

Lowell A. Drudge Interview #2

Company A, 317th Infantry Regiment

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

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

00:00:03 Speaker 2

Barracks in Paris, France.

00:00:04 Speaker 1

Right.

00:00:04 Speaker 1

And and so I went into Captain Jones and I said, Captain Jones, how would it be if I went down and picked up this prisoner, I said this would give me a chance to see my brother? He's at Frankfort. That'd be on the way down.

00:00:05

OK.

00:00:19 Speaker 1

Kevin Jones says yes. He says you can have my Jeep and my driver, but I had to have help. So they I had. I had another man to go with me because we we had to make sure that this prisoner was kept under.

00:00:32 Speaker 2

Close guard or.

00:00:33 Speaker 1

Close guard. Yeah, we we didn't. We didn't dare let him get away.

00:00:37 Speaker 1

And so Catherine Jones was good enough for to let me use his driver and Jeep.

00:00:44 Speaker 1

And that was quite a haul from from there, clear down to we were at Murnau, I think at that time, Marnal Germany close to Munich just outside of Munich, it was a suburb of of Munich.

00:00:58

Yeah.

00:01:00 Speaker 1

And.

00:01:02 Speaker 1

So I went at.

00:01:04 Speaker 1

I stopped at at my brother's office in Frankfurt on the way down, and he was he was gone for the day and I said, well, I said we can't wait. I said to you, I left word there, I said now we'll be coming back through at a certain time.

00:01:18 Speaker 1

And and so we went down to the disparity barracks. And you wouldn't believe it when we got down there, we found out this, this AWOL soldier was already back in the states.

00:01:30 Speaker 1

Out in Carlisle Barracks, PA, in a prison office. So this was more or less luck too, because we didn't have to worry about bringing the prisoner back.

00:01:42 Speaker 1

And I got a statement from from the people there at at the disciplinary barracks that that he he was already back in the states, that it was our. It wasn't our responsibility anymore.

00:01:52 Speaker 1

And so then I stopped and seen my brother on on the way back at Frankfort.

00:01:56 Speaker 1

So that just shows you what kind of man Emerson Jones was. He was, he was all right.

00:02:02 Speaker 1

And and like I say.

00:02:05 Speaker 1

I had 69 points with that one point held me up about two months of getting home.

00:02:11 Speaker 1

So it was. I don't know, it wasn't too long till Sergeant Godek.

00:02:17 Speaker 1

He went home on points and so I was acting regimental Sergeant major for, I don't know just how long probably.

00:02:26 Speaker 1

Maybe two months or so, but I I couldn't get my rating because I was only up there on special duties, see? So, but they tried to talk me into staying, but I had a wife and a 2 year old daughter back home and a job with the post Office department and I couldn't. I couldn't afford to do it.

00:02:44 Speaker 2

But they also talk up. Maybe OCS you.

00:02:46 Speaker 2

Going on to officer.

00:02:46 Speaker 1

No, no, they didn't mention that, but.

00:02:49 Speaker 1

I'm not too sure I would have done that. I I would have. I would have got a master Sergeant rating and that that have been good.

00:02:55 Speaker 1

Enough for me.

00:02:57 Speaker 1

But I I love that up there. I learned the army, I learned. I learned how to operate. But that was a mystery. I don't know how I was picked out of 3000 men.

00:03:08 Speaker 1

To come up and take this particular job to this day, I have no idea who recommended me. I don't know.

00:03:13 Speaker 2

How do you think it might have been?

00:03:15 Speaker 2

Captain Woodside.

00:03:17 Speaker 1

I don't know. I I I just. I just can't. It could have been.

00:03:22 Speaker 1

But it never got out because I tried to find out, you know, and I've never been able to find out what? How I ever, you know, was promoted. It really wasn't a promotion. But chances are, if we went to Pacific, I might have got out of action because I think if I had went to Pacific, I wouldn't come home.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

My luck was running out.

00:03:46 Speaker 2

I wanted to talk just a second that kind of job, my memory of mentioning Captain Woodside, man, that you admire greatly. And I know Mr. Ray Clark did as well. What did you know about his? His background? And could you describe something about it? The personality of the man, his physical appearance.

00:04:05 Speaker 1

Well, his physical appearance.

00:04:08 Speaker 1

Like.

00:04:11 Speaker 1

Mr. Clark said that redhead.

00:04:15 Speaker 1

With the mustache now, he had one of these. He was a big old Swede. I round face.

00:04:22 Speaker 1

Bushy red hair. And he had one of these hair.

00:04:26 Speaker 1

Curly cue mustaches. One of the kind of what? What do you? What do they call them? What? What? They call them handlebar mustaches. And the man was just.

00:04:38 Speaker 1

He was just.

00:04:40 Speaker 1

Well, he was a strong individual, very strong individual and had a strong feeling.

00:04:46 Speaker 1

Freeze, men. Very strong. Like I say, on that Christmas Day.

00:04:50 Speaker 1

The next day that morning, he, with tears rolling down his cheeks.

00:04:55 Speaker 1

He said. I'm sorry I said forever forever. I mean captain Woodside. I said you you couldn't help this.

00:05:03 Speaker 1

He was just. He's just a wonderful man.

00:05:07 Speaker 1

God, I think of him so much, you know.

00:05:10 Speaker 2

How many men were in the squad? You said you were.

00:05:12 Speaker 2

The only one there were 12 men.

00:05:12 Speaker 1

12 usually 12, but that wasn't always the truth. Sometimes you had 10, sometimes you had eight. You know what? When you're in a combat situation, you.

00:05:25 Speaker 1

You know you don't. And like I say when when you're up there on the line, you can be, sometimes you're better off if you're not an officer. I've seen the couple of times, the second lieutenants.

00:05:38 Speaker 1

We're sent over there and set up as is.

00:05:42 Speaker 1

Platoon leaders and and I seen one get up one day and he says well, let's go get them stood right up. And boy he he didn't have any more stand up till he was down for good see this is.

00:05:55 Speaker 1

So it and it don't make any difference.

00:05:57 Speaker 1

I mean, it's it's every man for himself.

