

## **Peter Nicholas Govostes Interview**

Company H, 318th Inf Reg

*(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Harper T. Gerry)*

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

00:00:01 Speaker 1

My name is Harper Gary. I'm here in Ellington, Connecticut, tonight on May the 10th, 2008.

00:00:11 Speaker 1

We're here to conduct an interview for the Veterans History Project.

00:00:16 Speaker 1

This evening I intend to interview Peter and devastates.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

Mr. Devastates was born April 10, 1923, and he served in the United States Army. The veteran of the Second World War.

00:00:31 Speaker 1

He achieved the.

00:00:33 Speaker 1

Rating of private first class.

00:00:42 Speaker 1

I I'm a friend of Mr. Devastates, and I will be conducting the interview this evening. And as I said, the interview is being done for the Veterans History project. So let's begin.

00:00:57 Speaker 1

Good evening, Mr. glasses.

00:00:59 Speaker 2

Good evening.

00:01:01 Speaker 1

It's my pleasure to be here to interview you today about your your service history in the Army. I'd like to start by asking you a couple of biographical details. Where exactly were you born?

00:01:12 Speaker 2

I was born in Boston, MA.

00:01:16 Speaker 1

And your parents names and.

00:01:18 Speaker 2

But my mother's name was Anastasia. My father's name was Nicholas.

00:01:24 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:01:24 Speaker 2

They came from Sparta, in Greece, in Greece.

00:01:29 Speaker 1

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

00:01:31 Speaker 2

I have a brother and I have a sister.

00:01:34 Speaker 1

That either of them serve in the military.

00:01:36 Speaker 2

My brother served in military in the Pacific.

00:01:40 Speaker 2

And I served in Europe.

00:01:42 Speaker 1

During the Second World War.

00:01:43 Speaker 2

We want two that is correct.

00:01:47 Speaker 1

Well, if I might, I'd like to ask you a little bit about how you managed to.

00:01:51 Speaker 1

Wind up in the army.

00:01:53 Speaker 2

Well, when I get drafted, I took the exam in Boston and they wanted me. I could want to tell it late and they wanted me in the Navy.

00:02:04 Speaker 2

I don't like water. I'm afraid of water. I don't want to be Navy man. I want to fight for my country, but I'd rather do it on land. I don't want to drown.

00:02:15 Speaker 2

And that's why I was in the Navy on the fishery for 15 minutes and they finally.

00:02:21 Speaker 2

Let me go.

00:02:24 Speaker 1

Well, in those days I would say that from your date of birth.

00:02:30 Speaker 1

You were. How old?

00:02:32 Speaker 2

Hello. 17 years of age.

00:02:33 Speaker 1

18.

00:02:35 Speaker 1

And here you were drafted into the military service.

00:02:38 Speaker 1

How? How did that feel?

00:02:41 Speaker 2

Well, I was more than glad to go and save my country. I didn't take it too serious. I figured I'd go over there with my friends and it wouldn't last long, but I was long. It did last long and it was blue.

00:02:55 Speaker 1

You remember the day you left for the army.

00:02:59 Speaker 2

Well.

00:03:00 Speaker 2

I know how to report to the police station in Everett and they in turn took us in town to the Fargo building. I believe where they gave us another exam and then they shipped us.

00:03:13 Speaker 2

To go out.

00:03:14 Speaker 2

Devons, Fort Devens. We're there there, too. And then?

00:03:20 Speaker 2

Gave us our uniforms and then then we we get shipped.

00:03:26 Speaker 2

Put on a train. We could take it to Boston.

00:03:30 Speaker 2

A border ship called.

00:03:33 Speaker 2

The USS Wakefield and 5 1/2 days later we were.

00:03:38 Speaker 2

Heading for.

00:03:40 Speaker 2

Birmingham, England, which I didn't know where we were going.

00:03:43 Speaker 2

Really.

00:03:45 Speaker 2

And.

00:03:47 Speaker 2

We get there late at night and then we will put on.

00:03:51 Speaker 2

Trains.

00:03:53 Speaker 2

They were very quiet, lot different from our trains that we have here today.

00:03:58 Speaker 2

And.

00:03:59 Speaker 2

We traveled to take it to the all night and we had two big duffel bags full of clothing. I could hardly pick them up. They were so heavy.

00:04:08 Speaker 2

And the first place they made us lay anything out on the.

00:04:13 Speaker 2

On the ground, we laid out all the thing in it like they had like 10 pairs of shots. They took two pair away. In other words, we carried half out.

00:04:26 Speaker 2

Clothes that they need and we can. We need the mules, but we didn't know that at the time. But in the end I ended up with two of each, but I probably had 10 of each. When.

00:04:35 Speaker 2

I went there.

00:04:37 Speaker 2

Of course, the load that lighter that was good.

00:04:41 Speaker 1

Before you reached England, I'm sure that you've had to go through like basic training.

