

Dunsha, Bruce Interview 5-26-95

[Speaker 1]

Five a Friday afternoon, I am William J. Kelch, and I'm interviewing Mr. Bruce Dunsha in his home in Wadsworth, Ohio, regarding his World War II experiences. So Mr. Dunsha, I wonder, when did you first join the service?

Well, I volunteered, and I don't know if it did me much good, because most guys were being drafted. But I went into Camp Forest, Tennessee, on the 18th of July, 1942. OK, Camp Forest, Tennessee.

Where is that? Camp Forest, Tennessee, near Tullahoma, South Tennessee, not too far north, just north of Huntsville, Alabama, out in the boondocks. Yeah, that's still pretty much out in the boondocks.

It was really in 1942. I get it. What was it that prompted you?

You joined the Army, is that correct?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I joined the Army.

[Speaker 1]

OK, and what was it that prompted you to join the Army, as opposed to the Navy, or Marines, or Army Air Force? I graduated in 1939 from high school, and in those days, they had a song, goodbye dear, I'll be back in a year, don't forget that I love you, and you can sign up for one year. Then they changed that for the duration.

And most of my friends that I was working with here in Ohio in those days belonged to the 37th National Guard, which was Ohio National Guard. And so most of them went in 41, and I was a little younger than some of them, so I didn't want to go. But anyway, these guys wound up in Camp Polk, Louisiana, with Model A differentials with a piece of log chained to it.

Model A differentials? Differentials tires with a piece of telephone pole latched to it with a chain, and these were their 37 millimeter howitzers. That's what they trained with.

It was so early in the war, they had nothing to train with, except they went to the junkyards and actually got Model A differentials and tied a log to it, or a telephone pole. That was their guns. That's what they trained with in Camp Polk.

Interestingly now, you mentioned these fellows went in in 41. Do you have any idea what motivated most of them? Since the war hadn't even started yet.

I mean, Pearl Harbor wasn't until December 6th. Well, I'll tell you what motivated them. First job I had after the war, we worked for Richard Beck Nursery, which was a German that came over here with a goose and a wheelbarrow from Germany.

And him and his wife had made a fortune here, but he was still a German. He had no use for America. He was in this area?

Oh, yeah, right here. Right down here on 18. In Wadsworth?

Akron area, yeah. Richard Beck Nursery. And so he had two Germans, what's the, I can't think of the dogs.

German. Dachshunds? No, yeah, dachshunds.

That ain't the word, the ones that are nasty. Oh, Dobermans, Dobermans. And we actually stood at the tension every morning while he looked us over.

And I remember the- You were working for him. I was working for Richard Beck Nursery. And these Dobermans would sniff you, and if you tried to move them, which they would snare you, he was a German.

And so the morning, I think it was a Royal Oak, was a British ship that was sunk by the Germans. And boy, he was gung-ho that day. Hooray for Germany, and to hell with the British, and to hell with Americans.

Well, about half the guys walked off the job and quit and enlisted that same day. I didn't, because I had just got out of high school a couple months before. So this is in the summer.

[Speaker 2]

This is like July or August?

[Speaker 1]

This is like July of 41 or August of 41 that these guys went. Well, the upshot of it was that they went to 37th, and they had all kinds of bad luck. They were in catpoke, and then they trained, and they were part of the 33rd, which was- I'm sorry, you said 37th?

They were the 37th National Guard. It had a fried egg insignia. It looked like a fried egg with an iron patch on it.

So they went to this catpoke, and then they trained them, but they weren't well-trained, and they didn't have nothing to train with. It was too early in the war. So they were kind of a goofed-up outfit.

But anyway, they were going to go somewhere on the rollover in the harbor in New York and sunk the Normandy, the French ship. They were supposed to go on it when they got the infantry unit trained, but it was sabotaged, or anyway, it rolled over in the harbor and sunk. And so they finally sent them to the Pacific, and they sent them out to Guadalcanal.

And they had about six weeks of tough fighting in Guadalcanal, and then they put them in tents and let them sit there and rot for about three and a half years. And when these guys- Are you serious? No, I'm serious.

They were in Guadalcanal in tents for three and a half years? Something over three years. And when they got back, I was very active in the American Legion or the VFW, and I'd try to get some of these guys, like Chuck Doley, some of his friends of mine, to join the hell with it.

We don't want no part of the Army. They were bitter. They fought for six weeks, but they were in the service, some of them, nearly four years.

And when they come out, they wanted no part of the VFW or the American Legion or anybody. They just were bitter. And did they have a mission at Guadalcanal?

You need some people to occupy the place. Mostly, these guys were in the medics. But they fought, and they were used for maybe six, eight, 12 weeks.

I don't know exactly the time. And then they just let them sit there and rot. They didn't do anything the rest of the war except sit there.

[Speaker 2]

They literally didn't have a job.

[Speaker 1]

They weren't taking care of patients coming out of the Pacific or anything like that? Bored to death. And they just sat there, and so they came back.

They were unhappy. So anyway, I waited until a year later, and then I volunteered, and I served three years, three months, and so many days with Patton in Europe. And I still got home about a year ahead of them.

So these guys were unhappy. These fellows that you spoke of that worked for the German guy in the? Richard Beck, yeah.

Richard Beck in the greenhouse. You literally believe that they were heavily influenced, at least, to join the military, just to kind of spite him? Well, yeah, because he had made his money.

He was a wealthy man. He drove Mercedes cars, and he was doing very well. If he had time, I'd take you down here and show you his grave.

He's got rocks as big as that fireplace in there with rhododendrons planted. We planted the stuff around his grave, him and Frieda. His wife's name was Frieda.

But he had no use for America or England. He was a German. He would always be a German.

And most of those guys, Johnny Cassan and Chuck Dolish and all the guys that quit and went to the 37th quit because he was flag-waving for the German army.

[Speaker 2]

They were going to say nuts to you, weren't they? Yeah, they just left him.

[Speaker 1]

So they left him. Did you have any, how old were you then now? Let's see, you said you'd be 19?

19, 19, yeah. OK. And do you remember having any particular memories about leaving home?

I mean, difficulties, you know, difficulties in your personal affairs, it was terribly difficult to leave your family. Not really, we were a farm family and I was going with the girl over there. I've been married to her now for 49 years.

But we went together for eight years before we got married. So we kind of grew up together. She was 13 when I first dated June.

And she's over 13 now and so am I. OK, so you didn't, there wasn't any particular trauma. No, I went to Akron and got on a train with a couple of guys and we went to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

And they put us on a troop train and a couple days later we were back in a siding and some lieutenant got up and said, welcome to Camp Forest, Tennessee. We were backing through the scrub oaks of Tennessee and we were Camp Forest. And so then it was training there and then it was maneuvers.

And then we went to other places and finally we shipped out of Camp Kilmer, New York or New Jersey. Did you have barracks at Camp Forest? Oh sure, yeah, wooden barracks, yeah, yeah, wooden barracks, yeah.

Did you have any other family members in the service?

[Speaker 2]
Brothers?

[Speaker 1]
No, I have two sisters and I'm the oldest of the three. OK, so nobody else then. Let's see.

Describe the place where you trained and where you went from there. OK, well you went to Fort Benjamin Harrison, got on a troop train to Camp Forest, which is a tall Tennessee area. And then?

Well, from there we went into maneuvers the next year. And there was, I don't know how many million, there was millions of men walking over Tennessee in maneuvers. You say the maneuvers, now this is 1943.

Yeah, Tennessee maneuvers. And suddenly, I just thought of it the other day when we were in Niceville, I see the old Niceville station there. And they turned all of us loose.

You have a go home, you have a furlough if you can get home. And I don't know what you know about the railroad in those days. They gave you so many days, if you could get home, you could go home.

But you had to go on the L&N Railroad. Oh, Louisville, Nashville, L&N. And L&N, we used to say it went Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee, I think, wear no clothes and eat turnips or something.

They had a name for it. But anyway, it was a real mess. Thousands of us were along the sidewalks, which is now the hotel in Nashville, laying out there waiting for a train.