00:06:01 Speaker 1

When you're in the infantry, you.

00:06:05 Speaker 1

You're just a plain GI Joe. Dog faces, Mr. Clark puts it.

00:06:11 Speaker 2

Were you a a Rifleman or?

00:06:13 Speaker 1

Did you? I was an expert Rifleman. I took it. That's a funny thing. I I took my training at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, and heavy weapons. In other words, heavy machine gun. 30 caliber, heavy machine gun.

00:06:26 Speaker 1

And the only time I ever used a machine gun.

00:06:28 Speaker 1

Is when I.

00:06:29 Speaker 1

Got my silver star outside Erfurt there and it was with a light machine gun. Well, they both operate the same way. The only thing one and one is air. Cool and the.

00:06:39 Speaker 1

Other is water cooled.

00:06:41 Speaker 2

And the machine gun you fired that day?

00:06:43 Speaker 2

At Erfurt was what kind of?

00:06:44 Speaker 1

Was it was a 30 caliber light light which is air cool.

00:06:45 Speaker 2

30.

00:06:48 Speaker 2

Error.

00:06:49 Speaker 2

Your icing gun.

00:06:50 Speaker 2

And you often see them on Jeeps and tanks with the holes in the sides.

00:06:53 Speaker 1

Right.

00:06:55 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:06:56 Speaker 2

Probably the easiest way to describe it is somebody.

00:06:58 Speaker 1

Well, a lot of them on your jeeps and weapon. Your light weapons were 50 caliber.

00:07:04 Speaker 2

Four 50s.

00:07:04 Speaker 1

And then on on your on your tanks was 50 caliber.

00:07:09 Speaker 2

Yeah, so, but ordinarily, you were a Rifleman.

00:07:12 Speaker 1

Definitely just just. Yeah, I just carried right. I just carried a rifle over my shoulder and.

00:07:14 Speaker 2

Called dog face.

00:07:19 Speaker 1

Sling and and you slept with.

00:07:20 Speaker 1

It too, I mean you.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

That's one thing you never you never got away.

00:07:25 Speaker 2

From did you keep it always?

00:07:26 Speaker 1

Loaded. Oh, absolutely. And I carried. I carried.

00:07:33 Speaker 1

A A hand grenade.

00:07:37 Speaker 1

In my lapel slot here.

00:07:40 Speaker 1

But of course you you squeeze the pin so it the pin didn't come out because you don't want to be sleeping. Sleeping with a live hand hand grenade with the possibility of PIN pulling out, or that you know.

00:07:52 Speaker 1

Yeah, we, we all carried A and and then I carried. I don't how many vandal layers.

00:07:57 Speaker 1

Of ammunition besides my belt. When I carried my belt.

00:08:02 Speaker 1

And usually all I carried, I carried this. Here is a folding trench shovel. It's it's like a gravel shovel, pointed shovel and they're they're smaller. Naturally only about. Oh, I don't know. 6/6 inch blade.

00:08:18 Speaker 1

And it the blade would fold under up next to the to the handle, and you carry that on your on your belt.

00:08:26 Speaker 1

And besides the vandwellers of around your.

00:08:30 Speaker 1

Shoulder and then I carry some I had. I carried a raincoat.

00:08:36 Speaker 1

And fold up behind my belt. Didn't kill it, didn't carry a pack. Now you see a lot of them carrying packs now. My outfit, we didn't carry packs we, you know.

00:08:48 Speaker 1

But they did issue 4 buckles for us when we were up in the in the bulge air at 4. Buckle boots. See when we first got out, all we had was just our combat shoes, combat boots, you know, they come up partway up your leg.

00:08:52 Speaker 2

A what?

00:08:55

Also.

00:09:02 Speaker 1

And find and some of them didn't even get get the we had problem with frozen feet up there.

00:09:08 Speaker 1

Hey, we. We'd be out there weather down to almost zero. And you lived in a hole like an animal.

00:09:15 Speaker 1

And I still got my little stove here that I used with my wife, sent, sent that to me that you have these little chemical tablets, and that's how I'd heat the water for my nescafe coffee in the bottom of of a of a foxhole.

00:09:35 Speaker 1

So we so we'd have warm coffee. Yeah, that that's how. That's how we live, just like animals.

00:09:41 Speaker 1

Don't believe I the reason I say it it's hard to believe that that we made it through the environment. We had to be in. That was the best shape I've ever been in my life. Like I said, I was an athlete in high school. If I was never in that kind of shape, I was 20.

00:09:54 Speaker 1

Four years old at that time.

00:09:57 Speaker 1

But I was never in that good of shape and thank God that I I took that that training seriously or I wouldn't be here talking to.

00:10:05 Speaker 2

There's a controversy and I always ask infantrymen about this. Men had served in the infantry SLA. Marshall was talking about that in some outfits. Or maybe he was making a general observation that there's always some fellows would never fire their weapon. And in a combat situation, some who always would. And then there are some fellows.

00:10:25 Speaker 2

Were sort of in a Gray area, but you were there. Was it there ever a problem in your company or the best of your knowledge of somebody freezing up and not firing their weapon when the Germans?

00:10:35 Speaker 2

Were.

00:10:36 Speaker 2

Firing at them, they had a.

00:10:38 Speaker 1

No, I.

00:10:39 Speaker 1

Not not in my experience. Now I.

00:10:43 Speaker 1

Of course, a lot of times you went in a position where you couldn't fire.

00:10:47 Speaker 1

You didn't want to stick your head out of the hole, you know, but basically I I didn't have.

00:10:54 Speaker 1

The only problem I had I had a a young kid with from he was from Pittsburgh, I remember.

00:11:03 Speaker 1

There's always 2 fellows.

00:11:04 Speaker 1

In a foxhole.

00:11:05 Speaker 1

You always had two you buddy.

00:11:07 Speaker 1

Up and your buddy.

00:11:08 Speaker 1

Up.

00:11:09 Speaker 1

Now, like I say, maybe once every three or four days or a week you our kitchen would be in some wooded area somewhere and you'd undercover of darkness.

