

## **Renaldo Martin Interview**

Company A, 318th Inf Reg

*(Aug 2001, interviewed by COL(ret) Grant Porter)*

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

00:00:10 Speaker 1

Very good. My name is Ronaldo P Martin.

00:00:10

OK. Thank you.

00:00:15 Speaker 1

And I was with company A.

00:00:18 Speaker 1

318th Infantry Division Infantry regiment.

00:00:23 Speaker 1

Of course, the 80th Division.

00:00:27 Speaker 1

And I was drafted in July.

00:00:32 Speaker 1

1942 I was one of the first one that set foot the Camp Forest, Tennessee.

00:00:38 Speaker 1

Get started.

00:00:40 Speaker 1

Receiving our training in Camp Forest.

00:00:43 Speaker 1

And we were trained for 2 1/2 years.

00:00:47 Speaker 1

And one thing that he kept telling us while we were being trained was that that we were being trained for the invasion.

00:00:55 Speaker 1

And we didn't believe it until the day that we boarded Queen Mary.

00:01:02 Speaker 1

Four days we were all lined up on the English Channel.

00:01:06 Speaker 1

Ready to go into action?

00:01:13 Speaker 2

And you landed at what? Where? Where did you land and organize?

00:01:17 Speaker 1

All my all my. Yeah.

00:01:22 Speaker 2

Drew equipment and moved, then started moving inland.

00:01:26 Speaker 1

Yeah, while moving and it kept on moving forward.

00:01:32 Speaker 1

I don't exactly remember the name of all the places that we went through, but few comes to mind right now and are chanting.

00:01:40 Speaker 1

Account.

00:01:41 Speaker 1

And then of course.

00:01:43 Speaker 1

And October the 8th, 1944, that's when I got wounded. That was near quantum sum.

00:01:53 Speaker 1

And.

00:01:55 Speaker 1

I was hospitalized for 15 months.

00:01:59 Speaker 1

When I was picked up from the on the Bellfield.

00:02:05 Speaker 1

Lieutenant Captain Sam McAllister.

00:02:10 Speaker 1

Is the one that came across me and I had laid there all day hollering for help.

00:02:16 Speaker 1

And of course, there was nobody around except a few tanks and the mortar Charlotte was going by.

00:02:23 Speaker 1

And I remember one thing that that there was a role not very far from where I was sitting on my back and the the shelves would hit the the road and the hot tire was falling, burning, you know, upon my face.

00:02:37 Speaker 1

Burn like fire.

00:02:39 Speaker 2

Now you were a platoon Sergeant by that time.

00:02:43 Speaker 1

By that time, yes, I was, yeah.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

So could you describe that action? How did that start? Did you were you moving forward?

00:02:53 Speaker 1

Yeah, the night before. Well, of course. I was awarded 3 Bronze stars.

00:03:01 Speaker 1

The invasion of on the Omaha beach crossing the Moselle River and the closing the palace Gap.

00:03:11 Speaker 1

And.

00:03:15 Speaker 2

The day you were wounded, though, your the company moved out on the offensive.

00:03:20 Speaker 1

Yeah, the night before around 12:00.

00:03:25 Speaker 1

The.

00:03:28 Speaker 1

Sent orders around 12:00 at night.

00:03:32 Speaker 1

That we were going to.

00:03:35 Speaker 1

Moves forward at 6:00 sharp in the morning.

00:03:40 Speaker 1

And very shortly after we started moving forward.

00:03:45 Speaker 1

That's when I was. I was hit by a when they called shrapnels from an 88 motor.

00:03:52 Speaker 1

Gun.

00:03:53 Speaker 2

OK.

00:03:54 Speaker 1

And that lead on the bells healed all day.

00:03:56 Speaker 2

The company moved on.

00:03:58 Speaker 1

Yeah, they kept on the platoon. My platoon kept up.

00:04:02 Speaker 1

Kept moving on forward.

00:04:05 Speaker 1

And I lay there and all I could hear all day long was that they were. They fought all day that I know.

00:04:13 Speaker 1

Did take their objective?

00:04:18 Speaker 1

And when the company commander came back at night.

00:04:24 Speaker 1

Just before dawn, he stumbled upon me, and that's when he sent help, you know to.

00:04:30 Speaker 2

Were there other wounded soldiers near you, or were you totally alone there?

00:04:34 Speaker 2

Were other wounds.

00:04:34 Speaker 1

Well, there was some I couldn't. I couldn't very well say it was tall grass and I could very well, you know.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

And be aware of how close they were.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

But you were close to a paved road or an asphalt paved Rd.