And when we got on these trains, it was a milk train. It stopped at every town to pick up milk. And of course, the soldiers, where they had a little money, and some of them got some whiskey, and they'd get drunk, and they'd start throwing up on each other, and it was a damn mess.

That's what it was.

[Speaker 2]

Not a lot of fun, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

And then, of course, when you get into Cincinnati, you had high speed trains in Cincinnati, Ohio. They had a brand new terminal. And they put you on the line that came right out of Cleveland.

I don't think it was less than two hours from Cincinnati home. And then you get home, and then she picked me up out at Wellington, Ohio, out here on 18 for the furlough. And so that was the end of Tennessee Maneuvers.

Shipped out of Gallatin, Tennessee, loaded all our equipment on trains, and we went to Camp Phillips. Say that again, Gallatin? Gallatin, Tennessee.

[Speaker 2]

Gallatin, Tennessee. OK.

[Speaker 1]

It was quite a railroad town. So you went from your furlough back to Gallatin. Gallatin, and then we shipped to Camp Phillips, Kansas.

Your whole unit formed up at Gallatin? This is? Yeah, the whole 80th Division shipped.

The whole division formed at Gallatin, and then went? 13,000 men. And went?

Went to Camp Phillips, Kansas. This by train, again? Train.

We camped Phillips, Kansas maybe three, four months, firing more. I told you the problem. Where's Camp Phillips?

Camp Phillips is near Salina. Where was it? It's the geographical center of the United States, in fact.

Oh, OK. So we were there for a few months. Then they shipped us to Camp Laguna, which was tent camp out in the Arizona desert.

Wow. And the gila bend there, it's outside of Yuma. I like the desert.

It's pretty nice. Yeah, I like the desert. Do you?

Why did you? Well, I didn't have any feeling for why you were doing all this.

[Speaker 2]

No.

[Speaker 1]

You were just training and training and training? Well, yeah. They give us all the tanks and stuff that had been beat up in Africa that they could get back here.

The trucks would barely run, and it was very poor equipment. And I don't know why they were training them, because Patton had already fought in Africa. And we'd beat the Germans in Africa.

There was going to be no more desert warfare. And why they sent us to the desert for training, I guess they wanted to place the holding action to the invasion. Can we put some times on this now?

We're in, I mean, roughly. We don't want to get it down exactly, but likely. I think we get out there in November, probably 40, this must be 43.

43, into Arizona. So like three or four months preceding that, you were at this Camp Phillips, Kansas. And before that, you were furloughed, and before that, in Tullahoma.

And you got to Tullahoma, you enlisted there? I enlisted. I got to Tullahoma on the 18th of July, 1942.

42. So you were in Tullahoma for the better part of a year, then. With Tullahoma and the Tennessee Maneuvers.

We were in the barracks, but we'd go out in the field. OK, so now we're in like, roughly, November? 43.

[Speaker 2]

43, right.

[Speaker 1]

And we're in Arizona. Arizona. What's the name of the place again?

I'm sorry, near Gila Bend, you said. Camp Laguna. Camp Laguna.

Camp Laguna, Arizona. Arizona.

[Speaker 2]

And then?

[Speaker 1]

And there were thousands of us out there, not only the 80th, but a lot more.

[Speaker 2]

Other divisions as well.

[Speaker 1]

And then they sent us to Iron Mountain, California, to fire an artillery problem. And if you do show up at this, Charlotte, I'd like you to talk to Colonel Monaghan, my battalion

commander, because we fired the best artillery project that has ever been fired by the US Army before or since, as far as I know. Is that right?

What, I'm sorry, Iron Mountain, California, where is that located? Up by the Salton Sea. I should know where that is, but I don't.

And I don't know that much about California. Southern California? Well, Yuma is on the Arizona-California border.

And you go north into California, and on the east side, you'll have the Salton Sea, Indigo, California, and up in there, it's a desert country. It's desert. Near Barstow?

Well, I don't remember. Fort Irwin? What's Fort Irwin now?

OK, OK, but it was Iron Mountain, California. Is that the name of a civilian city, Iron Mountain, California? No, there's nothing there but mountains.

There was no? No, these were the Chocolate Mountains in Yuma, where we were there. Chocolate Mountains are where we were stationed.

They were the tent cities. So you were out in the desert again, in California, in tents again, doing, firing artillery. Well, what kind of artillery pieces were we firing in?

I apologize for my ignorance. Well, 80th Division had four battalions of artillery. 313th, 314th, and 315th were 105s, and 905th was 155 howitzers.

OK, yeah, 105 millimeter and 155 millimeter. Yeah, one battalion of 155, and three battalions of 105s. And 314th, my outfit, was 105.

Was this traveling around the country something very new to you at that time, as a young man? Oh, yeah, when I was 19 years old, I'd never been. I'd been to Canada, fishing a couple of times.

I think, yeah, I'd never traveled. I was a farm boy, and we didn't have that. So you had not traveled widely in the United States?

Traveling was fun, yeah, it was fun. You liked that? Oh, yeah, I sure did.

I thought they were going to starve us to death in Tennessee. The war was a snap, personally, when we got to Europe, compared to the Tennessee maneuvers. Is that right?

That's right. Tennessee maneuvers were harder on you than the war, I mean, in a certain sense. I had a Captain Thurston, who was my battalion battery commander, in the maneuvers, and he said, Duncher, go back there and show me on a map.

He said, get back six miles to the rear, and go back in a ravine, a kitchen tent, and cook your chow for supper and breakfast. And supper was a hot meal. During lunch, the service battery man had come up with a bed sack, like they put the bodies in later on, but this was full of round loaves of bread.

And these guys had ridden on top of them. You can imagine what this bread looked like, you know, the guys. They were transporting men, and they laid down on top of the bread in these cloth sacks.

And so I had 155 officers and men to feed, and so they threw me off a bunch of brown paper bags, one gallon of orange marmalade, and one gallon of peanut butter, and all this bread that was crumbled to hell. So this is what I made a sandwich for 150 men. The peanut butter jelly sandwich was out of bread crumbs?

Well, and it was atrocious, you know. You had to take it and pack it together like it looked more like a snowball. So anyway, and these guys, they're walking the butt off of them.

You know, they're working them hard. They're driving us night and day in Tennessee, and that's what we got for lunch. And I thought they were literally going to starve us to death.

And what you got to drink was, well, you got water. I had plenty of water, but they could carry water in their canteen. You know, in their canteen.

But anyway, we eat better than that in Europe. Well, I started to tell you, Captain Thurston says, we'll go back there six miles to this road, and go in there and set your kitchen up, and put your camouflage net up and stay hid back there. And he said, after dark, come up and feed out the battery.

And I did. Well, that's the way we were trained. What actually happened when we got off at the beach in Normandy, the motor sergeant, Doe Donovan, says, you're the heaviest unit, don't you, with the kitchen truck.

You're first in line. Nobody had a kitchen truck in combat, except the captain's jeep. And then comes the kitchen truck, because I had all the cooks, and the KPs, and all the water, and all the food, and lay around the booze or anything we could loot in Europe.

We're first vehicle, see? And you have to have the heaviest vehicles up front, because if you stretch them out for miles and you lose them, that's the way they are. So that was a joke to me when I hit the beach and found out that I was, for the rest of the war, I'd be lead vehicle with a kitchen truck.

Now, that don't sound right, but that's the way it was.

[Speaker 2]
Thought so.

[Speaker 1]
Well, so would it be safe to say that you said, for example, you enjoyed the travel? Oh, yeah, yeah. Young, it was an exciting time.

At least up to Iron Mountain, California, we're up to Iron Mountain, California now. In general terms, how would you describe your experience? Well, that wasn't much as far as me.

[Speaker 2]

I hated the Army.

[Speaker 1]

I loved the Army. I was sort of indifferent. We kidded about it a lot, and we all bitched, and moaned, and groaned.

But actually, I think a lot of us found a home in the Army. We liked it. We liked it in general.

