated. OK.

00:44:00 Speaker 2

Good. It was kind of rough coming back to the water was bad. The storms.

00:44:07 Speaker 1

Rough seas.

00:44:09 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:44:10 Speaker 1

Storms. But you were on the ocean line and.

00:44:12 Speaker 2

They wouldn't wouldn't allow us up and next next we have to stay down below.

00:44:16 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:44:17 Speaker 1

Down below and how many? How many men do you?

00:44:19 Speaker 1

Think were on that ship.

00:44:22 Speaker 1

Thousands.

00:44:22 Speaker 2

I don't know. Yeah.

00:44:24 Speaker 1

Yeah, well, sure, they just crammed them in. How did you sleep? Did you have the rope for the ladder? Things like to sleep like 5 high or something, you know?

00:44:32 Speaker 2

Yeah, something like that, yeah.

00:44:34 Speaker 1

Uh-huh.

00:44:36 Speaker 1

Rope hammocks or something?

00:44:39 Speaker 1

So you don't remember too much about that. Probably you got home quicker than it did going there though. You just came straight home, right?

00:44:40 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:44:47 Speaker 2

Well, we was over there for a while.

00:44:52 Speaker 2

And then they they would send another guys in the replacement, they had a point system or something they would.

00:44:57 Speaker 1

Oh yeah. Point. That's right, they did.

00:44:59 Speaker 1

Have the point.

00:44:59 Speaker 1

System.

00:45:01 Speaker 1

So yeah, they have so many points.

00:45:04 Speaker 2

Yeah, and we.

00:45:06 Speaker 2

Who was down there? And they'd send new people in for us and it's in some of our older guys home.

00:45:13 Speaker 1

So that's how you got home too on the.

00:45:14 Speaker 1

Point system, yeah.

00:45:18 Speaker 1

OK. So you were on this ship and where did you land? Where did the ship land in?

00:45:21 Speaker 1

The United States.

00:45:24 Speaker 2

In New Jersey, I think.

00:45:26 Speaker 1

New Jersey.

00:45:29 Speaker 1

And.

00:45:32 Speaker 2

And then they.

00:45:33 Speaker 2

It was only there for.

00:45:36 Speaker 2

Three or four days and they said it's the campground I think.

00:45:40 Speaker 1

Back in Illinois camp. Yeah. OK. And then were you discharged from camp grants?

00:45:43 Speaker 2

That you got discharged from their.

00:45:45 Speaker 1

Discharge that was in Rockford. So how did you get home from Camp Grant train. Bus. Bus trip home.

00:45:50 Speaker 2

No bus.

00:45:55 Speaker 1

And how was your reception by family and friends? What you were? You were single. You were.

00:45:59 Speaker 1

Not married when you went to service you.

00:46:00 Speaker 2

No.

00:46:02 Speaker 1

Bus trip home.

00:46:04 Speaker 1

So how? How was your readjustment to civilian life? What did you do when you, after you recuperated and took a break? What did you do after that when you got home?

00:46:16 Speaker 2

On the steel mill then?

00:46:22 Speaker 1

US steel.

00:46:25 Speaker 1

And is that where you stayed for many?

00:46:27 Speaker 2

Years, or did you know I worked there about 5 years and then I worked for all the chemical company for about.

00:46:35 Speaker 2

It was blacks and chemical company, but it's called the organ wide mouth.

00:46:39 Speaker 1

Olin, the chemical company.

00:46:42 Speaker 2

31 years.

00:46:43 Speaker 1

31 years. Wow.

00:46:46 Speaker 1

OK, we're back on Mr. Brain said he worked at Olin Chemical for 31 years.

00:46:52 Speaker 1

Do you have you had contact with fellow veterans over the years earlier? I'm talking about.

00:46:59 Speaker 1

But did you contact any?

00:47:00 Speaker 1

Of your buddies that you were in the service with afterwards.

00:47:04 Speaker 2

No.

00:47:04 Speaker 1

You never went to any reunions or anything like that that they had.