00:04:45 Speaker 2

I have my basic training in.

00:04:48 Speaker 2

Can't hurt Texas.

00:04:51 Speaker 2

I was there for three months and then I went to a more basic training at Camp Bowie.

00:04:57 Speaker 2

I was assigned to tank destroys which fought the wrong now in Africa.

00:05:05 Speaker 2

And when when that campaign ended, they came back and they told the Witness Tech Destroyer business, it was a Black Panther. The emblem was a Black Panther with.

00:05:17 Speaker 2

A tank and a smoke.

00:05:22 Speaker 1

You're in the tank car.

00:05:23 Speaker 2

I was in the tank call for shots and it took us out because tanks.

00:05:29 Speaker 2

Loss in Europe wasn't as big as it was in Africa, kind of the desert, and the reason one of the reasons that.

00:05:35 Speaker 2

I was a terrain.

00:05:38 Speaker 2

Africa, the terrain was wide open.

00:05:41 Speaker 2

You have a lot of hills and Mars, and they use a lot of these tanks that they had in.

00:05:47 Speaker 2

There was 10 battles, but like if the market was tank battles then, but in between they use it for mobile artillery pieces. They had the 55 harnesses, the French 75 which was deadly, and they had a 57mm cannon which was useless.

00:06:07 Speaker 1

What do you think of your of your basic training? What did you think of that you were 18 years old? You never been through anything like that, I assume?

00:06:15 Speaker 2

Well, I I didn't take it. I I did it because I had to. I didn't. I didn't like it.

00:06:21 Speaker 2

I thought it was kind of tough on us, but I didn't understand it either. Don't forget I just got out of high school. I never. I never left Massachusetts.

00:06:31 Speaker 2

The furthest thing I ever did in Massachusetts when I was living there one Sunday afternoon, we were afternoon answer, bought a cup of coffee and came back. That was.

00:06:40 Speaker 1

It The next thing you know, you're at Fort Hood.

00:06:42 Speaker 1

Texas.

00:06:42 Speaker 2

That's right, chafford. Yes.

00:06:43 Speaker 1

And at that.

00:06:45

Point.

00:06:47 Speaker 1

And from there you went to.

00:06:49 Speaker 2

After three months there, we went to Camp Bowie that's that's about 120 miles away and I was there for a while and then we trained more. I went to work the school again, all about weapons. I became a weapon expert.

00:06:53 Speaker 1

Yeah, boy.

00:07:05 Speaker 2

But lo and behold, I ended up they had too many of them.

00:07:09 Speaker 2

And I didn't get.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Get to do my job. But I did what I.

00:07:13 Speaker 1

Was told so you were. You say you didn't. You were in the Tank Corps for.

00:07:17 Speaker 1

A.

00:07:17 Speaker 1

While, but what was your what was your final specialty? Where? What did you wind up doing in the service?

00:07:18 Speaker 2

Good.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

In Europe I.

00:07:23 Speaker 2

Was in heavy weapons when I was in combat. That's what you're asking.

00:07:27 Speaker 1

Yes.

00:07:30 Speaker 2

And 18th Infantry battalion. There was 3 when I was in the second company H, which meant heavy weapons meant mortar and machine guns.

00:07:41 Speaker 2

Most of the time I was with the.

00:07:43 Speaker 2

Martha.

00:07:44 Speaker 2

And I'm at that time I didn't know which was better, but later on I found out the machine guns. Life expectancy was 5 minutes and I was in the models, so I was.

00:07:55 Speaker 2

You know, sometimes you don't ask questions, you do what you're told and that's it.

00:08:03 Speaker 1

Anything particular stand out in your mind about the?

00:08:08 Speaker 1

Your preparation, your training, your.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

Roger, during my training.

00:08:14 Speaker 2

You know I'm. I'm a young guy and you know, and I live right away.

00:08:18 Speaker 2

You don't volunteer for anything because that guys would volunteer says anybody here can drive.

00:08:24 Speaker 2

And guys would say, yeah, I can. I can alright drive this broom around and then they just sweep the ground.

00:08:31 Speaker 2

OK, I learned. Keep your mouth shut.



00:08:34 Speaker 2

And you don't choke with the sides in either.

00:08:38 Speaker 2

And I made a mistake.

00:08:40 Speaker 2

Mistake was the society when I grow up, I want to join the Army and be inside. And just like you.

00:08:46 Speaker 2

KP 2 weeks.

00:08:49 Speaker 2

Clean our grease stress and that was you. Clean out the grease trap and you puke into the trap and you clean it out again and you puke. I did that for two weeks.

00:09:01 Speaker 1

Well.

00:09:01 Speaker 2

So you don't, you don't make jokes here.

00:09:03 Speaker 1

How was the social life? Was there any social life? I know it must have been a lot of hard work, but did you have any time off? What did you do then?

00:09:09 Speaker 2

The only time the only decent time I had time off was there when I was transferred from bully to Camp Robinson in Little Rock. That was a nice place, a nice city. I wouldn't mind living there.