There were some goof-ups, but in general, yeah, we liked it. So we're now in time, where are we? We were in November, and there is a lot of cases now.

What, December, January of 44 now?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I suppose.

[Speaker 1]

And then they loaded us on troop train again, and shipped us out of there. I think we were the last people to ever train in the desert, and there was no need to train us there except to fire the artillery. But the desert had nothing to do with it.

The desert fighting was over. It had all ended.

[Speaker 2]

In North Africa.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, there was no reason for it. So anyway, then they shipped us back to Fort Dix, New Jersey. So this would be very early, January, February?

We left out of there, Camp Kilmer. We left out there the day of the beach, D-Day. Oh, you actually?

I got on the Queen Mary D-Day. So June 6, 1944, you got on the Queen Mary. New York, Harvard.

New York, that's Camp Kilmer, New York? Yeah, you had to get through Camp Kilmer, New York. Fort Dix is a training camp.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I know Fort Dix.

[Speaker 1]

You have to go through Kilmer. That's an, I don't know what kind of a, where they muster you out to get you overseas and come back through. You go through Kilmer, and you come back through Kilmer for a drink.

So it's the Queen Mary. Yeah, we went on the Queen Mary. From Manhattan someplace?

Right on the, yeah, Manhattan, right downtown New York. And Camp Kilmer is near there? Yeah, Camp Kilmer and Fort Dix.

Let me get it right here. Camp Kilmer is in New Jersey, I think. New Jersey, Camp Kilmer is in New Jersey, and so is Fort Dix in New Jersey.

But they're all right there. But it was the biggest bunch of troops you ever hauled. We took the entire division with most of our equipment, plus a bunch of WACs and some Navy people.

We'd been out and stayed on the Queen Mary, which is out at Long Beach, California. She's a hotel now. Oh yeah, yeah.

In case there's some men out there. Oh yeah, I've seen it. I've been on it, as a matter of fact.

My brother, my brother just lives down the street from there. So, and that trip was, we had- Small world, excuse me. Yeah, we had 24 hours, no, 12 hours below deck and 12 hours above deck.

And I liked it above deck much better than I did below. This is- On the Queen Mary.

[Speaker 2]
In transit to Europe.

[Speaker 1]
Okay, just let's go back just for one second. Can you tell me, at that point when you left the US, do you feel like, do you feel that you were a well-trained soldier? Your training was, you figure your training was adequate.

Yeah, we'd been trained and retrained and over-trained. Okay, so you- Yeah, they kept us busy by training us, yeah. So you felt very well-trained.

Yeah, like I said, if you do come to Charlotte, I would like those scores and to curtail us off. It's the best test scores any artillery unit ever fired in history. History of the US Army still stands today.

Yeah, and you think it was pretty realistic, the training. I mean, as realistic as training can be. These guys from 18th Field and Fort Sill were artillerymen and they knew what they're doing, they're not slouches.

So, now we're on the way to Europe, the Queen Mary, 12 hours above deck, 12 hours below deck, and the whole trip took about how long? Three, four days. Three, four days, and you landed at?

At Scotland, Firth o'Clyde. Firth o'Clyde in Scotland up at where they make the whiskey. Can't think of the name.

Okay. Yeah, Northern Scotland. Okay, but this is, so this is like approximately June the 10th, something like that?

Yeah, first week of June.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, first week of June.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, okay, let's see. So, you were a cook, and this is the 80th Division, and your regiment is the 314th Field Artillery Battalion. Headquarters there.

Oh, this is, you were a mess sergeant, right? Did you want to be a mess sergeant, or did you just get stuck in that, or how did you get to be a mess sergeant, and what did you think of that, and was it what you expected? Did you like it, or did you not like it?

Well, before I went in the service, I started working for Eddie Krause, which was a neighbor of mine, and we had a little butcher shop, and so I had done butchering. I butchered hogs, and beef, and veal with him, and I made hamburgers, sausages, and all this. So, you know, 19-year-old kid, what is your MOS, you know, is a meat cutter.

Well, I wasn't a first-class meat cutter, but that's all I'd done, except work for Richard Beck for a little while there, and so I went in. So, we had a guy named, in those days had been Captain Richard Shalio, and he interviewed us at Camp Forest, Tennessee, and I'll always remember it, because I went in with a guy named Walter McCarty, and so we saluted him, and we'd been in the service about a week, and he said, well, you boys want to do, and I said, we both want to be truck drivers. He said, well, we said, we want you to be happy in the service.

He said, McCarty, how'd you like to go into the supply room? No, you wouldn't like it. He wanted to drive a truck.

How would I like to? No, I didn't want it. I'd like to drive a truck, so.

But he said, we want to keep you boys happy in the service, so we saluted him and left, and going out, I bumped into a barrel-chested little guy from 18th Fort Sill, and he said, I'm Sergeant Armand, the mess sergeant. He said, are you Duncheon? And I said, yes, sir.

He said, report to the kitchen tomorrow morning. That was my entire military career. I said, right there.

So, it wasn't a real scientific way of selecting. I wasn't the first mess sergeant. There's lots of things that you have to do as a mess sergeant to get along with the men, and we started out with Butch Armand here, but these guys, that's a sad story, too, because these guys cadred out to the 106th Division, and they're the outfit that was machine-gunned and murdered in the Battle of Bulge.

They never got the proper training, and they went into the Bulge, and they were greener in grass, and the Germans took their guns away from them and turned them on them and really wiped out the 106th Division. And I was mad at the time because I wanted the cadre to the 106th, and I'm glad they didn't go because I'd have been sleeping in Luxembourg for the last 50 years. So, anyway, they started picking mess sergeants, so we had a guy named Herman Fraz first, and he was an old baker.

We're still dying. Still in Tennessee. I'm talking about Tennessee here.

Oh, he got picked to be mess sergeant. So, Herman Fraz was an old guy, but he shouldn't have been in the service. He was too old and a bachelor, and he'd run a German bakery for his folks, but he was nobody for mess sergeant.

He didn't get along with the men. And then we had a guy named Fuller, and he didn't get along with the men either. He'd rather waste the food than feed it to the troops.

And so Captain Thurston called me, and he said, hey, that's the youngest guy in the kitchen, but he said, I think you can do it. You want to be acting mess sergeant? And I said, I'll try it.

So, I was acting mess sergeant, and I got along with the troops, and we were there to feed them, and the food was not the best, but you should try to not throw it in the garbage can. But these other guys, they'd hoard it. You know, a guy'd ask for an extra slice of bread.

Nah, get out of here. We haven't got it. And then they'd get back to the dump and, you know, dump out 10 loaves.

Well, I never tried to do that, and I got along with the men good. So, how did this affect your advancement, though? Oh, well, I- How many enlisted grades were there, seven?

Is that, don't let me put words in your mouth. No, well, first three graders are tech sergeants starting at the top. I mean, master sergeant, tech sergeant, staff sergeant.

Okay, man, okay. Master sergeant, first sergeant, you had one first sergeant. Master sergeant, first sergeant, tech sergeant.

Okay, the master sergeant, tech sergeant, I mean, the master sergeant and a first sergeant, they're the same- Except they got a diamond.

[Speaker 2]
Same rank, right?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, he's got a diamond in the middle of it- He's a first sergeant.

[Speaker 2]
That's one rank, though, right?

[Speaker 1]
That's right, same thing. One pay grade. That pay grade.

Then tech sergeant, then staff sergeant. So. One rocker is that- staff sergeant and then?

[Speaker 2]
Buck sergeant.

[Speaker 1]
Corporal. T5s and T4s and a lot of other grades that were below that. Okay, so you had like, how many, how many people did a corporal, how many pay grades did a corporal outrank?

You understand the question? Corporal, I think about three, a T5 and a T4 and a PFC, I think. I'm not too sure of that.

Okay, so you had, did you have two grades with no, no, no, if you're a man under you, like in the wire section or motor section, not motor section, you'd have just three, three stripes, which was a buck sergeant, we call the buck sergeant, straight sergeant. Okay, the corporal have two stripes. Right, that's right.