00:11:20 Speaker 1

One would go up to get.

00:11:23 Speaker 1

Food.

00:11:24 Speaker 1

The other one stayed in the hole.

00:11:26 Speaker 1

And then when that one came back, the other one?

00:11:28 Speaker 1

Would go.

00:11:30 Speaker 1

But this kid kid by the name of Fritz, I believe his name was from from Pittsburgh. He followed me like a dog every, every, every time I go, I turn around and Fritz was behind me.

00:11:42 Speaker 1

I said God, man, I said you're.

00:11:45 Speaker 1

Get away from me, I said. The first thing you know, I said, we're both going to get killed.

00:11:50 Speaker 1

Well, he just kept this up and and.

00:11:54 Speaker 1

Even the old man told me I'm talking about Woodside.

00:11:58 Speaker 1

He said, hey, you, you got to get that kid off your back and I.

00:12:00 Speaker 1

Said you telling me I know it.

00:12:03 Speaker 1

And all of a sudden, one day you just come up missing.

00:12:06 Speaker 1

He's one of these guys. I'm unable.

00:12:10 Speaker 1

And then after I got up to regiment, I found out.

00:12:14 Speaker 1

That the reason he went AWOL and the reason he was probably following me like a dog, he had syphilis.

00:12:21 Speaker 1

And the guy was he? He was well, he was sick. But this Seth was not evidently affecting his mind in some way.

00:12:29 Speaker 1

And yeah, that's that. That's that was the reason he was he was like he was. And here here all the time he had syphilis.

00:12:37 Speaker 2

And he never mentioned anything about.

00:12:38 Speaker 1

No, I never. Well, you should have went back to to, you know, went back to sick call and find out what, you know, what was wrong with him. But he just didn't do it.

00:12:40

Don't you get it back?

00:12:46 Speaker 1

But he did. He I know Captain Woodside. He.

00:12:50 Speaker 1

He said you got to get him off your back, he said. You're both going to get killed. And I said you telling me I know what I've told him.

00:12:56 Speaker 1

But you know, I'd. I'd be up up there eating and maybe turn around. There was fits behind me.

00:13:02 Speaker 1

Nobody back.

00:13:03 Speaker 1

In our hole.

00:13:05

So.

00:13:06 Speaker 2

Not being covered then to that particular site.

00:13:07 Speaker 1

That's right, but I I.

00:13:09 Speaker 1

You know that there are some funny things that happen, you know.

00:13:12 Speaker 1

All getting back to the frozen feet and things, and I don't even how this happened.

00:13:18 Speaker 1

But we changed our socks every day up there.

00:13:22 Speaker 1

You carried 1 dry pair in the top.

00:13:24 Speaker 1

Of your helmet liner.

00:13:26 Speaker 1

And then you had actually the ones you had on your feet. But every day there was a runner came around with a pair of dry socks, and he's trying to avoid this here frozen foot thing. And there was a, there was a lot of them. They a lot of.

00:13:41 Speaker 1

Them lost toes, some of them lost their whole feet.

00:13:44 Speaker 1

It it it it was rough.

00:13:46 Speaker 1

Luckily, I'd I'd mine got cold, but I. But every day I was religiously with this, I chained my socks every day up there so.

00:13:58 Speaker 1

That's that's about the story.

00:14:01 Speaker 2

Captain Woodside, given the strength of his personality, I would assume now I don't want to put words in your mouth that you had a real strong a spree decorating company. It would that be a fair assessment.

00:14:11 Speaker 1

Oh, yes, yes, what it did.

00:14:14 Speaker 1

Those guys who went through hell for Captain Woodside.

00:14:19 Speaker 1

And he had done the same thing for.

00:14:20 Speaker 1

Us.

00:14:21 Speaker 1

See, that's that's.

00:14:24 Speaker 1

Of course, now, Captain Woodside wasn't the only one we had. I mean, I we we had other company commanders before him, but but he was tops in my book.

00:14:34 Speaker 1

Of course it in actual combat.

00:14:37 Speaker 1

When things are rough, he he was our main man. Prior to that, you know, we we weren't actually in under fire, you know, that makes a difference too.

00:14:47 Speaker 2

I assume he is. He survived the war. Is that correct?

00:14:50 Speaker 1

Well, well, I'm almost sure he did, but I have no contact. I've tried to even even Captain Jones from regimental headquarters. I've never been able to find out what it. Now I know that Sergeant Goldak the one that, that, that.

00:14:53 Speaker 2

You had no contact.

00:15:07 Speaker 1

Replaced the Sergeant palettes. He passed away. I got it in my new Ridge, 80 Division Association magazine. And here about a year or two ago, he.

00:15:07 Speaker 2

Correct.

00:15:20 Speaker 1

Passed away.

00:15:22 Speaker 1

So, but but Sergeant Palazzos belongs to the 80th Division. He lives in New Jersey.

00:15:28 Speaker 1

Think I've got his name and address here. I'll give.

00:15:30 Speaker 1

It to you, OK.

00:15:31 Speaker 1

I got it here somewhere. I don't know just where it is, but I'll try to find it.

00:15:36 Speaker 2

You mentioned off tape too. The importance of the combat Infantry badge, which is the blue background with the cross rifles. What what does this the Combat Infantry badge mean to you in in relationship to the other?

00:15:43 Speaker 1

Right, right.

00:15:50 Speaker 2

Metals that you received.

00:15:53 Speaker 1

I the The thing is.

00:15:57 Speaker 1

There's a great possibility that I would have never been awarded the other medals without first being awarded or first being a a combat infantryman.

00:16:07 Speaker 1

And to me, they they, you know, they talk about the Marines.

00:16:13 Speaker 1

But I can classify myself with any marine.

00:16:18 Speaker 1

We we had it just just as tough as they did so.

00:16:22 Speaker 1

When it comes to combat, we we we were the we were the top people and that goes along with the Marines. I don't mean to take anything in the Marines. That's a great offset.

00:16:31 Speaker 1

But to tell them that that they were better than we were, that I'd have to see.