00:09:20 Speaker 2

But in Texas, where I was near Pauline in Brownsville, the population was so small, you know, we got 100,000 troops there.

00:09:29 Speaker 2

And population of the Cities Party.

00:09:32 Speaker 2

10,000, you know and you know the parents don't want the GI going up to their daughters. Can't blame them.

00:09:42 Speaker 1

So you you mentioned that you've ordered the Wakefield and?

00:09:45 Speaker 2

When I kept when I left to Boston to be shipped when the.

00:09:50 Speaker 2

Board the ship, called the USS Wakefield.

00:09:54 Speaker 2

We crossed. We left that morning and we crossed the Atlantic in 5 1/2 days and we landed in bringing him our our New England.

00:10:07 Speaker 2

At night time.

00:10:09 Speaker 2

And there was.

00:10:11 Speaker 2

So many troops aboard the ship, we only picked theaters twice a day.

00:10:16 Speaker 2

And I ate twice a day, and I I just barely made it.

00:10:20 Speaker 2

I didn't get seasick, but there was bad things happening even then too. There was a power trooper unit on that ship and all of a sudden their side and disappeared. I believe they threw him overboard. I don't know why. Apparently he must have been bad. I don't know.

00:10:38 Speaker 2

But I'd like I said earlier and train. I ran to keep my mouth shut.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

And that's what they did.

00:10:46 Speaker 1

And anything stand out in your mind about your time in England and Birmingham or?

00:10:52 Speaker 2

Wow, they're so so.

00:10:57 Speaker 2

Barriers there, you know, like if you were born poor, you died poor. You could not advance and and looking out over the side of the ship there's a little boy and a little dingy. And they they threw down the rope and he climbed up that rope and we could hardly understand. And he had such a thick alimony act.

00:11:17 Speaker 2

But then they put us on trains and we rolled all night and we went to some camp that belonged to a Lord, and I could swear I was back home and.

00:11:30 Speaker 2

New England here, and that's why we call this new end, because the terrain is just like it is here.

00:11:37 Speaker 2

And and it didn't. It didn't get back there till 12.

00:11:40 Speaker 2

1:00 in the morning.

00:11:45 Speaker 1

Well, from England, I assume that you you.

00:11:48 Speaker 2

Well, from England I went.

00:11:52 Speaker 2

DJ's that we crossed the channel, they transported us from the.

00:11:53

So.

00:12:01 Speaker 2

Carrier the ship into LCI's Landing craft infantry. And that's when we hit the beaches.

00:12:09 Speaker 2

And that was at Omaha Beach. There was 5 beaches, second wave I was in.

00:12:13 Speaker 1

Enormous.

00:12:15 Speaker 2

The second wave.

00:12:16 Speaker 1

2nd Wave Normandy Omaha beach.

00:12:16

The waiver.

00:12:19 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:12:21 Speaker 1

Can you tell us a little about that experience?

00:12:23 Speaker 2

While this.

00:12:25 Speaker 2

The Germans had it zeroed in no matter where we went, they had all that activity and mortis, and they could.

00:12:33 Speaker 2

They could hit it within 2 feet from where you were they wanted to.

00:12:37 Speaker 2

But we did manage to go up to cliffs in between and we did we.

00:12:44 Speaker 2

We in second day we only had like a 13 mile and if they had, we built this history talking later on if they had we built.

00:12:51 Speaker 2

This.

00:12:52 Speaker 2

At that particular day, would the invasion would have failed?

00:12:56 Speaker 2

But.

00:12:58 Speaker 2

History also tells us it's the reason they didn't send more troops because they didn't want to wake up to furer how true it is, I don't know, but that's what history tells us.

00:13:07 Speaker 2

So anyway, after we got in there, I had I asked the French people where I was.

00:13:12 Speaker 2

And they showed me on the map.

00:13:16 Speaker 2

And little by little we Easton, Easton, Easton and.

00:13:22 Speaker 2

And we were in Normandy.

00:13:25 Speaker 2

And then the other four beaches, there was 5 all together. Eventually we called up and I ended up in a replacement depot.

00:13:34 Speaker 2

Because my Alfred got wiped out.

00:13:36 Speaker 2

There's only a few of us, so I became a replacement and then then I.

00:13:42 Speaker 2

Joined.

00:13:45 Speaker 2

The 8th Division.

00:13:48 Speaker 2

300-1853 battalion.

00:13:51 Speaker 2

And the.

00:13:52 Speaker 2

I fought the rest of the war with them.

00:13:55 Speaker 2

And then we went to.

00:13:59 Speaker 2

All on them after Paris didn't. Didn't go in Paris. I, with the exception of 100 miles, I walked across France with the exception of 100 miles and that 100 miles I was on a freight train like cattle. And that took us 2 1/2 days to go 100 miles.

00:14:17 Speaker 2

With all that cattle and the fins.