00:47:09 Speaker 1

OK. Are you a member or were you a member in any veterans organizations like the VFW or the?

00:47:13 Speaker 2

No.

00:47:15 Speaker 1

Who do you belong to?

00:47:15 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:47:17 Speaker 2

VFW and Rockdale.

00:47:20 Speaker 1

Rockdale OK. Ohh yeah, that's the one right down.

00:47:23 Speaker 2

They close it up now. I guess they.

00:47:24 Speaker 1

Yeah, I think so. I see you can see.

00:47:26 Speaker 1

It right from the vote.

00:47:28 Speaker 1

So you were a member of the VFW?

00:47:35 Speaker 1

All right. Mr. Breen is a.

00:47:38 Speaker 1

He's a member of the VFW. He also has.

00:47:42 Speaker 1

Over to the other side, this is his current membership card for 2017.

00:47:48 Speaker 1

Oh, this is the American Legion. The American Legion, right. He's a member. 59 years. And I guess you said you were VFW also.

00:47:56 Speaker 2

No, there's American Legion.

00:47:58 Speaker 1

Oh, it's American Legion, not the Vienna.

00:48:01 Speaker 1

OK, American Legion.

00:48:02 Speaker 1

I have. I'm holding in my hand here a.

00:48:08 Speaker 1

Three pieces of paper that are and the envelope that he used while in the service for V mail official business Army.

00:48:17 Speaker 1

And Navy departments.

00:48:20 Speaker 1

Army it's just it's ripped off here. Oh, war and Navy departments. This is the tiny little female. Well, this is they shrunk it in size, but these are individual sheets where Donald's written to his mother and signs it, Donald.

00:48:36 Speaker 3

Alright.

00:48:36 Speaker 1

Let's see what year it is.

00:48:39 Speaker 1

1945 May 22nd, 1945.

00:48:45 Speaker 1

From Evans City, Evan C Austria writes, and he's got.

00:48:47 Speaker 2

That would be Austria.

00:48:51 Speaker 1

A letter to his mom.

00:48:52 Speaker 1

And then here's another one to.

00:48:56 Speaker 1

Emily, this is.

00:49:00 Speaker 1

Lauren Carse, Elwood IL oh right into his sister, writing her a letter. And here's the third one, it says greetings from Britain. It looks like a little cartoon.

00:49:02 Speaker 2

But there's my sister.

00:49:12 Speaker 1

Here.

00:49:14 Speaker 1

Margaret Jane. Mary Jane. Course Elwood. All mine. Oh, he's sending this to his niece. She had a picture of it, but this is the original V2 that shrunk down, though the brains are shrunk down, I guess. But this is what they would just send out. This was the mail. How long do you think it took for mail?

00:49:16 Speaker 2

So that's my niece, my sister's.

00:49:29 Speaker 1

To get from Europe to the United States.

00:49:32 Speaker 2

Well, we read. Write a letter.

00:49:32 Speaker 1

During the war.

00:49:34 Speaker 2

Home.

00:49:35 Speaker 2

We have to turn it into the company and an officer had to check it all and make.

00:49:37

Oh.

00:49:39 Speaker 1

Well, sure. It had to be censored, right? Censored a male. But how long do you think it took before this letter that you wrote, got home to your mother? How long would it take?

00:49:40 Speaker 2

He wasn't.

00:49:52 Speaker 2

I suppose about.

00:49:55 Speaker 2

They tried to.

00:49:56 Speaker 2

Do it as quick as they could. I saved it. Would take a week or two weeks, or maybe two weeks.

00:49:58 Speaker 1

Ohh I know.

00:50:01 Speaker 1

Ohh at at least at least two weeks I would say mostly I think the.

00:50:05 Speaker 1

Consensus is that took about two weeks for for a letter to get there from, especially from Europe.

00:50:10 Speaker 1

During war, you know?

00:50:12 Speaker 1

And vice versa too. So what else do we have? If we have some? Oh, and what was your? You said you had a buck Sergeant. And what about your medals? And and and honors? Mr. Brian doesn't have a display case, but he does have metals and others. Why don't.