And a PFC to have one. That's right, and in between there was some guys that were radio operators and specialists and they were T5s and T4s and they had three with a T above it and then the pars too. Okay, like two, two below that single stripe?

Actually, I don't remember.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, well in any case.

[Speaker 1]

They had a T for a technical career. Did, did, did the fact that you were the Captain Thornton? Thurston.

Thurston, excuse me. Thurston selected you to be the acting mess sergeant, did this actually result in a promotion? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I was PFC and I settled in as staff sergeant.

Oh, so you went from PFC to staff sergeant. I think there was another grade in there for temporary because I was acting sergeant. Okay, so you were, so at Tullahoma you had three stripes then.

Right, so you were progressing very rapidly.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I was.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, now how about by the time you got to be, to get on to Queen Mary? Nothing ever changed. Staff sergeant in Tennessee and the staff sergeant the day I come out of the Army.

Okay. That's all that the grade calls for is the mess sergeant, unless you had a battalion. If you fed a battalion mess, you know, which we didn't have.

[Speaker 2]

Then you'd get staff.

[Speaker 1]

Then you'd get probably tech sergeant, even maybe master sergeant if you had.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, is that right?

[Speaker 1]

If you're feeding several thousand men or something. The only time I fed more than the company was when we went on the troop train from Iron Mountain, Michigan, or Iron Mountain, California back here. I was the only guy to get off the troop train except the train commander and that was to put on water.

And we had two kitchens there and we fed them from both ends. I was feeding the whole battalion, which was 555 men. In those days did your rank tend to go along with your job, meaning if you were a buck sergeant and somebody decided, okay, you're now going to be the battalion mess sergeant.

Suddenly you'd get two or three stripes, boom, just like that? Well, yeah, but you wouldn't have battalion mess sergeants in the artillery because you had headquarters battery, and you got A battery, B battery, C battery, and so forth. You're spread out, see.

Yeah, you don't have a whole battalion in one place. Say if you're in the infantry though. No, because they'd have companies and regiments also, see.

Okay, who would have a battalion mess sergeant? Some place like at Fort, what are we talking about here, in New Jersey.

[Speaker 2]
Oh, by Fort Dix?

[Speaker 1]
Training battalions, training battalions, or MPs or something like that. Okay, okay. While we're talking about that, I want to say something about that because it always bugged me.

We're all American soldiers and the infantry guys get the butt end of everything, and here we're out in these Tennessee maneuvers and these poor guys are walking their ass off night and day, and they're having peanut butter sandwiches on breadcrumbs, see. Well, about in there somewhere they sent me to cook and bake school at 9th Service Command MPs, also right on the post at Tullahoma. Yes.

So, we're on garrison rations. Now, garrison rations means beer, fresh milk, fresh vegetables, T-bone steaks, any damn thing you want. This is for the MPs, and it always kind of got me here that these MPs running around with their white uniforms and everything, you know, going into the town and kicking around the infantry boys, which needed some kicking around, but we used to have to feed once a week.

We had a party, I think it was Thursday, and if you didn't use up all the garrison rations, you didn't get the money next minute. It was a dollar and some cents a day, a dollar and some cents a day. So, we would get T-bone steaks, and if the MPs wanted three T-bone steaks, they could have them.

If they wanted beer, we could have it. And they're on the same post, American soldiers.

[Speaker 2]
So, I'm on garrison rations, and the infantry guys, the infantry guys out there walking there.

[Speaker 1]

For a peanut butter sandwich. Peanut butter sandwich, maybe an apple. Well, still a lot of that goes on today, actually.

And that always regret me, because the Service Commands, the guys that went, you know, on the post, and they're never going to see a live shell, and they're never going to see any combat. They were eating garrison rations, but the infantry guy, the infantry man, he used to, I got all kinds of empathy for the infantryman. Boy, he gets all the crap.

Infantry guys get the same kind of stuff today. Yeah, he gets the same crap. Let's see.

You obviously met a lot of different people in all those different places. Did you have any impressions of, thinking, I'm thinking now, okay, here we have a young man from northeastern Ohio, from a rural community in northeastern Ohio, and suddenly he starts meeting up with people from everywhere. You know, New York, and Miami, and St. Louis, and...

Couldn't believe it. It made an impression, the different kinds of people. What were some of your impressions as far as, I don't know, what kind of impressions did you have of people from other areas?

Of course, 80th Infantry Division was made up of Blue Ridge Mountain Division, that's their insignia, made up of West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Hillbilly Boys, and good soldiers. Hence the name Blue Ridge. That's right.

By the way, Mr. Dunn, excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt, but if you want to take a break anytime...

[Speaker 2]

No, I just don't want to get the cough in the face.

[Speaker 1]

Stop, you know, feel free, we can do that. Hey, June, would you bring me a cough drop? This damn thing has really been driving me nuts.

I am sorry. No, no, no, but you know, if you want to take a break, we can certainly do that. But anyway, I got an experience because I remember one guy, Riffey, and I used to get along with these guys real good in the chow line, but Riffey, his name was Riffey, was a West Virginia boy, worked in the motor section, and he used to come through and I'd ask him, I said, Riffey, what did you do in civilian life?

And he said, I was a coal miner. He said, and the reason I asked him this is I wanted to hear him say bushel. And he said, I said, yeah.

And he said, yeah. He said, I had the biggest damn shovel you ever seen. He said, I'll bet it'd hold a burshel.

I said, how much? And he said, a burshel? And I'd love to hear him say burshel.

And there was an experience for me because things in Ohio, like Creek, you know, for a stream, but these guys over there, hey, I'm going into town, you want me to carry you into

town? Now, I'd never heard that word before, you know, carry you into town? And so we used to kid him about it because some of the boys had said that, see, if you'll carry me into town, we'll get a poke.

And I never heard a bang referred to as a poke. And we'll get a pound of bread and you can tote me home. And I used to kid these guys.

But they were nice guys and they were hard. They didn't have anything. Like I said, most of them, including me, found a home in the Army.

We were getting three squares a day and we had good clothes. We had good officers. It wasn't bad.

I don't know. Some of them didn't feel that way. I remember Speer come into our outfit from New Jersey and he was a multimillionaire.

His dad was. He had department stores in New Jersey. Speer wasn't thrilled to be in the infantry.

And I remember this. He came down to and he went and called somebody and got transferred out of the infantry division. And he came over to the first sergeant.

And the sergeant, he said, bring my bag down from the second barracks. You know, the first sergeant had a few words to say about it. He'd be damned if he killed him on the spot.

You're asking the first sergeant to carry his bag? Yeah, that just wouldn't get it. Well, he thought that he'd pulled rank with somebody.

He'd made a phone call to somebody and they got him out of the infantry division. Right now, they'd probably send him to the MPs or somewhere where he was never going to get hurt. See, but anyway, he came in and he told the sergeant, the first sergeant was a sergeant named Steger and an old army man.

And he told Steger to bring his bags down. But Steger was going to kill him. He didn't lay a hand on him, but he was really rough on him.

It's an interesting thing to me now. When you first went in the army, were the NCOs and officers mostly old army guys? No, the cadre.

Now, go back to Fort Sill, a cadre, like the MSS sergeant, was 18th Field Artillery, Wrigley Army, and all our officers were. But then they kept catering out. That's how they made these other divisions.

See, they got us started. Kept diluting out, diluting out, diluting out. So by the time you got to the Queen Mary...

None of the original... Well, officers were all with us. The officers stayed.

Monaghan was my battalion commander. He's a West Pointer, graduated in 39. And of course, he'd been to Fort Sill, I don't know, officers in school.

He's done it all. He was quite a man. Okay, let's see.

It says, did you spend time out of the United States? Well, that's obvious. We're over in Firth O'Clyde now, about June 10th.

Give or take a few days in 1944. The sun never went down, and they put us on railroad cars, and, you know, passenger cars, and sent us south to Norwich, England. Right.

Which is the center part of England. And then they sent us to one more firing problem. We had to set our guns in, and I don't know, that ain't the word for it, but there's a way to register your guns.