00:14:20 Speaker 2

That's all we can do and we start to want railroad station. This is interesting.

00:14:26 Speaker 2

And of course, the GI's are looking for anything they can get their hands on. There was a safe in there. We couldn't open it. They couldn't.

00:14:33 Speaker 2

Open. I didn't even.

00:14:33 Speaker 2

Try, but it was a champagne factories there. Do you ever have your fatigues washing champagne? I did. I remember that.

00:14:44 Speaker 2

But there was something else. We finally moved on.

00:14:49 Speaker 2

And.

00:14:50 Speaker 1

Did you meet much resistance? Once you left the beach there normally.

00:14:55 Speaker 2

At times where we also had the free French spot at night time, what they would do, they would go out, night, they would.

00:15:02 Speaker 2

At the beginning, from what I understand, what the what the Frenchman told me they would.

00:15:08 Speaker 2

Sneak up on the enemy.

00:15:11 Speaker 2

Seduce him, kill him and take his weapon away. Now they had a weapon. They would hide it during the day.

00:15:17 Speaker 2

Man in court was the village I was in.

00:15:20 Speaker 2

I was there for quite a while.

00:15:23 Speaker 2

And then when the Battle of Budget was starting to come, then they moved us. So I traveled to three countries in three days, and I ended up in bastone.

00:15:35 Speaker 1

So.

00:15:36 Speaker 2

The 101st was in Bastone.

00:15:40 Speaker 2

And.

00:15:43 Speaker 2

I got wounded it best from.

00:15:45 Speaker 2

December 25th, around noon time.

00:15:48 Speaker 2

And for what I understand, they were surrounded and that General McCauley.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

He yeah.

00:15:56 Speaker 2

He was asked to surrender by the Germans and he answered nuts and they didn't know what it meant. Well, they don't want my buddies told me that it took him three days to break through.

00:16:08 Speaker 2

And it was a double ring. It wasn't 1 ring. It was two rings and they finally broke two in the mean time of the year. The last drive that Hitler made. And he backed past past storm because they knew they couldn't take it. And they finally get stopped. And Patton did that, and I was in his army.

00:16:26 Speaker 2

I'm very proud of Patton.

00:16:28 Speaker 2

I think it was a great general.

00:16:31 Speaker 2

And.

00:16:35 Speaker 2

I'll tell you something very interesting. My granddaughter graduated.

00:16:40 Speaker 2

Four years ago from Suffolk University in Boston.

00:16:45 Speaker 2

And a friend of mine who happened to.

00:16:47 Speaker 2

Be a judge.

00:16:49 Speaker 2

And a lawyer, he belonged to this.

00:16:55 Speaker 2

It's such a thing and we went there to eat and dine and pay our respects and I was wasn't eligible to be there. But I was a guest.

00:17:07 Speaker 2

And one of the fellows there.

00:17:09 Speaker 2

Now talk about coincidence. One of the first things all over. He got up and he introduced himself and he told me he was in vast stone.

00:17:19 Speaker 2

Well, I heard that my ears perked up so right after them he was over. I went over to speak to him. I told him I wasn't vestone. I said I get wounded, but they told me early December 25th, he says, what outfit I said, he said, well, you guys were on my.

00:17:33 Speaker 2

Left I remember.

00:17:34 Speaker 2

You guys said you were on my left, he said. I got wounded seven days later.

00:17:39 Speaker 2

About seven days later, I was gone. I.

00:17:42 Speaker 2



I went to back. I ended up in Paris and then from Paris I ended up to cross the channel. I went to England and I was in a concert out there for.

00:17:50 Speaker 2

6.

00:17:51 Speaker 2

Months before they sent me home.

00:17:54 Speaker 2

There's all this stuff in between, but you know how much can you remember?

00:17:58 Speaker 1

Well, what do you remember about why you were on the front lines when you were fighting there?

00:18:03 Speaker 1

In Europe and.

00:18:04 Speaker 1

Do you remember?

00:18:04 Speaker 2

Well, my first day in court.

00:18:06 Speaker 2

That after we got in there, there was a follow on my left and.

00:18:10 Speaker 2

A follow on.

00:18:11 Speaker 2

My right and the follow on my left, he was winding. He made me nervous, he.

00:18:16 Speaker 2

Was.

00:18:17 Speaker 2

Almost crying, he said. I'm married. I got two children. I'm going to get killed. I said no, no, no, no. 2 seconds later he was dead.

00:18:26 Speaker 2

They got him.

00:18:28 Speaker 2

To say he's only a foot away from me.

00:18:31 Speaker 2

How do you how do you figure that out?

00:18:33 Speaker 2

And my sizing came from Boulder, Co and his name was brought again and he was a German. I had another Sergeant. His name was fishbeck.

00:18:44 Speaker 2

He was chairman, they they both came from Texas. He came from Texas and I did go to see me. He came to my house. He's used to stay in God. God, duty with me.