00:04:49 Speaker 1

Yeah. And that's all paved road. And they were shelling, you know, and when they the shell would hit the the hot tire and would fly up in the air and get me in the case. And there was burning like fire that I remember very well.

00:05:03 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:05:05 Speaker 1

After they picked me up, I.

00:05:09 Speaker 1

I lost conscience there for.

00:05:12 Speaker 1

Then I remember when it took me back to.

00:05:17 Speaker 1

That center.

00:05:18 Speaker 1

Sure.

00:05:22 Speaker 1

They were ready to leave with the ambulance there and.

00:05:28 Speaker 1

One of the fellows that was all the time that they carried me back on the they were shooting us all the time.

00:05:35 Speaker 1

And they had to put me down, you know, and go a little further and then do the same thing again and that.

00:05:43 Speaker 1

Once he reached the ambulance he he stopped and the driver and he said get take one of those guys off because this fellas got to to go right away.

00:05:55 Speaker 1

And I didn't want them to do that as now he was ahead of me.

00:05:58 Speaker 1

Let him go and that I remember that I came back to enough, you know, to to remember that. But now they insisted that so one guy said that I'm coming off.

00:06:10 Speaker 1

They put me in the ambulance and.

00:06:13 Speaker 1

We landed in Nancy, France. Nancy is where I was hospitalized for two weeks and then now I was transferred to.

00:06:27 Speaker 1

And and I forgot the name of that place in England.

00:06:31 Speaker 1

I was there for three months.

00:06:34 Speaker 1

And then you ship me to the states here, Martinsburg, WV.

00:06:40 Speaker 1

Bakers hospital.

00:06:42 Speaker 1

I was hospitalized in all 15 months.

00:06:47 Speaker 1

I received my discharge and December 23rd, 1945.

00:06:53 Speaker 2

You know I'm interested when you landed. Were you up just a private Rifleman? Then at that time?

00:06:59 Speaker 1

No. I was a Sergeant. I was, Sergeant. I was a squad leader.

00:07:01 Speaker 2

You are, Sergeant. Were you a squad leader?

00:07:04 Speaker 2

So you were one of the early ones to arrive in Tennessee with the division and you had worked up to be a squad leader by the time you went overseas.

00:07:13 Speaker 1

Correct.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

And.

00:07:18 Speaker 2

Can you tell us about, uh, your training? You said you felt well prepared in your training?

00:07:24 Speaker 1

Yeah, we we train, you know from camp far through went to.

00:07:30 Speaker 1

Kansas, Kansas, Tampa, Little Laguna, Arizona that came to Fort Dix, NJ we trained for 2 1/2 years before we were shipped overseas.

00:07:40 Speaker 2

How long had you been a squad leader before you went overseas into combat?

00:07:53 Speaker 1

Chicago and.

00:07:56 Speaker 1

I would say before I went to combat, I must have been this quarter either for about 7 or 8 months I guess.

00:08:02 Speaker 2

And you knew your squad and you felt comfortable with them. Now, once you went into combat.

00:08:05 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:08:10 Speaker 2

You we know you were getting replacements by the time you were wounded. How many of the original ones were still there from that squad? Do you? No, not very many.

00:08:19 Speaker 1

Not very many. After you know out of the end.

00:08:21 Speaker 2

Rounds.

00:08:24 Speaker 1

When I got worried, I had the platoon I'd say out of the platoon, there probably was that we went overseas with.

00:08:35 Speaker 1

Not more than not 36, not more than.

00:08:40 Speaker 1

12:15.

00:08:42 Speaker 2

12 or 15, yeah, and most no more than 1/3 of the platoon were original people by that time by October.

00:08:43

Then.

00:08:50 Speaker 2

And the you commented the new soldiers coming in.

00:08:54 Speaker 2

Had not gone through three years of training, probably they had probably gone through maybe a year.

00:08:59 Speaker 1

And we felt we felt very sorry for them because they, you know, they didn't have the proper training.

00:09:06 Speaker 1

And we knew that it wouldn't. It wouldn't last very long and.

00:09:13 Speaker 1



I would say probably most of them within.

00:09:17 Speaker 1

Three or four days a week at the most, we're bumped up.

00:09:21 Speaker 2

Or be a casualty or kill. So you tended to by the time a person became a seasoned, so to speak, infantrymen, their chances shot up dramatically to last longer by, as most of the casualties then tended to be new replacements.

00:09:22 Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

Is that correct as a as a squad leader and then a platoon Sergeant did. Did you typically try to do anything to prepare them when they arrived in the comp?