And so they sent us to Wales to register our guns. Okay. And then we came back, and we went to the...

Back to Norwich? England, no. Back to England.

Yeah. And now we're pushing D plus 60, and... Okay, so we're looking like early August, 1944?

I landed D plus 60, walked off in the moonlight, never even got my feet wet, so it wasn't too hard a landing. But you could still... You landed where?

D plus 60 in Utah Beach. Okay, D plus 60 Utah Beach. Literally 60 exactly.

60 exactly. So that'd be... 60 exactly.

Would that be August? August, June? August 6th, I think.

Well... I wonder how they count that.

[Speaker 2]

I don't know. August 6th or 7th.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, I asked 31 David. Okay, about August 6th, 1944 at Utah Beach. And Patton was supposed to...

Tell the story here now. We're in the 80th Division. That's right.

And this is part of the 3rd Army now. 3rd Army.

[Speaker 2]

So you're...

[Speaker 1]

When did you be... Excuse me, I'm sorry to interrupt, but when did you become part of the 3rd Army? I can't tell you that, I don't know.

Sometime in England, I suppose, huh? You were... Oh, yeah, I was all...

In Division... I imagine when we were back in Dixit, we were already part of this army, but I had no way of knowing that. They don't give you that information.

Yeah, okay, but you... Okay, now August 6th, give or take a day, and we're in Utah Beach. Yeah.

And you're now part of the 3rd Army. Right. And Patton was supposed to have been activated.

The 3rd Army, I understand, was supposed to have been activated on the 13th of August. Now, this is just hearsay. This is what I've heard over the years.

Patton was already fighting on the 3rd. The 3rd of August. Yeah, so three days before we came in, Patton was fighting out in...

towards Lahar, out in there.

[Speaker 2]
Right.

[Speaker 1]
He wanted to fight Germans. He didn't want to sit around, so he didn't wait for the 13th to... Okay, so it's your understanding that the 3rd Army began fighting before it even existed.

Well, it did before it was activated.

[Speaker 2]
Right, right. Yeah, before it was officially existed.

[Speaker 1]
George liked to get about a weak jump on them. Okay, okay. Let's see.

You can hear the guns now. My impressions when we got in there...

[Speaker 2]
Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]
You said you had a story about landing, yeah. D-60 and American paratroopers and German were still hanging to the trees. Now, they talk about grave registrations and all this, and this kind of gives you a shock, too.

Americans... American paratroopers. ...in their harnesses, hanging to the trees, 60 days after the landing. Hanging to the trees where?

[Speaker 2]
Just inland along the road?

[Speaker 1]
In the beachheads. We went in there. You ever see this St. Mary's Glacier?

[Speaker 2]
Oh, yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1]
Right there is where we went. Right there. You went through St. Mary's Glacier?

The edge of it. I didn't see it until later, but we were right at the St. Mary's Glacier. That's where the guy got hung up on the beach, yeah.

You say Germans. There were Germans, German dead on the ground that had never been buried, and American paratroopers still hanging to the trees, D plus 60. That's very interesting.

I mean, you'd think that the... We understood that. Yeah.

Was there... By D plus 60 was... St. Lowe, you ever hear of St. Lowe? St. Lowe, yes. St. Lowe, it was 20 miles inland. You could hear all the shell...

Okay, it was still very active fighting going on. That's right. First night we went into combat, we drove through St. Lowe, captured our first prisoner in St. Lowe. First night in combat, it was raining like hell, and we were scared shitless. Yeah, no, that's fine. We were, because the guns were going off.

They were our guns, but we didn't know that you'd go along a hedgerow or something, and all of a sudden these guns take off, and they're anti-aircraft guns, and they're probably American, but you're half asleep and wet. These are American anti-aircraft. Does that mean that you were, in fact, being...

Well, there was still some Luftwaffe coming in, strafing at this time. This was the day... The day we landed is the day that St. Lowe surrendered. They occupied St. Lowe. Okay. So, the next day, or a couple days later, then Patton puts us into action, and we're going through St. Lowe, and this Captain Thurston was the small of it. He was a small man. He was about five foot tall, a real nice guy, and we had a Captain Bloomer, and he was about six foot six. He was the tall guy out there.

So, Bloomer's ahead of us in the jeep there, and this German comes out of the... It's raining, and this German comes out of the burning building, and he wants to give up. And nobody wants to really take the shelter half off and get wet to take his surrender.

So, finally, Bloomer did. Bloomer got off and cussed him out a little and put him on the back of the jeep, and so then we took him with us until we got up a few blocks or wherever it was, and we found an MP, and we dumped him off, give him to an MP. So, Bloomer got credit for capturing the first prisoner of the 8th Infantry Division.

Okay. I'm not sure I understand it, because about the shelter half, you're... Oh, well, we...

You're using your shelter half as a poncho? Yeah, that's right, to try to keep him from drowning. It's raining miserably.

Now, what does that got to do with the German guy, exactly? Well, he's coming out of this building, see, and you see him against the... I actually seen him, he was right ahead of me.

Bloomer was in the jeep ahead, this tall guy. And so, this German comes out, and he wants to surrender. He's trying to surrender to Bloomer, but Bloomer don't really want to get wet to take his surrender, see.

Oh, because he was undercover?

[Speaker 2]
Yeah, he was...

[Speaker 1]
Well, he had a shelter half or something over him, and he was sitting comfortable on the jeep. Oh, he wasn't using it like a poncho? Well, I don't remember the...

[Speaker 2]
Okay, hang on.

[Speaker 1]
Anyway, he wasn't very happy to take a prisoner, but he got credit for capturing the first man. Just for curiosity, when this prisoner came up, and you put him in the jeep, did somebody search him or...? I suppose Bloomer took his weapon. He probably handed his weapon.

He must have been... He probably was a... I don't know this, but he was probably an airman, a German airman, and he probably only had a pistol, so he probably had been shot down over St. Lowe, and he parachuted into the city there somewhere and been hiding until the right time to surrender. Okay, okay. Well, okay, let's continue here. Well, anyway, from then on...

I better go in there and get a paper, and can you shut that off for a minute? I'll go get a map. It'll help you a little, explain...

After a brief pause, we're talking again with Mr. Bruce Duncha, and he is looking for a map that will describe some of his journey through France as we go with the Third Army eastbound towards Germany and France. He's shown me a picture here of Major General M.S. Eddy with General George Smith Patton and Major General H.L. McBride, the three of them pictured together. George Patton's ivory-handled pistol, very much...

No, it's not pearl-handled, he had some choice words about that, but his ivory-handled pistol very much present on his hip. And this is another picture of Patton? And I'm looking at...

This has been carried in an engineer's pocket all during the war, a guy from Medina, his name was Pat. And George got in a little trouble, and we're crossing the Rhine River. Yes.

Excuse me, Mr. Duncha is describing a picture of George Patton, it's taken... Crossing the Rhine River. Crossing the Rhine River, and this picture was carried for several months.

Yeah, one of the engineers that put in the Bailey Bridge, or the bridge here. Had it in his pocket. Had it in his pocket, there's the mark of it there.

And that is George showing his contempt for the Germans by pissing in the Rhine River. Oh, I see, oh yes, yes, I guess he is... Yes, okay.

George, and he got a lot of trouble with that I think it was Lady took the picture. Oh, is that right? Oh.

Eisenhower didn't like that very much. I'd be glad to, you know, donate some of this stuff if you... App of France showing the Cherbourg Peninsula and the movement of the Third Army from south, generally south Hampton area across the Cherbourg Peninsula on to Utah Beach.

Right, yeah, they were all... Utah Beach, and then on to the Cherbourg Peninsula. And George was fighting out in here already prior to that.

St. Lowe, I don't think it shows on here. No, St. Lowe is not in the picture. Okay, okay.

Oh, what do you know about Argentan Falaise Gap? Do you know anything about it? No, I really don't.

Well, the war would have been, according to Patton and all the people I know. Yes. Probably the war would have been shortened by several months if George would have been able to do what he wanted to do here.