00:16:34 Speaker 1

That.

00:16:36 Speaker 1

Because we, we we served under the same conditions as they did and this is actual combat. You know you can.

00:16:45 Speaker 1

The other branches of service you know, you even in the artillery and stuff like that, you're not right on the line. You know, you this this is that means something to me.

00:16:57 Speaker 1

To know that I was at first hand.

00:17:00 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:17:01 Speaker 1

Duties, you know, in a combat way, rather than being making some death someplace or or, you know, or maybe way back away from the front, maybe firing our till recent, you know, and stuff like that.

00:17:14 Speaker 1

Oh, we we needed all the service. Don't get me wrong. We needed them all. I remember laying on my back up there that Christmas Day.

00:17:22 Speaker 1

In one of those holes and seeing those B seventeens going over, I mean just hundreds of them going over the top and go get them go get.

00:17:31 Speaker 1

Them you know.

00:17:33 Speaker 1

And I'll tell you something else.

00:17:36 Speaker 1

When you're in a condition like I was up there on Christmas Day, don't think that you can't pray.

00:17:43 Speaker 1

And don't take a long prayer.

00:17:47 Speaker 1

God be with me.

00:17:49 Speaker 1

God be with me and he was or I wouldn't be here.

00:17:58 Speaker 1

That's true.

00:18:00 Speaker 2

When that you were wounded in that tree burst on, I think it was.

00:18:04 Speaker 1

March 17th, March the 14th, 1945.

00:18:09 Speaker 2

Were you incapacitated?

00:18:11 Speaker 1

No, I I didn't go on with that. I I felt this. It felt just like a sting back here.

00:18:19 Speaker 1

And held my hand a little bit of blood there and there's some medics. 1 Medic not too far from there, taking care of another guy. And finally he came over to me and he said sorry. Do you need any help? And I said, well, I said I got a piece of it back here in my arm and got something back here and he took a look at it. He said, well, he said if you want to go back to medics, he said I'll send you.

00:18:39 Speaker 1

Back and God, they were small arms fire all around us said, hey, I've got to be wounded worse than this before I go back, you know?

00:18:47 Speaker 1

But I said I may need a statement from, you know, from from you. And so I guess that's where they got the information. Or maybe he turned it.

00:18:54 Speaker 1

In I don't know.

00:18:55 Speaker 2

But they just basically patched your arm up.

00:18:57 Speaker 1

He didn't. He didn't. They didn't do nothing, right?

00:18:59 Speaker 1

Then.

00:19:00 Speaker 1

No, I I just just covered it up and.

00:19:04 Speaker 1

It finally stopped bleeding and I just let it go. And then incidentally in.

00:19:09 Speaker 1

I think it's about July.

00:19:12 Speaker 1

We still had our woolens on yet, and I remember reaching back here and I cut my finger.

00:19:18 Speaker 1

I felt something and here that piece of shrapnel has started to come out and went through my shirt sleeve bag here. Then I went down to medics.

00:19:27 Speaker 1

And and one of the captain down there, he got a hold of a pair of trees and pulled it out.

00:19:33 Speaker 1

It was about that long and oh, it wasn't any bigger and hard to pencil lid.

00:19:38 Speaker 1

But that thing went right in there and just.

00:19:41 Speaker 1

You know, a lot of them still carrying their their shrapnel. I mean it goes in.

00:19:44 Speaker 2

And stays right in there. A lot of fellas were wounded by tree bursts. I've interviewed several that was lethal, like those 88 hit those trees and just spray.

00:19:52 Speaker 1

Well, well, you know, they they come out with it with well, we had it too.

00:19:58 Speaker 1

We had it with our 90s, you know it, it it right at treetop, they would, they would explode and come down like this.

00:20:07 Speaker 1

Now that was towards the end of the war too. And when they come up with that, that type of ammunition. Yeah. Well, the Germans had it too.

00:20:15 Speaker 1

But I don't know these these ones that these tiger tanks fired up through that woods that day. They come direct up through there. They they didn't explode above the trees. They come right up through the trees.

00:20:26 Speaker 1

And I got just about just about at the Crest of this hill.

00:20:32 Speaker 1

And I did. I actually just seen about the time this one guy hard tanks.

00:20:37 Speaker 1

I could see just just the top of this one tank. Well, that I didn't want to see you all are tanks that are different. And I mean, you're going to scatter and pretty quick.

00:20:49 Speaker 1

Now they never come on. Well, they couldn't come down through the woods because it was just tanks could have come to that, which is too thick.

00:20:56 Speaker 1

But boy, they sure fired down through there.

00:21:00 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:21:01 Speaker 2

Question I always ask the veterans is, did the war experience change them in any way? And I'd ask you that question. Did you change this a person from the time you went in until the time you got out of service?

00:21:15 Speaker 1

I didn't think me didn't change me much more than.

00:21:20 Speaker 1

Then probably making a much, much, much stronger man.

00:21:25 Speaker 1

Mentally and not so much physically, but especially mentally I.

00:21:30 Speaker 1

I I just become so much more military, I guess. I don't know. I guess that's how I'd have to explain it now, physically. You know, you you you're not going through that training all the time when you get out but.

00:21:43 Speaker 1

But mentally, it made me a much stronger person. I know it did. I know it did.

00:21:50 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:21:52 Speaker 1

And I think another thing that that helped me probably was was my.

00:21:58 Speaker 1

The athletic aspect that I had in high school where.

00:22:04 Speaker 1

This this helped me build character discipline.

00:22:07 Speaker 1

You need discipline. Ohh, but you you need discipline more than anything else and that's the reason it gets to be so rough on on on some young people going into service today that or any time as far as that's concerned.

00:22:21 Speaker 1

Not having any discipline before they enter the service and then you get this discipline. I mean you get discipline.

00:22:29 Speaker 1

And that's well, that's that's that's the the core of your success in America in making a soldier or a sailor out of out of anybody or an airman is you got to have the proper discipline.

00:22:44 Speaker 2

That kind of carries over them to the.

00:22:47 Speaker 1

Rest of your life, it does definitely. I mean, in whatever. Whatever your.