00:09:42 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:09:53 Speaker 1

Well, yeah, we would. You know, we would try to advise them, you know, to try to copy us, you know.

00:10:02 Speaker 1

If they see, you know that we were taking cover or anything like that, that to do the same thing.

00:10:11 Speaker 1

But when you don't have the proper training.

00:10:14 Speaker 1

Uh.

00:10:15 Speaker 1

You don't take advice very easily.

00:10:18 Speaker 2

What? What were their typical mistakes? If we can talk about this, like, did they fail to take cover quickly enough? Did they? They fail to see, identify proper cover and concealment, was that?

00:10:25 Speaker 1

Correct. Yeah.

00:10:30 Speaker 1

Yeah, and not not careful enough. You know, like, for instance, we come to a wall, a cement wall or something like that. Well, you know, a hole was blown through through the wall that you could pee, you know, to see what was going on and get inside the wall. Well, some of these guys, the first thing they would.

00:10:50 Speaker 1

Come to a place like that.

00:10:53 Speaker 1

Try to peek in in a place like the whole, like that right off. You know, they opened up fire.

00:10:59 Speaker 2

On them. And you knew the enemy would be covering obvious places like that and prepared to fire.

00:11:04 Speaker 1

Sure. Now they had, you know, most of those things like that was planned ahead of time. You know that that.

00:11:12 Speaker 1

That's what they wanted to do.

00:11:15 Speaker 1

For a color.

00:11:15 Speaker 1

To go on.

00:11:16 Speaker 1

Stick his head out there. That was an easy target.

00:11:18

Now.

00:11:20 Speaker 2

I remember I'm in a different war, but I remember an infantry. Different leaders would direct point men and so forth where to travel to, to be under cover and concealment.

00:11:34 Speaker 2

Did you have much opportunity? Did your squad leaders direct the movements or you know what I'm saying?

00:11:42

Uh.

00:11:45 Speaker 1

I would say once you're on the frontline that you're on the fire.

00:11:51 Speaker 1

One thing that.

00:11:54 Speaker 1

Said that, we observe.

00:11:57 Speaker 1

That if you know that your life is in grave danger.

00:12:02 Speaker 1

That you there's a certain chemical that your body creates on your on your brain and makes you a little lightheaded.

00:12:14 Speaker 1

Sometimes we'd see different things that would happen, you know, like for instance.

00:12:19 Speaker 1

Somebody would trip and fall.

00:12:22 Speaker 1

When you go over that, nothing funny about that, but we giggle.

00:12:28 Speaker 1

Or somebody would be flat on the ground and get their backpacks blown right off from there.

00:12:36 Speaker 1

And stay right out there without his crash.

00:12:41 Speaker 1

Not very funny, but we giggle.

00:12:45 Speaker 1

Because we figured that.

00:12:47 Speaker 1

My personal opinion, I should say that that we were quite lightheaded.

00:12:54 Speaker 2

They could talk about an adrenaline high. That's right.

00:13:01 Speaker 2

So.

00:13:03 Speaker 2

For example, in Vietnam, where we tended to move down trails and in in a single file a lot.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

In Europe, I imagine a rifle company would often be deployed on a line or in a formation spread out, so it was a.

00:13:18 Speaker 2

Different kind of thing.

00:13:19 Speaker 1

Never a bunch of. So that was a no no. And that's one problem that we had with newcomers.

00:13:27 Speaker 1

That they would try to they they thought, you know, if you get close to somebody else, they would give you a, you know, protection but not in our case.

00:13:37

MHM.

00:13:38 Speaker 1

You had to be on your own and look after yourself.

00:13:43 Speaker 1

And look up at you to take care of.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

Can you just? Do you remember the 1st combat engagement your squad and company tuning company were involved in? Do you remember that?

00:14:03 Speaker 2

Or any given in game. The first you might come to mind.

00:14:08 Speaker 1

Well, of course the landing. When we came off those tubs, you know, we jump in the water.

00:14:15 Speaker 1

Boy, always.

00:14:17 Speaker 1

Neck high.

00:14:19 Speaker 1

And.

00:14:22 Speaker 1

Once we landed on the beach, there wasn't too much resistance when we landed.

00:14:26 Speaker 1

On the beach.

00:14:28 Speaker 1

But that first night that we.

00:14:32 Speaker 1

Kept on pushing forward, took a small town and we came to a small town.

00:14:38 Speaker 1

And there we really got engaged into a heavy fighting.

00:14:46 Speaker 1

I stay for at least three or four hours.

00:14:50 Speaker 1

Was pitch dark.