This was a gap here. We had British coming in from... British and Canadians coming in from the north and the 8th Division coming in here outside of Argentan.

Where's Argentan?

[Speaker 2]

Argentan's right here, yes.

[Speaker 1]

Right here, and we left a gap there. And of course, these... I didn't realize you'd have this in World War II.

You'd have thousands and thousands of horses. German artillery with horses. And so...

That's right, yeah. We had a... We had L5 planes, spotter planes for artillery, spotter planes.

And what they did, they left this gap open, and I don't know how many... What exactly do you mean by gap? I'm sorry, I don't quite understand.

There's a gap between Argentan and Falaise. You see Falaise on there? Falaise.

Falaise. No. Well, it's known as the Argentan-Falaise Gap.

But anyway, we left these Germans trickle out of here, and every time they got the roads full, we clobbered them and murdered 100,000 of them. I don't know how many was killed

there, but I would say that they probably killed half a million Germans. When you say a gap, do you mean there was a gap?

Germans are trying to get back to Germany through this gap here. Okay, wait a minute.

[Speaker 2]

This is the path of the...

[Speaker 1]

Germany's this way. Yeah, okay. This is the path of the 8th, see?

Okay. And our first combat. This was our first combat.

Argentan, there. We captured Argentan. The 8th Division did.

But I don't show it. I thought it showed Falaise on there. Maybe it doesn't.

Well, anyway, it's known as the Argentan-Falaise Gap. And I don't know how many, but we probably captured and murdered, for about the only way you can say it, because it wasn't a war, it was a turkey shoot. Yeah, describe that a little, if you don't mind.

Well, Germans are trying to get back to Germany. You've gone past the Germans? You've sort of enveloped them?

In other words... In the pocket. You're closer to Germany than they are.

Right. And they have to get through your line to get towards Germany. So we left the escape route for them here, purposely, so that every time they filled the roads with their horse-drawn artillery and all their equipment, then we put up our planes and we had a turkey shoot.

We shot at them from the north. The Canadians and the French shooting them from the north and Americans from the south. And as soon as we got them all butchered, we waited for them to fill up the roads again.

But George wanted to encircle them, and he didn't want to kill half of them, he wanted to kill every German in sight. They wouldn't let him do it. And he always had a, you'll have to read, you know, I'm not George Patton, but if George could have done what he wanted to there, I think the war would have been over too much quicker.

Because there was a lot of people there that we let back here, and then we had to fight them again and again and again. Okay. How do you know, just what leads you to conclude that Patton wanted to do it that way?

Well, I'd heard it at the time that he was unhappy with that they wouldn't let him do what he wanted to. See, we had Montgomery, I think, in here, the British, and anytime you got the British in here, the damn thing was messed up, as far as I'm concerned. You're not a big Montgomery supporter.

No, I sure as hell ain't. You know, Eisenhower had a tough job, you know, sorting out, trying to keep peace, but Montgomery is no, I'm no fan of Montgomery. But that was where, if we'd have killed them there, my buddies wouldn't have got killed back here at the Moselle River, because we let these guys slip out of here and they killed a lot of them.

But we could have captured them all. There was no reason we couldn't have captured them all if I, well, I'm no general, I don't want to talk about it here, but you know, the war could have been shortened right there. That was the first big battle, and that was a big mistake.

When did you, when were you first actively under fire? I mean, right here, really. Argentine.

And under fire, is this artillery fire, principally, or small arms fire, or bow? I'm ashamed to tell you, the first time I'd ever got a purple eye or anything, but we were taking fire from the north, and Colonel Monaghan said, let's get a flash and sound outfit and see them. And you know, who was firing on us?

Flash and sound outfit.

[Speaker 2]

Flash and sound outfit. Yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

They... It's an intelligence gadget.

[Speaker 2]

That's right.

[Speaker 1]

Where's the flash and where's the sound coming from? So we found out, you know who we were taking fire from? You're old.

British. British. The first time I got a piece of shrapnel to my shirt here, and I'm holding it out to keep from burning my arm, and I'm laying in the mud puddle alongside a bridge in Argentina, is we found out that right away, and then we called, got the communications in, and they raised their fire.

You know, they're firing clear over the area and firing into American... I'm not saying the British are bad soldiers or anything, but Montgomery was a... Okay, so your first time you were under fire, you were under fire from the British.

Right. How about... When was the first time you were under fire from the Germans?

Well, probably the Moselle River, personally, when I... But a lot of guys were dying every day in here, you know, but personally... The first time I was under...

It kills you just as well as...

[Speaker 2]

Oh yeah, for sure, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

And you were never actually wounded? No, never got... But you came close enough to have the hot shrapnel in your shirt.

I'm laying in the shirt, Wilkie and I, it was a motorcycling, I'm laying there, and I'm holding it. I said, what's the trouble? This thing is smoking, it's through my wool shirt, and it's smoking, and I'm holding it out to keep it from burning.

It's about as big as a lead pencil, but it would hurt. Wow. And that's the closest I ever came to getting burned.

If you just got a little burn from that, you'd have a purple heart. Oh, I could have pushed him down against my ass, he got a purple heart, I suppose, but I didn't want to burn that bad. Wow, that's very interesting.

Well, anyway, then they slip out of this pocket, and we chase them night and day, halfway across France. And of course, we could have been to Paris, we were at Orleans, do you see Orleans?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, right here.

[Speaker 1]

It was Orleans, two or three days before they went into Paris. But that was political, again, they let the Frenchman, who was he, de Gaulle, come in, and the guys, Americans were in Paris, they pulled them back and let the French march in. It was political, they ended up.

Did you, were you captured? You mentioned just one prisoner, the first prisoner that you captured. Did you capture more?

I'm curious. Oh, I'm sure. Did you have any personal contact with any of these other prisoners?

No, the only thing here I remember here, Captain Thurston had been replaced as my battalion battery commander, and they had given us a guy named Barney Holt. And he was a personal boyhood friend of Colonel Monaghan, my battalion commander. Right.

And we had a wild Texan named Carnahan, who was a regular cowboy, and he was a major. And so, right away, he found out that there was all kinds of British saddles up here and war trophies. And so, he took a guy named Rosanna from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I think he was a buck sergeant, driving the jeep.

Yes. And Hatcher, who was our communications sergeant, tech sergeant, handling the radio, and Carnahan, opposite the driver, and Holt in the back seat. So they went up to get him some war trophies.

And they come in the back road, hit a mine, killed Carnahan, killed Holt, and wounded the other two guys in bed. So it was damn foolishness. They had no business being there.

Carnahan was that kind of a guy. He always rode with his foot outside the jeep on that little tin step. And the colonel told him a million times, Carnahan, get your foot in there.

And it blew his legs completely off, because, see, they had sandbags in the jeep. And even going over a mine, it might have saved him, but Carnahan had his foot hanging out there like a cowboy, and it tore his leg right out. It sucked.

So we lost two officers, and two men did come back to us, but both the officers were killed, Holt and Carnahan. So that was our first... Well, we'd already had one casualty, one forward observer killed up to then.

What kind of trophies were they after? Well, he's Texan. He was going up there and getting some German saddles and guns and...

Oh, from... Yeah, take home. You say German saddles.

German military people were actually riding the horses?

[Speaker 2]
Oh, sure they had.

[Speaker 1]
As well as pulling?

[Speaker 2]
Pulling chow.

[Speaker 1]
I knew their artillery was still being pulled with horses, but they were actually riding horses.

[Speaker 2]
I couldn't believe that.

[Speaker 1]
I thought, you know, we're going, you know, we're out in the desert, we've got tanks and all kinds of mechanized... We didn't have a horse that I know of anywhere, maybe in a grade ground somewhere, but... But they were actually using horses for...

Transport. Individual transport, I mean, to ride from point A to point B. That's why here, if Patton, I'm sure, if he'd had his way in this thing here, rather than kill them, I don't know how many killed, you have to read up on it, but there was lots of them killed there in Argentan, Felicia.