00:18:55 Speaker 2

His wife's name was Melvin. So was my wife's name Melvin, and he came and see me after the war and he said, he says in car in Boulder, Co he says 9:00, they pulled the sidewalk.

00:19:07 Speaker 2

He was totally amazed now what happened and everyone he's coming from Victor and sitting through my house and I was running out of time unexpected. All my neighbors came. They helped me finish wallpaper and paint and everything. He shows up. They had a big fan. We had a party last all night and he come in there, he said.

00:19:27 Speaker 2

You know what Rusty Street is? So when you going to peace party, he was amazed. Now having his two by three miles.

00:19:35 Speaker 2

Right. Population back down was about 45,000 people.

00:19:40 Speaker 2

So he finally gets to Elm Street, which is about a block away from me, and he stops. Can you tell me what you said? You're going to peace party. Take a left and the right and you'll be there. And. And he was there.

00:19:51 Speaker 2

It was a great day. Today we were up all night. The neighbors came back, came to the house to keep bringing bags of ice cubes, anything we needed. The neighbors did it all, and we didn't even lock our doors at night.

00:20:06 Speaker 2

In fact, that that night I went next door and slept next door.

00:20:10 Speaker 1

Did you make many, many close friends through the service, through your military service?

00:20:14 Speaker 2

Well, it seems I still see a couple or talk with you.

00:20:19 Speaker 1

And have been in contact with since the war.

00:20:21 Speaker 2

Oh yes, we are. Well, unfortunately a lot of work expired.

00:20:26 Speaker 1

How much contact did you have from back home with the family while you were serving over in Europe?

00:20:31 Speaker 2

Well, I would write my brother wrote to me all all the time.

00:20:36 Speaker 2

The thing is, you write a letter and the the attendant have to read it and they would cut out what he didn't want you to say.

00:20:45 Speaker 2

And after you get through cutting, there was nothing to read because you don't know what to say.

00:20:51 Speaker 2

I mean.

00:20:52 Speaker 1

Did your brother also serve in the European?

00:20:53 Speaker 2

My brother served in the Pacific. He was in Okinawa.

00:20:59 Speaker 2

Yeah. And then he he did go to Japan, after which they occupied Japan. He was there, and he was a marine.

00:21:10 Speaker 2

That's not just, not. That's not to say that the Marines are any better than the army men because they're not. If they did copy our obstacle course that I know for a fact because a friend of mine is a

marine today and and and he he explained it to me and says, yeah, that's how he said. Well, I mean, I said you copy this from us. He says from what you say.

00:21:30 Speaker 2

I think it's true.

00:21:32 Speaker 1

Do you remember your brother's outfit? Where he he.

00:21:36 Speaker 2

Was he was in capital, Jean, the United States Marine. I don't know. I did write to him, but not often.

00:21:37 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:21:40 Speaker 1

You don't know which battalion, what division or anything like that.

00:21:45 Speaker 2

No.

00:21:51 Speaker 1

You mentioned probably well, Normandy was certainly one tremendous battle of the war, but you mentioned the battle.

00:21:59 Speaker 1

Of the bulge.

00:21:59 Speaker 2

Battle of the budget was the biggest war in the history of the United States. The biggest war I ever stated was the.

00:22:06 Speaker 2

Battle of the boats.

00:22:08 Speaker 2

And like I said.

00:22:12 Speaker 2

Even even today, they they acknowledging that that that was the biggest spell. So I I feel.

00:22:19 Speaker 2

Very hard. I was in the invasion of Omaha Beach. I was at.

00:22:24 Speaker 2

Bastone so I don't think I own it.

00:22:28 Speaker 2

I I think I did my my duty. I love my country, right or wrong.

00:22:33 Speaker 1

Well, I'd say that you certainly did.

00:22:38 Speaker 1

Did serve your country in a in a big, big way. As a matter of fact, if I'm not mistaken, you were recognized with a number of medals and achievements with regard to your service, were you?

00:22:48 Speaker 2

Yes, yes, I was.

00:22:48 Speaker 1

Not.

00:22:50 Speaker 1

Could you tell us a little bit about your?

00:22:52 Speaker 1

Decorations.

00:22:53 Speaker 2

Well, I got the combat infantry badge twice.

00:22:58 Speaker 2

The second time I'll get a lease with it because I ended that under combat.

00:23:03 Speaker 2

I was awarded the Bronze Star with my name engraved on it.

00:23:09 Speaker 2

I have 3 battle stars, 4 ballot saws and ETO, which means European theater of operations.

00:23:18 Speaker 2

I got the.

00:23:20 Speaker 2

A presidential citation from Franklin Delano Roosevelt from my unit.

00:23:25 Speaker 2

I get that and I have that at home. I'm very proud of it. I did.

00:23:31 Speaker 2

I'm I'm obsessed with the war. I shouldn't be. But I am. I cannot get it out of my mind. It was the biggest part of my life.