00:50:26 Speaker 1

You tell me about.

00:50:27 Speaker 1

These and stripes he's got Sergeant stripes.

00:50:32 Speaker 1

He said he.

00:50:32 Speaker 3

OK.

00:50:33 Speaker 1

Was a buck Sergeant. Now, what's the difference between a buck Sergeant and the Sergei?

00:50:37 Speaker 2

Well, it looks like it's got three stripes. The staff Sergeant would have three stripes and then a black thing underneath there.

00:50:47 Speaker 1

Uh-huh.

00:50:48 Speaker 2

Then there's a tech Sergeant.

00:50:49 Speaker 1

Text Sergeant, right?

00:50:51 Speaker 2

And the master Sergeant and master Sergeant.

00:50:54 Speaker 1

Yeah, but that so like the, I know that the.

00:50:58 Speaker 1

The master Sergeant would have the stripes like he have up here and down here too, right? Something like that or something with the six stripes.

00:51:03

Yeah.

00:51:04 Speaker 2

Yeah, they have.

00:51:06 Speaker 2

And someone would have the one in the middle of the that'd be a first first Sergeant. That'd be coming, Sergeant.

00:51:09 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:51:13 Speaker 1

1st.

00:51:16 Speaker 1

OK, So what are some of these metals that you got? Why don't you describe as a?

00:51:19 Speaker 1

Red.

00:51:20 Speaker 1

A red metal already have it. OK. Why don't why don't we do that? We'll just. I can read it because I can read it into or you can read it into the record.

00:51:22 Speaker 3

I had it written down here in these pictures.

00:51:30 Speaker 3

Oh, OK.

00:51:30 Speaker 1

Why don't you read it? Susan's daughter is going to read them.

00:51:33 Speaker 1

Metal.

00:51:34 Speaker 3

He has the American Campaign Medal, which is this OK, striped one uh for the European, African, Middle Eastern theater. OK, he has two bronze battle stars.

00:51:39

Green.

00:51:47 Speaker 1

OK, two guns.

00:51:48 Speaker 3

He has a good conduct medal, which is this red and white striped one, and then he has.

00:51:54 Speaker 1

Two good contact.

00:51:55 Speaker 3

A lot. He thinks 1 might be his brothers.

00:51:58 Speaker 1

Ohh.

00:51:59 Speaker 3

And this red 1 is the World War 2V.

00:52:02 Speaker 2

Medal. OK. Yeah. And the dog takes. Ohh yeah.

00:52:06 Speaker 3

Oh, he's got his dog tags. And you said these were fur.

00:52:10 Speaker 3

Your infantry metals.

00:52:10 Speaker 1

Right.

00:52:13 Speaker 1

OK. Insurance free. Oh, yeah. With the rifle long.

00:52:15 Speaker 1

Rifle.

00:52:18 Speaker 1

OK, this is a pin.

00:52:21 Speaker 1

Rifle 1 rifle pen OK.

00:52:24 Speaker 1

Where you're a sharpshooter or anything.

00:52:27 Speaker 2

No, just.

00:52:28 Speaker 1

It's just regular.

00:52:30 Speaker 1

This one too.

00:52:32 Speaker 3

Yeah, I think he had two of them. And this same thing, two stripes, actually, he's.

00:52:32 Speaker 1

Because the same one. Yeah, too long, right?

00:52:36 Speaker 3

Got 3 of.

00:52:37

Them.

00:52:40 Speaker 1

Dog tags. Yeah, here's the other one.

00:52:42 Speaker 2

So they used to have a little.

00:52:47 Speaker 2

And then say your blood type and your religion on there.

00:52:51 Speaker 1

Yeah, I think it's got here, but I can't see what it is. I can't tell it anyway.

00:52:55 Speaker 3

Yeah.

00:52:56 Speaker 2

And then they have a little notch up here. Some of them said they shove that into your teeth if you're dead.