So you didn't have any contact with any prisoners then? Direct contact? Other than that, maybe not very...

[Speaker 2]
Not there.

[Speaker 1]

Okay. Did you... How much contact with civilians did you have?

I suppose civilians and... Well, here we're having a ball here in Orleans. Girls are bringing us out wine and crawling all over, smooching us and giving us flowers and everything.

We were the liberators of Orleans, I think it is right here. Right. Yeah.

And so that was a heyday. And this here was, you know... Then we went...

Then as you went east, of course, you eventually got to Germany. Well, we got here to the Moselle River. Okay.

And all these Germans that we let get back here were setting up on the high ground in Germany here, Pointe de Moussane, and proceeded to kick the hell out of us and drown us in Pointe de Moussane and the Moselle River. So Patton was... I'm sure he was right about that.

If we'd killed them there, we wouldn't have had to fought them here. So this was tough here. Well, that's the toughest combat we had.

Right there at the Moselle River. Moselle River. They had the defense...

[Speaker 2]

Our general was killed here.

[Speaker 1]

At what point during this... Again, my history is not what it ought to be, but I remember Patton going crazy because he didn't have enough fuel. Oh, yeah.

Well, he wanted to go on, but he couldn't because he had fuel. Where was that along here? Oh, right here at the Moselle.

We got across the Moselle. Right in here, this area, we bogged down for the winter. Right where my fist is here.

Winter of 1944 to 1945. Right. Okay.

All right. So you had a difficult time at the Moselle. Right.

You eventually crossed the Moselle, however. Right, yeah. Don't let me put words...

[Speaker 2]

No, no, no. That's right, across the Moselle.

[Speaker 1]

And then after that, you bogged down for lack of... Lack of...

[Speaker 2]

P-O-L?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Gasoline mostly, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Gasoline.

[Speaker 1]

And here's Nancy here. Now I'll have to insert my interpretation of a deal we had here, and this is all scuttlebutt among the troops, but there's a place called Metz here. Fort that's never been captured in years and years.

It had 40 foot walls on it.

[Speaker 2]

Very famous.

[Speaker 1]

And Patton, everybody knew that Patton was beside himself to capture Metz. And I never heard this, but it was common knowledge that orders came down from headquarters, turn off your radios. So we turned off the radios.

We had no radio communications for about a week. And... For a week?

Well, I don't know. Wow, okay. Week, four days.

[Speaker 2]

I mean, it wasn't just an hour. No, no, no, no. It was quite a while.

[Speaker 1]

Turned off your radios. They're out of order. Okay.

And so Patton surrounded Metz, bypassed it, poured fuel oil down the breathers, set it on fire, and went about his business. And so then the orders kept coming down from, I don't know, Bradley or whoever. And of course, we got a big kick out of this.

They said, General Patton, under no condition are you to capture Metz. And he said, hell, we captured it last Tuesday. What the hell you want to do?

Give it back? And this was a big morale booster for the troops because he had some, you know, he's an old history man. And he knew what he wanted and what he didn't want.

[Speaker 2]

Right.

[Speaker 1]

Nancy, we captured it also, but he didn't give a damn about Nancy. He just wanted to capture Metz because nobody had ever done it until George Patton. Okay, so now we're in the winter, 1944-45, and kind of bogged down, at least temporarily.

And now we're going to have the Battle of the Bulge here momentarily. Yeah, we're down near Sandoval.

[Speaker 2]
Sandoval, right there.

[Speaker 1]
And we were in a town called Farberville, right down here. What did it say again? Farberville is where I was.

Farberville, F-A-R-B-E-R-V-I-L-L-E. Now, excuse me, interrupt, but we're over here. This is Alsace-Lorraine, right?

And a lot of German-speaking people here. Yeah. What kind of relationship did you have with civilians here?

[Speaker 2]
Not too good.

[Speaker 1]
Not too good. They're more like German sympathizers now? Yeah, some of them, they spoke German and they spoke French.

You didn't quite know where you were with them, as I remember it, they were. Okay. Farther west, you were the liberators.

Yeah, we were liberators in France, but here we're getting. Now you're becoming the bad guys? Some of this has been France and Germany and France and Germany.

You can't sort it out. So anyway, this is when they come in to appear to the Bulge. And so that's when Patton went in, you know, and said he'd have the troops there in 24 hours.

Right. And he did. Were you one of the troops?

Yeah. You were one of the troops. I got lost and I was there again.

Heavy vehicle. Captain Thurston hit me and I don't know how I got through him, but I was leading the car when we went by Luxembourg City and I got lost in Belgium. I don't know how they did that.

Excuse me, is Captain Thurston, is this the same guy back at Tullahoma? That's right. Yeah, all the way through.

So this is the same fellow. Same guy. You're still a buck sergeant and he's still a captain?

I'm still staff sergeant and he's a captain. You're staff sergeant? I was staff.

Yeah, right away I was staff. One rocker. Oh, I'm sorry.

I thought you were, oh, forgive me. So you were a staff sergeant in Tullahoma? Right.

And you're still a staff sergeant? And he was a captain and he's still a captain? I think maybe he made major before he got out.

I'm not sure. Okay, okay. But anyhow, you got lost?

Somewhere in Luxembourg, we were the first unit in Luxembourg we held outside the city of Luxembourg and I don't know how, but you know, it's pretty hard to sort out Belgium here from, but anyway, we were one time during the night, we were in Belgium. Now I don't know how I got there or anything else. I just remember that we were, it was 10, 20 below zero and I can still see that kitchen where we had all these sausages up there and she fed us Belgian sausage and ersatz coffee and warmed us up.

And she? A woman, a Belgian lady, farmhouse. A Belgian woman.

Okay, yeah, she fed you? Yeah, fed us during the night. And anyway, we got straightened out and then we were back in Luxembourg, outside of Luxembourg at a place called?

Outside of Luxembourg City. Yeah, right outside of Luxembourg City. Uh-huh.

And so that's where they stopped flowing around. They, you see a place on here called, where we got buddies killed. Let's see what we got.

Luxembourg, what's the town here? Dijkerk? Dijkerk, La Rochette, La Rochette?

And there's Bastogne. There's Bastogne, Wilts. Morning, guys.

We were in Wilts one morning and I'll tell you how cold it was, I'll have to tell you about being a mess sergeant in Wilts. We were pretty much out of food and we had a kitchen truck come in or a supply truck come in and they threw it off about 10 cases of New York dressed poultry, if you know what that is. Old redon, red hens that still had the neck and the head and everything and the feathers on them and the guts in them and the feet.

The guts were still in them? Oh yeah, the guts were still in them. I thought New York dressed had the guts.

No, the guts were still in them. Oh, okay. Anyway, these guys are hungry.

That morning I'd slept in a straw stack and the next morning my shoelaces were just like barbed wire, I couldn't get them to tie. And at the stoves, we had gas stoves, they wouldn't generate the gas and so I went to Donovan, who was the motor sergeant, and I got a blowtorch for him and I went over the gas lines with a blowtorch and I got the gas to vaporizing so we could get heating. Since you bring that up, what was the average night like?

I mean...

[Speaker 2]

Night?

[Speaker 1]

That's to the extent, during this whole journey from the Cherboard Peninsula to where we are now in Luxembourg, what was life like in terms of sleeping and... Well, from here, it was hell because Patton... From here, Mr. Gunsher is indicating the Argentine area. We moved on, Patton wasn't stopping for nothing. He had a favorite phrase, he said, grab them by the

nose and kick them in the ass. And that's what he did and I had him catch up with me one time with my kitchen trucks and I was very...

I had food in the stoves and I'm trying to take them out, you know, nicely, get them the hell out of there. He wanted... Wait, wait, you say he caught up, he literally, he personally caught up with Staff Sergeant Gunsher?

No, no, not me personally. But the orders come down, throw the damn food and empty the kitchen trucks, we're going to leapfrog infantrymen. So we dumped our stuff in the ditch, literally, everything we had on our trucks and they took our trucks to bring infantry forward so we didn't hit them.