00:23:39 Speaker 2

And maybe I'm being obsessed with too much, so I asked a lot of my friends.

00:23:45 Speaker 2

As as we get older, it seems to be more and more prevalent in your mind.

00:23:50 Speaker 2

The war, the war, the war, and then I see what's happening to these kids that they won't won't they wouldn't defend the country.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

I don't know who's right, who's wrong anymore, but I know I I was right. I did what I had to do. And if I had to do it again, I would.

00:24:08

No.

00:24:09 Speaker 1

You certainly have.

00:24:11 Speaker 1

Compiled a number of achievements for your military service and I would think you'd be extremely proud of that.

00:24:17 Speaker 2

I am proud of it.

00:24:19 Speaker 2

I have a daughter and a son and.

00:24:23 Speaker 2

Any any information I have about my military service payment that they each have a copy. My son has the originals because he's a boy and my daughter has duplicates.

00:24:36 Speaker 2

You know him being a male, you know, he could be subject to the draft too, but fortunately he didn't have to.

00:24:43 Speaker 1

I'd like to ask you a question and then you feel free to pass on it if you if.

00:24:47 Speaker 1

You wish because I you know it's it's.

00:24:50 Speaker 1

This question probably affects people in different ways, but having seen what you've seen at the beach at Omaha and in the Battle of the Bulge and also being wounded yourself in action, I mean, you must have seen your share of casualties on the battlefield.

00:25:07 Speaker 1

Has that.

00:25:08 Speaker 1

How has that affected you? Let me.

00:25:09 Speaker 1

Just put a thing like that.

00:25:10 Speaker 2

Rob.

00:25:12 Speaker 2

After after after I get into into friends and started walking around, the villages were 3-4 miles apart. Little tiny villages.

00:25:21 Speaker 2

And the Germans could see us coming. And what happened there was they'd be up in the church.

00:25:25 Speaker 2

Staples.

00:25:27 Speaker 2

And they could. They could see us. So we want it. I didn't.

00:25:31 Speaker 2

The commanders, Linda, the first thing they did, they shut down the steeple. So if there's any.

00:25:35 Speaker 2

Gems up there, they were gone.

00:25:38 Speaker 2

And then you see these bridges that animals pigs, if they, if they didn't pick them up, they'd be swollen up.

00:25:45 Speaker 2

And I seen their Germans with their heads, color of red cabbage.

00:25:51 Speaker 2

And I would say.

00:25:53 Speaker 2

I would hum to myself and I would sing.

00:25:57 Speaker 2

That.

00:25:59 Speaker 2

World War 2 what's the use of worrying in in my mind, because I.

00:26:04 Speaker 2

I was not.

00:26:05 Speaker 2

Going to really get me and it didn't.

00:26:08 Speaker 2

I I thought I did everything I could.

00:26:13 Speaker 1

And you've spent some time thinking about it. Since you've got returned from the service though.

00:26:18 Speaker 2

Tons and tons of hours. I cannot get it out of my mind. I'd like to, but I can't.

00:26:26 Speaker 1

Well, in the midst of all that tragedy that you.

00:26:29 Speaker 1

Had to observe.

00:26:31 Speaker 1



What? What? What would the soldier do? What did you do for any form of recreation to get your mind off of things? I mean, was there, was there something that soldiers particularly did when they weren't?

00:26:41 Speaker 2

Well, let me let me put it this let me put it this way.

00:26:42

Right.

00:26:45 Speaker 2

I'm in the front lines. I didn't smoke and they used to give me a pack of cigarettes.

00:26:53 Speaker 2

A day I didn't smoke, so I gave all my cigarettes to further my squad.

00:26:59 Speaker 2

And they give us a candy bar.

00:27:02 Speaker 2

And that's why you got you got. So you hated that D rational candy chocolate. Then you just hated it. So now they said to me, says Peter, we're going to let you go with some Nancy for five hours.

00:27:15 Speaker 2

Well, I have no money. I have nothing so.

00:27:19 Speaker 2

He he's the guy getting that pack of cigarettes.

00:27:22 Speaker 2

So when I get to Nancy, France.

00:27:25 Speaker 2

Before I could even get off the trucks or censor me, they got money in their hands.

00:27:30 Speaker 2

And they they're going to. They want American cigarettes and they willing to pay anything for them. I was so naive. I wouldn't take more than a buck.

00:27:39 Speaker 2

Right.

00:27:42 Speaker 2

So I didn't manage to buy.

00:27:45 Speaker 2

A couple of things. A little bottle of perfume and I did get it sent home.

00:27:49 Speaker 2

Now the the sad thing is they had a big building there.

00:27:54 Speaker 2

Red Cross.

00:27:56 Speaker 2

You're not going to like what I'm going to say about the Red Cross.

00:28:00 Speaker 2

But I'm not going to lie either.

00:28:02 Speaker 2

I went into Red Cross and they serve in Donuts and coffee.