00:22:51 Speaker 1

Endeavor is in your life. What? Whatever you do that carries over and not. And that's like I say, you asked me what? That's the strength that I got or that's really what I got out of the military.

00:23:04 Speaker 2

And it says here that you started back to the United States on December 17th, 1945 and arrived on December 29th, 1945 and.

00:23:13 Speaker 2

How did you?

00:23:13 Speaker 2

Get maybe talk a little bit about how you left Europe and got back to the states.

00:23:20 Speaker 1

Well, if we have to talk about that.

00:23:23 Speaker 1

There was about 1300 of us on the Sheepshead Bay. Now that's a liberty ship.

00:23:30 Speaker 1

And we left.

00:23:35 Speaker 1

Where did we leave in France, I guess, left out of Lahar.

00:23:39 Speaker 1

I believe it left out of the hard.

00:23:41 Speaker 1

And the name of this liberty ship was the Sheepshead Bay of all names.

00:23:47 Speaker 1

And we got out at the azarz one time, about 5:00 in the morning and we.

00:23:51 Speaker 1

Were.

00:23:52 Speaker 1

I think.

00:23:54 Speaker 1

5 bunks high.

00:23:56 Speaker 1

And I was on the top bunk or the next to the top. And don't don't remember for sure. We get down the 80s ours and they claim we had a I don't know, a 60° tilt or something like that.

00:24:08 Speaker 1

And man, it shelled us out of those bunks and I woke up just in time and grabbed the head post.

00:24:14 Speaker 1

Davis Canteen cups and canteens flying all over that hole down there where we were sleeping.

00:24:20 Speaker 1

And all the 1300 on that Liberty Chef, I don't think there was 12 of us that didn't get sick. And I was one of the 12 that didn't. Every time I'd go to feel a little sick, I'd go up up top side.

00:24:32 Speaker 1

And so we didn't have to worry about eating for a while. But the one thing that then it sticks and it took us, I think 13 days something like that to get back to that, we want to get back by New Year's. Oh, we didn't want to get back celebrate New Years.

00:24:47 Speaker 1

But anyway, the one thing I'll remember about it.

00:24:51 Speaker 1

And the Chinese boy. But then our.

00:24:54 Speaker 1

Our service here in one of the lower bunks.

00:24:58 Speaker 1

And that poor devil laid in there for 13 days and never got.

00:25:02 Speaker 1

Out of there.

00:25:05 Speaker 1

Instead of instead of being yellow, he turned green.

00:25:08 Speaker 1

I I couldn't believe that.

00:25:10 Speaker 1

That man never got all that for 13 days.

00:25:15 Speaker 1

He was that sick.

00:25:18 Speaker 1

But anyway then.

00:25:20 Speaker 1

We got back, we.

00:25:23 Speaker 1

I told this to the to the high school group and I spoke to them out there here a year.

00:25:27 Speaker 1

Or two ago.

00:25:31 Speaker 1

When we got home, I said we pulled into the New York harbor.

00:25:36 Speaker 1

And I said, I've seen the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life.

00:25:41 Speaker 1

I heard one of the kids out and I said Ohh your wife. I said no, I said the Statute of Liberty.

00:25:49 Speaker 1

And I said that's the truth.

00:25:52 Speaker 1

I was so thankful to be back to the good old United States of America.

00:25:57 Speaker 1

And so they run us over to, to.

00:26:01 Speaker 1

Cam kilmer.

00:26:04 Speaker 1

And of course, they kept telling us. Now when you get back, that first meal is going to be a T-bone steak and all the trimming. I'll never forget that we were in our.

00:26:16 Speaker 1

Wherever we were building it, I don't remember where some big barracks or whatever. I kept looking at that line. I thought, Oh my God, it was two blocks long leading into this kitchen where they was going to feed us. I waited, I guess. About 3:00 in the afternoon. Something like that. I finally decided. Well, maybe I better go or starve to death. So I got. I got down and got in line.

00:26:36 Speaker 1

I'll never forget going through that line and you know, we captured a lot of prisoners over there during the war and a lot of them wanted to wanted to be captured because they wanted to come to the states.

00:26:49 Speaker 1

See and serve out their time in the states till the end of.

00:26:51 Speaker 1

The war.

00:26:53 Speaker 1

Well, I'll tell you why I'm getting to.

00:26:54 Speaker 1

This.

00:26:55 Speaker 1

I get ready to go through this. I picked up my my tray at at the beginning and start going down through getting my stuff and I got down to with a T-bone steak was.

00:27:07 Speaker 1

This guy put a little tiny tee bone snake on there. I looked up at him here as one in German, German prisoner of war. Looking. I said. Hey buddy.

00:27:15 Speaker 1

I said you better get a steak on there and pretty quick and the biggest 1 you can find back there and I scared him a little bit.

00:27:24 Speaker 1

So he did. He took that one off and then he he put.

00:27:27 Speaker 1

A big steak on there.

00:27:30 Speaker 1

Well, I'll never forget that. Well, then then you see that, that run into that, that's see that was on the 29th, was it of December we landed.

00:27:41 Speaker 1

Well, then we were there, Kilmer, for.

00:27:45 Speaker 1

I don't know.

00:27:46 Speaker 1

Another day or two, I guess.

00:27:50 Speaker 1

And they put us on a train and I don't know how many times we shifted from 1 train to another and we're never in New Year's Eve. I was riding the rails.

00:27:59 Speaker 1

Heading for Camp Atterbury, Indiana, there's a wild.

00:28:02 Speaker 1

And I think we got in there, I think on the second see on the 2nd and then I would discharge there on the 3rd of January 1946, but it.

00:28:11

Platform.

00:28:14 Speaker 1

It's one of these things where you say you wouldn't take a million for your experience, but never again, you know.

00:28:22 Speaker 1

Never again.

00:28:26 Speaker 2

Is there anything you'd care to add or some other anecdotes or incidents that we didn't talk about?

00:28:34 Speaker 2

Earlier in this interview.

00:28:36 Speaker 2

Want to make sure we get us?