00:52:59 Speaker 1

Yeah, what's?

00:53:03 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah, see look at that. There is a notch here. My gosh notch in the dark tig. Wow.

00:53:06 Speaker 2

And they know who it was.

00:53:10 Speaker 1

Oh.

00:53:11 Speaker 1

Well, of course there was always 2. They kept one with the body and they took one, I guess. Yeah. With the blood type in it. OK, he's got both of his dog.

00:53:16 Speaker 2

Yeah, I had two of.

00:53:18 Speaker 3

And what were cities, Dad?

00:53:20 Speaker 2

This shoulder patch for the Blue Ridge blue.

00:53:22 Speaker 1

OK so.

00:53:24 Speaker 1

Ridge Mountain Blue Ridge that that was the Blue Ridge. That map thing was the Blue Ridge campaign shoulder patch.

00:53:28 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:53:31 Speaker 1

Because that's what that said on the map. Yeah. OK.

00:53:38 Speaker 1

All right, so.

00:53:42 Speaker 1

You came back home and.

00:53:47 Speaker 1

What were like some of your? How did your military or war time experience affect your life? Do you think? How did it affect you?

00:54:03 Speaker 2

Going to be a little peaceful. You didn't get angry right away anymore.

00:54:07 Speaker 1

OK, good.

00:54:11 Speaker 1

And how about some lessons that you learned from the military or what you learned while you were there while you were in the service period?

00:54:21 Speaker 2

Take orders that yes.

00:54:24 Speaker 1

Take orders, right?

00:54:26 Speaker 1

Well, do you overall, do you think that it was a good experience or would you rather not have done it?

00:54:32 Speaker 1

Being in the military.

00:54:34 Speaker 2

Well, in one way I'm glad they did it, but I.

00:54:37 Speaker 2

Wouldn't want to do it again.

00:54:38 Speaker 1

Right. OK. That's that's pretty much, you know, sums it up, that's really.

00:54:44 Speaker 3

He's been to a veteran's ceremony, but are my daughters school up in Plainfield and they all line up and March in and he gets very impatient, he said. He waited, he waited in enough lines. Wait, he's in the army.

00:54:56 Speaker 3

Just now, like waiting in line anymore.

00:54:59 Speaker 1

How about the 4th of July with the fireworks? Did that bother you with the guns going on, you know?

00:55:07 Speaker 1

OK. So is there anything else that you would like to add to the story?

00:55:11 Speaker 1

Are you Susan?

00:55:13 Speaker 3

This was was this your whole unit over where?

00:55:16 Speaker 2

No, there there was a bunch of.

00:55:20 Speaker 2

Officers and.

00:55:22 Speaker 2

And listen, that's got a chance to go into the capital of Prague.

00:55:26 Speaker 1

Prague. Yeah, he's got. He's got an actual photograph here of him and Prague, and he's he's in the front of a bunch of men standing in guys down to below.

00:55:26 Speaker 3

That was the prime picture.

00:55:39 Speaker 1

So there's no pictures that you're willing to part with any original pictures.

00:55:44 Speaker 3

I'm going to try and organize it. If we have double s. Yeah. Get them to you.

00:55:46 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:55:48 Speaker 1

Yes, you can just give me a call and right, what you can do is.

00:55:54 Speaker 1

Drop them off. If you talked with Kim, Christ or or whatever. Or you can mail them to me or whatever, because I have to type this up, you know? And and I'm going to send you. What is this?

00:56:00

OK.

00:56:04 Speaker 3

Do you?

00:56:04 Speaker 1

Need to? OK, Mr. Breen. We are finished with the interview. And I just wondered if there was anything else that you wish to add to your story.

00:56:15 Speaker 1

Anything you can think of, and if not, if you think of something after I'm gone, we can we can add this in before it's sent off.

00:56:25 Speaker 2

Expected.

00:56:26 Speaker 1

Ohh well good for you. I'm glad you did. And I will thank you very much for this interview and thank you for your service to our country. Thank you.