00:28:07 Speaker 2

How to buy tickets 3 for \$0.10?

00:28:11 Speaker 2

I said, well, I only want one says no, you gotta buy 3.

00:28:16 Speaker 2

So I buy 3. I had eight francs in my hand. They needed 10. So I said, hey folks, anybody got a couple extra francs?

00:28:25 Speaker 2

Doesn't guys come up with a handful? Might take all you want, buddy.

00:28:30 Speaker 2

I took the two Franks, brought my things, and got in this huge line. When I get up to the by my truck, I said I have 3 coffees and three three Donuts, she says. You got one coffee and one donut.

00:28:44 Speaker 2

And So what about this? Would you never get in line again? The reason I wanted tree I wasn't going to drink tree coffee, so I wasn't going to eat 3 Donuts. I was going to give it away. They wouldn't do that. That's the American Red Cross.

00:28:57 Speaker 2

Love them. I won't give them the right time.

00:29:01 Speaker 2

So Rachel, I may, I will, but not the right. Maybe shouldn't be saying this. Maybe I'm cutting my own throat here. I don't know.

00:29:09 Speaker 2

But what are they going to do? Shoot me? The Gems couldn't do it.

00:29:13 Speaker 2

So what am I going to say?

00:29:17 Speaker 1

How was tell us a little bit about the you're coming home?

00:29:22 Speaker 1

From the war, leaving leaving.

00:29:24 Speaker 2

Europe, when I came home from the war, I came home on the US his pocket. It took 15 1/2 days to cross.

00:29:33 Speaker 2

The ocean. It was winter time.

00:29:36 Speaker 2

Was very stunning. I got seasick.

00:29:40 Speaker 2

I could see sicker for three hours after I was aboard ship, and they went on the cot and they couldn't even eat. And the farm next door he wore around me and arms the sucker on.

00:29:52 Speaker 2

Or a piece of crusty bread. I was in bed for 14/14. I couldn't. Could not eat and I finally got to Boston, Boston harbor.

00:30:03 Speaker 2

And you know and.

00:30:04 Speaker 2

And and findings that they took us.

00:30:08 Speaker 2

We deposited the boat.

00:30:10 Speaker 2

And we went to Fort.

00:30:13 Speaker 2

Edwards, Camp, Edwards.

00:30:15 Speaker 2

When they eventually discharge.

00:30:17 Speaker 2

Us.

00:30:19 Speaker 1

And and you were wounded at the time you went to the hospital there.

00:30:21 Speaker 2

Yes, I was.

00:30:24 Speaker 2

Yes, I went to the hospital and they wanted me. They wanted me to stay there for 30 days to get acclimated to being discharged. But right next door to me, there was an airplane.

00:30:38 Speaker 2

Right, the airport.

00:30:42 Speaker 2

Well then, please come over there and scare the hell out of us and we.

00:30:45 Speaker 2

All ducked under the books.

00:30:48 Speaker 2

Put choice on that part.

00:30:51 Speaker 1

And once from that, that hospital at at Fort Edwards that you were were discharged.

00:30:56 Speaker 1

From the military.

00:30:56 Speaker 2

Yes, yes. And then they came to Boston.

00:31:00 Speaker 2

We had to wait till 12:00 to get a train. So my buddy and I, we said, well, we'll, we'll have a limo. The guy says he'll take us to Boston for \$25.

00:31:12 Speaker 2

Between the two of us, we had we had enough money, so we took the limo.

00:31:17 Speaker 2

And and about 5 miles before we got to South station, he says, hey, listen folks.

00:31:22 Speaker 2

Why don't I give you a couple of bucks and you can take the train and go the rest of the way?

00:31:27 Speaker 2

And I won't have to go and watch this. No.

00:31:30 Speaker 2

We paid you to take us through there every day and the first thing I did went over and.

00:31:35 Speaker 2

I bought myself a hat.

00:31:38 Speaker 2

And then after we then we took took the train and we went.

00:31:44 Speaker 2

One heart.

00:31:45 Speaker 1

How did it feel to get home?

00:31:48 Speaker 2

I went to Everett Square way and I cried.

00:31:52 Speaker 2

I was so glad to be home.

00:31:54 Speaker 2

You know, it's like you gave me a. You gave me a new life.

00:32:03 Speaker 1

Well, that's quite a quite a story. If you could sum it up. Is that what kind of what lessons did you get from that experience? What, what? What would you like to pass on in the way of what you learned having gone?

00:32:14 Speaker 1

Through what you did.

00:32:16 Speaker 2

Well, you know, it's like if you get sick, you go to the doctor.

00:32:21 Speaker 2

Whether he's right or wrong, you've got to listen and do what he says, and that's what I learned in the army. Keep your mouth shut. Do what you're told and all those couple of times.

00:32:31 Speaker 2

That what happened to me? I tell you another thing that happened to me in the States and this this is kind of comical in a way.