00:28:40 Speaker 2

The whole story, if at all possible, Mr. Drudge.

00:28:48 Speaker 1

Oh, there's some humorous things that happened during my service that that I, I couple of my just thought of now.

00:28:58 Speaker 1

Which probably wouldn't add to it. Actually, it's just it's a humorous part, you know.

00:29:04 Speaker 1

Sometimes they would. We'd have a mail call.

00:29:08 Speaker 1

And.

00:29:10 Speaker 1

I remember one time I had instructions to take two men and go back. Usually our mail ended up with our kitchen unit wherever our kitchen unit was. That's where our mail was.

00:29:21 Speaker 1

And so I someone I don't whether the captain or somebody said to take two of your men and go back and get the mail.

00:29:28 Speaker 1

So I took off and.

00:29:30 Speaker 1

Started up this trail, went back, went up to the kitchen and.

00:29:34 Speaker 1

And got the got the mail.

00:29:37 Speaker 1

And we started back.

00:29:39 Speaker 1

And these two guys are out in front of Maine going down through this.

00:29:42 Speaker 1

Trail through the woods.

00:29:44 Speaker 1

And all of a sudden, just like that.

00:29:47 Speaker 1

And so I did too.

00:29:50 Speaker 1

They scattered. Just go out the site and hit the ground. That's that's what you do when you're in infantry. I mean, if you see something that.

00:29:59 Speaker 1

It's fear, actually. I mean you you want to stick your neck out. But anyway, I I went off the site too, and I finally looked up like that way down.

00:30:10 Speaker 1

Leaning up against the tree was a German.

00:30:14 Speaker 1

I looked at that and I looked at that.

00:30:18 Speaker 1

We've kind of I've never seen no movement.

00:30:22 Speaker 1

And find that hook. Oh, what in the world is going on here?

00:30:27 Speaker 1

So I hollered something as one of the guys, I'd forget which one it was. I called him by name.

00:30:31 Speaker 1

I said hey.

00:30:33 Speaker 1

You know, I thought by doing this that that German.

00:30:35 Speaker 1

Would you know movement?

00:30:37 Speaker 1

And you know what some.

00:30:40 Speaker 1

Crazy Gee I had done. He found a frozen German body and set it up.

00:30:46 Speaker 1

Against this tree.

00:30:49 Speaker 1

Now God, I mean, but it sure scared us, but not not not that that that now this is say it's a humorous thing about it, but it's one of these things that you can't.

00:31:01 Speaker 1

Really believe could happen.

00:31:03 Speaker 1

But there that poor soldier had been killed and frozen. It was that cold, see. And there there he just stood him upside. That and boy, it looked just as natural as.

00:31:13 Speaker 1

Could be, I mean he.

00:31:17 Speaker 1

And then one other time, I probably shouldn't tell this.

00:31:21 Speaker 1

But we we were, we were sleeping on the floor in in some building.

00:31:26 Speaker 1

And.

00:31:28 Speaker 1

Incidentally, we had no electricity, no lights over there.

00:31:32 Speaker 1

No, that's alright, that's right.

00:31:37 Speaker 1

We had no lights and no water.

00:31:40 Speaker 1

The water you got you got right out of a stream or you. And we doctored our water. You know, we had pills we had.

00:31:45 Speaker 1

To.

00:31:45 Speaker 1

Put in our water in regards to.

00:31:47 Speaker 1

Where?

00:31:47 Speaker 1

You got it. And no electric, no electric at all. Except they had generators back at the kitchen or something like that. But when we want to move like that, we didn't. But anyway, we we were. I think it was in a.

00:31:59 Speaker 1

Some kind of a public building. We're sleeping on the floor and our our sleeping bags to call them fart sacks.

00:32:07 Speaker 1

But anyway, about in the middle of the night? Why? One of my boys said. Hey, sarge. Hey, Sarge, where's your trench knife?

00:32:14 Speaker 1

He said. I gotta go. I gotta go there in the dark. I swim around trying to find my trench. I pretty soon, he says, oh, forget it, Sarge.

00:32:27 Speaker 1

So I mean now this is just.

00:32:29 Speaker 1

You can knock out all the tape, but you know there's some humor in all this too. You know, you, you can't. It can't all be real serious. And there there's things like that that happen that that you kind of remember too, but they just come back to me now. Since you asked if there's anything else like.

00:32:49 Speaker 1

But prior to that, there isn't. There isn't anything that I can.

00:32:53 Speaker 1

I can think of.

00:32:55 Speaker 2

Well, I appreciate very much you taking time to talk to you today.

00:32:58 Speaker 1

Well, I.

00:33:00 Speaker 2

I know you've had the illness in your family and a lot of problems.

00:33:03 Speaker 1

Well, it's it's one of those things. And but I thought I better do this while I. I thought I probably should do this while I can.

00:33:10 Speaker 1

Because.

00:33:11 Speaker 1

Like I say, we don't know it. It seems like every month or so we're burying one of our VFW members out here.

00:33:19 Speaker 1

And then, you know, they were all served overseas and during the.

00:33:24 Speaker 2

Wars. Yeah, we're losing our World War 2 veterans.

00:33:26 Speaker 1

Oh, it's we're so thin out here that it it it's pitiful.

00:33:31 Speaker 1

I I helped organize this via W out here.

00:33:35 Speaker 1

Back in 1946.

00:33:38 Speaker 2

You might talk a little bit about some of the positions you've held in both the state, local, state, and national VFW. That's pretty interesting, I think.

00:33:44 Speaker 1

Well, all right, well, I.

00:33:48 Speaker 1

Like I say I I I'm a I'm a Charter member and a life member of Raymond VFW Post 8972. I belong to American Legion.

00:33:58 Speaker 1

Been here for 49 years, 49 consecutive years, but I became more active in the VFW basically because I helped organize the the VFW here and.

00:34:08 Speaker 1

German.

00:34:09 Speaker 1

And I served.

00:34:12 Speaker 1

3 terms as as the commander of the post.

00:34:15 Speaker 1

And I served two of those years when we built the building, you probably went by it out here at the West.