00:14:53 Speaker 1

Half of the time, we didn't know where we were or where was ahead of us.

00:14:59 Speaker 1

But we kept on moving forward.

00:15:01 Speaker 2

Alright.

00:15:04 Speaker 2

The UM.

00:15:07 Speaker 2

Typically, as a leader, did you feel like?

00:15:12 Speaker 2

It was hard to control what was going on in combat.

00:15:15 Speaker 1

No, because I'll tell you once I was a squad leader and then the two Sergeant.

00:15:23 Speaker 1

I kept telling my men I'll never ask you to do something that I want.

00:15:30 Speaker 1

Be able to stand for you and lead you to it.

00:15:33 Speaker 1

And that I stood by Dad.

00:15:36 Speaker 1

I was in front of my man and default.

00:15:39 Speaker 1

And follow along with me.

00:15:42 Speaker 2

So you controlled by leading out front.

00:15:46 Speaker 1

At the if your men had confidence in you and.

00:15:50 Speaker 1

And then you know, you could.

00:15:52 Speaker 1

Very well controlled all of them. Except I would say again not I have anything against the newcomer because they were there.

00:16:01 Speaker 1

For the same purpose that we were, but they did not have the training. That's all there is to it.

00:16:08 Speaker 2

Is there anything special you would like to cover while we're doing this interview?

00:16:15 Speaker 2

That you had in mind about your experiences in the 80th Division?

00:16:27 Speaker 1

In the guide to what?

00:16:29 Speaker 2

OK. How long have you been coming to the reunions?

00:16:33 Speaker 1

17 years we started in 19. The first one was in Baltimore, MD.

00:16:39 Speaker 1

1986.

00:16:40

M.

00:16:42 Speaker 1

And into that first reunion.

00:16:47 Speaker 1

It was.

00:16:49 Speaker 1

I think it was 3 or 4 fellas that we had trained together all the time we were in this case and that we had fought together until the date I was wounded.

00:17:01 Speaker 1

And that was in 1986. Then, of course, the word spread out then that.

00:17:07 Speaker 1

I had attended one of those meetings and that.

00:17:11 Speaker 1

Then the the fella that took over my platoon with that when I was wounded.

00:17:16 Speaker 1

He was then.

00:17:18 Speaker 1

When I was wounded, he was only a corporal.

00:17:22 Speaker 1

In the first of the first quad I believe was the first squad, Karl Heppner.

00:17:29 Speaker 1

And the US promoted right along until when I was the one that he's the one that.

00:17:34 Speaker 1

Took over the platoon.

00:17:39 Speaker 1

He was there.

00:17:41 Speaker 1

And that was probably.

00:17:44 Speaker 1

Seven or eight of us that had trained and fought together, and we were just like brothers. Of course, you know, it was nice.

00:17:48

Hmm.

00:17:53 Speaker 1

It made those reunions very, very nicely attend to.

00:17:55

Uh-huh.

00:17:57 Speaker 1

But they're they're all gone.

00:18:01 Speaker 1

Disregarding in here does not a single one except me here from company.

00:18:06 Speaker 2

From that company.

00:18:07 Speaker 1

Yeah. On the other one is.

00:18:10 Speaker 1

With no with no gas company.

00:18:14 Speaker 1

Oh yes, I've got status back.

00:18:18 Speaker 1

Uh.



00:18:20 Speaker 1

This is Elmer Dorston.

00:18:24 Speaker 1

He trained. He was not in campfires with us, though he he joined the.

00:18:31 Speaker 1

Idiot, I think it was in Tampa, going Arizona.

00:18:36 Speaker 1

Probably about a year after we had started the camp, Forrest, Tennessee, he joined us when he joined the.

00:18:46 Speaker 1

318 company.

00:18:49 Speaker 1

And.

00:18:51 Speaker 1

He was there.

00:18:52 Speaker 1

Came over with us.

00:18:55 Speaker 1

Pretty Mary.

00:18:56 Speaker 1

And he fought with us.

00:18:59 Speaker 1

He was here. This this arose.

00:19:03 Speaker 1

And then there's Wignall he his father was with us. I remember.

00:19:09 Speaker 1

Vaguely. I remember his father vaguely, but that's his son that's coming into the reunion now. Yeah.

00:19:12

Mm-hmm.

00:19:15 Speaker 2

To the reunions, OK?

00:19:18 Speaker 2

OK, well.

00:19:21 Speaker 2

Thank you very.

00:19:21 Speaker 2

Much for this, we'd like to ultimately be able to send you a copy we have.

00:19:27 Speaker 2

Stuff just in case like it.