00:32:39 Speaker 2

We have a lot of discipline. You fill up your canteen with water, you can't even really drink. It's got chlorine and salt in it.

00:32:48 Speaker 2

And.

00:32:49 Speaker 2

Or on the rifle range.

00:32:51 Speaker 2

And I've opened up my canteen and I took it. Just wiped my lips because they check it when you come back.

00:32:58 Speaker 2

They check your canteen and all of a sudden who shows up, or a chief comes up and is a general in isogeny in it, and I get caught with the canteen on my lips.

00:33:10 Speaker 2

They took me down.

00:33:12 Speaker 2

They discipline me with the grease traps. That's another time.

00:33:16 Speaker 2

And.

00:33:18 Speaker 2

That's what happened there, but where a lot of the funds were due.

00:33:22 Speaker 2

They would drink the water if they didn't get caught, then they would put tables in the water to bring the water level up.

00:33:29 Speaker 2

I never would have thought of that. I wasn't smart enough to do that back then, don't forget.

00:33:34 Speaker 2

I've never been away from home.

00:33:38 Speaker 2

And and I found that summers were still fighting the civil war.

00:33:42 Speaker 2

Ohh YY.

00:33:46 Speaker 2

But I made some good, good friends that lived in North Carolina and Virginia. I made some good friends.

00:33:55 Speaker 2

Even even there was.

00:33:56 Speaker 2

A far by the name of Buddy Klein, he came from New York and they picked on him in basic because he was Jewish. He says he wanted to wear his Hanukkah on a Saturday and then giving KP on purpose because he was Jewish.

00:34:15 Speaker 2

Well anyway I.

00:34:17 Speaker 2

And I became buddies with them. And they they told me that if I hang around with him, they're going to take away my passport pages. And they did.

00:34:26 Speaker 2

Right. They did take him away.

00:34:28 Speaker 2

But anyway, make a Long story short, we could shift out. We checked in contact with each other.

00:34:34 Speaker 2

He got killed.

00:34:37 Speaker 2

One shortly later I wrote to his parents.

00:34:40 Speaker 2

In New York.

00:34:42 Speaker 2

He was a nice guy. I don't care what missionary he was.

00:34:52 Speaker 1

Are you yourself?

00:34:54

Would.

00:34:55 Speaker 1

You currently or did you, after the war belong to any?

00:34:59 Speaker 1

Membership in any organizations.

00:35:01 Speaker 2

Yeah, the I'd I'd want to, yeah.

00:35:05 Speaker 2

Veterans.

00:35:05 Speaker 1

Smith.

00:35:06 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:35:11 Speaker 1

Well.

00:35:11 Speaker 1



I want to thank you for for sharing this experience with us today.

00:35:15 Speaker 2

I will try. I was able to answer your questions.

00:35:18 Speaker 1

I don't mean to cut you short. If there's anything else you want to add, please feel free.

00:35:24 Speaker 2

No, I'm glad you're doing it.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

I don't know how much.

00:35:27 Speaker 2

Good. This will do.

00:35:29 Speaker 2

For younger people today, they don't think like I do, and they never will. This country never will be the same. The world is changing.

00:35:37 Speaker 2

And there's nothing I can do this they call that progress. I read that book that Morrow wrote about the greatest generation. Believe me, that's true.

00:35:49 Speaker 2

Yeah, sure.

00:35:49 Speaker 1

Well, from my generation to one of the greatest generation, I want to thank you for your service.

00:35:55 Speaker 2

Thank you.

00:35:55 Speaker 1

And I think maybe by doing these types of interviews and making a permanent record in the Library of Congress that future generations will come to understand a little bit about what it was like.

00:36:08 Speaker 2

Well, you know one thing they got to learn. It doesn't matter what nationality you are. My parents came from the old country.

00:36:14 Speaker 2

But they became citizens. They did papers.

00:36:17 Speaker 2

Passport they they got everything and they registered.

00:36:21 Speaker 2

They went to school to learn.

00:36:23 Speaker 2

My mother, I I taught my mother how to write her name.

00:36:28 Speaker 2

My father had his own little business.

00:36:31 Speaker 2

You know, they didn't make a lot of money, but we weren't hungry either. They preserved and made a lot of things by themselves.

00:36:40 Speaker 2

A housewife back then was a full time housewife. Later on, the government made it so that her wife had to work to support the family because everything was getting out of control and we got \$0.15 of power was a lot of money for something.

00:36:56 Speaker 2

Dozen eggs, 9 cents \$0.10 quarter milk was not \$0.09.

00:37:03 Speaker 2

And then if I was lucky, I could keep the penny. I wasn't lucky too often, but I that's the way it went.

00:37:11 Speaker 2

Oh yeah.

00:37:12 Speaker 1

Well, thank you, Mr. Gavaskar, I appreciate your taking the time to do this for me.

00:37:17 Speaker 2

Thank you for asking.