00:34:21 Speaker 1

End and Bremen.

00:34:22 Speaker 1

And.

00:34:24 Speaker 1

I served as a district commander.

00:34:28 Speaker 1

And I've served.

00:34:32 Speaker 1

The state of Indiana.

00:34:36 Speaker 1

3/3 times as chief of staff.

00:34:40 Speaker 1

Twice as department inspector.

00:34:43 Speaker 1

And I was Reverend Bess, Assistant Department chaplain for 18 years.

00:34:50 Speaker 1

And I've been national deputy chief of its chief of staff.

00:34:55 Speaker 1

Three times.

00:34:58 Speaker 1

And.

00:35:00 Speaker 1

I've I've been. I was the only another, probably one of the most important jobs I've ever held in in the VFW.

00:35:08 Speaker 1

Is I am the only service officer.

00:35:12 Speaker 1

That the VFW and Bremen ever had.

00:35:15 Speaker 1

So I served 49 years as service officer.

00:35:21 Speaker 1

I have helped hundreds of people in the in the in this Community, hundreds of veterans.

00:35:27 Speaker 1

Their widows and their children, and in this.

00:35:30 Speaker 1

Community and I'm I'm probably as proud of that as anything because after all.

00:35:36 Speaker 1

We honor the the dead by helping the living.

00:35:40 Speaker 2

If they're in distress, then you are the.

00:35:41 Speaker 2

One that called them on.

00:35:42 Speaker 1

They come to me and then of course I go through our Department service office there in Indianapolis.

00:35:48 Speaker 1

And Paul Curtis is the Department service office at this time.

00:35:53 Speaker 1

And the first department service Officer I worked for was Richard L router.

00:35:58 Speaker 1

Bush and you've heard of Richard L Roudebush?

00:36:02 Speaker 1

Very close friend of mine just passed away this just last winter.

00:36:07 Speaker 1

And Rowdy was a past national commander of the VFW and course the congressman. I'll the 6th district for. I don't know. I think 6 terms or something like that.

00:36:15 Speaker 2

And they named the VA hospital down.

00:36:16 Speaker 1

And the VA hospital in Indianapolis is named after him.

00:36:21 Speaker 2

Did you also get to know governor?

00:36:22 Speaker 2

Bowen.

00:36:23 Speaker 1

Governor Bowen delivered my oldest, my youngest daughter. He is my family doctor. For over 20 years.

00:36:31 Speaker 1

Oh, I know him. Who better believe I know him. I know him real real well.

00:36:36 Speaker 2

Governor Otis.

00:36:37 Speaker 2

Orders are Otis R Bowen was very popular.

00:36:42 Speaker 2

Of Indiana.

00:36:44 Speaker 1

Of course I'm not. Maybe a great fan of all politicians, but I think Governor Bowen was honest.

00:36:51 Speaker 1

And he's his politics are different than mine. But I still voted for him.

00:36:57 Speaker 1

That would be too bad if I didn't win it. Yeah. So, yeah, he was. He's a mighty fine and he's a mighty fine man, yet he's still.

00:37:05 Speaker 1

You know he's here in Bremen.

00:37:09 Speaker 1

The the first part of May.

00:37:13 Speaker 1

They held a A community recognition of the end of World War 2.

00:37:20 Speaker 1

At the American Legion Building and Doctor Bowen was our principal speaker. So yeah, he still he, he's our our post surgeon and he has been for a while for many, many, many years.

00:37:33 Speaker 1

There was a.

00:37:33 Speaker 2

She's. Does he still live here?

00:37:34 Speaker 1

In Bremen, he lives out here. Donnybrook is out here. Hey, you remember.

00:37:39 Speaker 1

When you came in on 331 out here and then you had to make a left.

00:37:43 Speaker 1

To come in.

00:37:43 Speaker 1

To Bremen, that stopped. That's Donnie Brook over in there.

00:37:48 Speaker 1

He lives in, out in, in that area, out in there. When you go home, if you go down 330.

00:37:52 Speaker 1

One is that.

00:37:53 Speaker 1

The way you to to bourbon to hit 30.

00:37:57 Speaker 1

But when you get out east of Bremen here, where the mile out and then you make that jog to the right, it's a stop sign.

00:38:03 Speaker 1

Out there, right?

00:38:04 Speaker 1

Well, if you look right off, that's Donnie Brook and that's where.

00:38:07 Speaker 1

Doctor Bowen lives.

00:38:10 Speaker 2

I'm sorry, I interrupted. You said he was post surgeon for many, many years.

00:38:13 Speaker 1

For the VFW, for our VFW Post. Yeah.

00:38:17 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:38:18 Speaker 2

And was he active in attending meetings?

00:38:20 Speaker 1

No, no. He never was active.

00:38:23 Speaker 1

He's always.

00:38:26 Speaker 1

Supportive, you know, I mean if we ever need any assistance or anything like that in the medical field or anything like that, he's always been.

00:38:34 Speaker 1

You know.

00:38:35 Speaker 1

Real good. Real good, yeah.

00:38:40 Speaker 2

I thank you very much for talking to me today. It's been a great pleasure for me to have an.

00:38:45 Speaker 2

Opportunity.

00:38:45 Speaker 2

To meet you. And I'm glad I did have an opportunity. If it hadn't been for that chance reading of that article in the American Legion, that the letter to the editor that you wrote, I probably.

00:38:51 Speaker 1

Or.

00:38:55 Speaker 1

Well, I've had other calls, you know, relative to that and but.

00:39:02 Speaker 2

I will send a copy of this to the US Holocaust Museum because I.

00:39:05 Speaker 1

Know you have my permission. You can. You can send it anywhere you want to send it.

00:39:09 Speaker 1

Because.

00:39:10 Speaker 1

I'm a firm believer that the the more we educate to people all over the world.

00:39:16 Speaker 1

That this thing called the Holocaust should never happen again. I don't care where it is that, that, that's so inhuman.

00:39:24 Speaker 1

So terrible.

00:39:26 Speaker 1

It doesn't even sound like it could could possibly happen.

00:39:30 Speaker 1

But these people that question that they should be straightened out because it happened and it and it's people like me that's seen it, that knows it happened.

00:39:40 Speaker 1

Right, it happened.

00:39:42 Speaker 2

And it's why it's important, as you say, the number who are still living today, who are witnesses to it and the ones who went through it, who still are alive, are dwindling every day, and it needs to be put in some kind of permanent form for posterity.

00:39:53 Speaker 1

Ohh yeah.

00:39:58 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:39:59 Speaker 2

To keep it from happening again as you said so eloquently.

00:40:02 Speaker 1

Well, I've I've I've talked every chance I get. You know, years ago, I I probably wouldn't have done this, but as I've grown older there, there, there's no reason for me not to. To, to come out and and tell it like it like it is.

00:40:16 Speaker 1

That's.

00:40:17 Speaker 1

My daughter, like I say, my youngest daughter is a librarian up at Rome City IN.

00:40:22 Speaker 1

I've been up there on a couple occasions. This is a middle school.

00:40:27 Speaker 1

And you'd be surprised how inquisitive some of these kids are when you go to talk about this, you.

00:40:31 Speaker 1

Know.

00:40:32 Speaker 1

About the extermination of the Jews, I've I've had. I can still see that one blonde girl coming up to me and saying something about.

00:40:41 Speaker 1

Well, now if you was a blonde over there, you know, that was an indication you were a Jew. I said, well, now, honey. Now wait, I said that's no indication you're a Jew. I think she was thinking of herself as having been in a situation over.

00:40:54 Speaker 1

There where she would have been taken in because she was blonde headed and blue eyes, you know? And so I talked to them a.

00:41:02 Speaker 1

Couple of times you know.

00:41:04 Speaker 1

And then I took all my I got war souvenirs all over the place. You know, I don't have. I got most of them down at my other home where my oldest daughter is.

00:41:07

Right.

00:41:13 Speaker 1

But.

00:41:13 Speaker 1

This is just an example of some of them. Here's.

00:41:16 Speaker 1

Here's some of the.

00:41:19 Speaker 1

Some of the stuff here I've.

00:41:20 Speaker 2

Got here. Oh, yes. It's like a arm.

00:41:23 Speaker 1

It's an arm band here. Here's 2 arm bands, and here's here's a flag. It's a pretty good size flag there.

00:41:24 Speaker 2

Arm bands and.

00:41:29 Speaker 1

But I've got other stuff in there.

00:41:34 Speaker 1

Down down at my home place where I get my original home to my oldest daughter and I've got bayonets down there, and in fact I've got a.

00:41:44 Speaker 1

There's a sword down, a dress sword that some doctor from Lazek Leipzig, which is not too far from Weimer.

00:41:53 Speaker 1

I've got it hanging down there and.

00:41:56 Speaker 1

Oh, I had. I've got belts and.

00:41:59 Speaker 1

Different insignias and stuff like that. In fact I one of the guys when I was down in Garmisch Partenkirchen down there, somebody in the home found a German uniform.

00:42:10 Speaker 1

And they said, come on Drudge. They put that thing on. We'll take your picture. Well, I wished I hadn't, but I did. And I've got a picture of me and that their German uniform, it sent me to a tee.

00:42:25 Speaker 1

Yeah, but that I just some things, you know, it it kind of humorous thing that you.

00:42:31 Speaker 1

That you do.

00:42:32 Speaker 1

And after all, at that time, in a sense, in your mind, you're still a kid, you know, because you've been older, you probably wouldn't have.

00:42:39 Speaker 1

Done it.

00:42:41 Speaker 2

In retrospect, looking back 50 years like Boy, I wish I hadn't done that, probably.

00:42:44 Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, there's.

00:42:50 Speaker 1

There's.

00:42:52 Speaker 1

Me and and my two brothers.

00:42:55 Speaker 1

I'm the tallest one there, see. And then my brother, junior. That's Harold. That's the animal pathologist in the middle. He had all the brains in the family. Oh, he's a scientist. And there's *****
**** that was killed.

00:43:11 Speaker 1

Now I was down home in in Lexington. Well, here.

00:43:17 Speaker 1

There they are. When we I was married here and he was going to college and **** was in high school.

00:43:24 Speaker 1

Well, he's, he's gone, you know? So I was down to Lexington. And here's junior and I sitting here in his front room down there. But I.

00:43:34 Speaker 1

And this is one of my favorite posters.

00:43:39 Speaker 2

Sitting and wishing won't change your faith. The Lord provides the fishing.

00:43:44 Speaker 2

But you have to dig the bait.

00:43:47 Speaker 1

That's right, it's true. You see here the sweat rolling down his face here. See that worm coming here and that chicken? His bobber here. And here's his.

00:43:55 Speaker 2

You got to keep that chicken.

00:43:57 Speaker 1

Dog.

00:43:58 Speaker 1

Look at that. Look at that hanger cheese.

00:43:59 Speaker 1

Oh, that's a wonderful picture. It's like a Norman Rockwell. Yeah, it may be. I'm not too sure it isn't. I, Lord, I don't know, though I doubt because I've had that. I've had that for a good many years. I doubt it.

00:44:06 Speaker 2

It isn't. It's like a.

00:44:11

Yeah.

00:44:12 Speaker 1

And one of my.

00:44:12 Speaker 1

Daughters.

00:44:14 Speaker 1

Did that one for me.

00:44:15 Speaker 2

Because I know you're a big fan of fishing. Yeah, I pray that I may live to fish until my dying day. And when it comes to my last cast, I then most humbly pray when in the Lord's great landing net and peaceful peacefully asleep, that in his mercy I be judged big.

00:44:32 Speaker 2

Enough to keep.

00:44:35 Speaker 2

Like that.

00:44:37 Speaker 2

I'll go ahead and shut it off and thanks again. Mr. dredge. I sure appreciate it.

00:44:39 Speaker 1

OK.

00:44:41 Speaker 1

Well, I appreciate you coming all this way too, so yeah.

00:44:44 Speaker 2

Pleasure.