In other words, threw the food out of the truck so the truck could be used to ferry infantrymen forward. That's right. And here, he's got tanks out here 20 miles running off the maps and they were giving the Germans a hard time, but he's got infantry back here 35 miles behind the tanks, see, and artillery riding so we were no longer...

Did you stay with the truck as well? No, no, no, no, no. You just lost your truck altogether, did you ever see it again?

Oh, yeah, yeah, sure, we got them back, but they... When you say you got them, the same truck or... Same, yeah, we got the same truck back.

He just probably, I don't know how it happened, but I imagine he'd give orders that the 314th, the 313th, and the 315th dump your trucks, we need them to transport infantry. And so all the big six-by-six trucks, whether it was a...

[Speaker 2]
What kind of truck?

[Speaker 1]
Six-by-six, they call them big four-wheelers, you know, the big GMC trucks, they call them six-by-six. And then the little over three-quarters are called four-by-fours. Are these diesel-powered, gasoline, gas-powered?

Dodge truck, yeah, Dodge. So, yeah, as common as the living was, for probably one week there, we traveled night and day, we never stopped. And we had a lot of gas.

And I could look at you and my eyes were as bloodshot as this, and I told him, you know, I think my name is Duncha, I'm not sure. You know, you're a zombie. And George said, hey, he don't give a damn if you're a zombie or not, let's move forward.

Grab him by the... Right, right. If you did get any sleep, you slept in a haystack or lying on the ground?

Anywhere you could sleep, anywhere you could sleep. If you could get in the building, great. But we're talking August here now, the weather's nice, see?

We're not in bad weather. Okay, did you get any rest? Like, you know, okay, you get a day off here or two days off here?

No, no, no, no, no, no. Absolutely no days off for nothing? The object is kill Germans.

To hell with anything else. It didn't matter about anything else. Okay, all right, so now we're back in Luxembourg.

Excuse me for these digressions. Well, anyway, as he went into that meeting with Ike and them, he said he could have his troops there in 24 hours. Right.

And he did. It was 10-20 below zero and we turned our headlights on in the middle of a war and drove into Luxembourg with headlights. I don't mean marker lights, blackout lights, we had our headlights on.

Why the headlights? Because we wanted to get to Luxembourg. So you could see?

That's right.

[Speaker 2]

Okay.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, if you drive with the blackout lights, you could drive 60 miles an hour if the guy in front of you could keep it up so we could get there. So we went into Luxembourg and 28th Infantry Division, 28th Infantry, Keystone Division, they were coming out of the woodwork there, they were fighting and they were coming out of wood piles and everything else. They got run over pretty much, annihilated.

Then north of them where they had the, I don't know if it's on here, I don't think it is, where they had the massacre, that's 106th, but that's, they're the guys that got plastered. The guys that left Camp Forest, the cadre, they got taken care of. During this whole time here now, how much contact have you had with, other than being shelled by the British, how much contact have you had with Allied, any Allied troops?

Not really much, no. Here there was some, I think the 90th and the 80th were the inter-divisions committed here in French and English to the north. I can't, you know, there was other troops in there.

We weren't there alone, but the 3rd Army, it was 3rd Army's show. You didn't personally have much contact with any Allied? Oh, no, no, no.

So you relieved Bastogne, is that— Yes, Patton had a favorite combat team, and it goes on and on here. I didn't know it at the time, but 314th Field Artillery, 318th Infantry Battalion, I don't know what battalion, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd, and 4th Armored. These were kind of his pet guys, if he wanted something taken, he'd give them the job.

We never got any credit for it, but 4th Armored Tanks went into Bastogne with 318th Infantry on them. They were the first breakthrough that we got in contact with. The nuts.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. What's his name? McCullough?

McCullough. McCullough. Okay.

He wasn't there, Maxwell Taylor was actually in command, right?

[Speaker 2]

I don't know.

[Speaker 1]

No, no, no. No, Maxwell Taylor was in command, but he was gone, as I recall, and McCullough was the second in command. They broke through and come out with no one what's to do, and then, of course, the weather broke in the next couple of days, and things improved, but they fought in places like— Okay, so the 80th Division was part of Patton's favorites, if you will, in terms of getting a job done.

Well, there's a Clairview, that's a castle up in Luxembourg here, where the mannequin dressed in their American mannequin is dressed in my uniform, shoes, fruit salad, and bronze star and the whole bit. I got to know Tilly over there, who was— I'm sorry, I'm not following this. This is Clairview, it's a town in Luxembourg, and if you look at those patches, there's—I'm looking for 80th there, somewhere up there.

Those are the outfits that fought in Luxembourg, and there was a lot of them, I see them. But the Blue Ridge Mountain one, there's 80th—can you see it, can you pick it out? I'm not sure I recognize it, actually.

Is this one up here, up there in the upper right? Yeah, there's the Third Army, that one there, Blue Ridge Mountain, the second one over right there. Right, okay.

That's it. Same as this, see it right here. Oh, yeah, okay.

The Blue Ridge Path in France, Luxembourg, Germany. Okay. All right, so we finished Battle of the Bulges over, and we begin to go— And we had a lot of bad combat there, and lost a lot of men, so we lost men here, that was when we first got— Mr. Dunsh is indicating Argentown in France, lost a lot of men there, and then— Moselle, we lost a ton of them. And then in relieving Bastogne, we lost more, and of course we lost them all along, but the big campaigns was this one, where we were first bloodied, Moselle, probably the biggest of the bunch, outside of the Battle of the Bulges, it was probably bigger than that. I just had a— I'm just going to show you here a little bit. June, you didn't get on any of these missions, but, well, okay, don't worry.

I wanted to show you, I just read the other day how many casualties we had. Okay. I had it over here, but she cleaned it for me.

Okay, now we're, so then after the Bulges, we— Well, after the Battle of the Bulges, we'd go over the Our River and fought in a lot of places there, but a lot of— See, these towns— These are most generally towns that we captured. Here's Castle. I don't know if you know anything about Castle.

[Speaker 2]

Castle, yes.

[Speaker 1]

Well, you went, just for the recording here, we're going east from Luxembourg through St. Wendell, Kaiserslautern area, just to the north is Weybrook, and then general area Mannheim, Werms, Mainz, Wiesbaden, Frankfurt. Here's where we crossed. Okay.

Crossed the Rhine River.

[Speaker 2]

Crossed the Rhine at Mainz?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, this is relieving himself in Mainz. Okay, yes. And Castle here had 80,000 civilians in the Ruble, and to tell you how fanatic they were, we captured the town, house-to-house, the infantry did, 318th Infantry, and they were manufacturing tanks there, and they were putting tanks against our artillery with Volkstroopers, civilians at the controls, and the tanks we were knocking out had less than six kilometers on them in most cases.

The paint wasn't dry from the factory. So they had literally, these tanks had come from the factories and— Put a civilian behind them and they'd put them out against— And you were actually then fighting civilians. That's right, and we had to use howitzers for direct lay weapons because you couldn't fire them.

We were in the same town they were. So you were zero elevation on a howitzer to fight a tank. Yeah.

Is that right? That's right. And the colonel had some rough times there.

You know, that was—they could have got lucky. The infantry's bedded down in town or drunk or whatever is going on, I don't know, but they're bringing tanks out with fresh paint on them with a civilian in there and he's driving right into a battery area and start firing at your artillery. Does this suggest that the civilian population is now very hostile?

Oh, yeah. They didn't like 80,000 of their sons and daughters and people in the Ruble. Oh, they'd been— This is Ruble from bombing.

Bombers, bombers, bombers. So they were perturbed by the attack of the— Finally, we had a general. Is this British Air Force and U.S. Air Force or both?

[Speaker 2]

I don't know.

[Speaker 1]

In any case— They were unhappy with us. That was their principal grievance? It wasn't so much that you were— Well, I don't know.

I don't know what their principle was. They didn't want to be losing the war and they never gave up. They were fanatics.

The reason I ask that is I have read some accounts in some places where the Germans almost welcomed U.S. people as liberators. This wasn't one of them. But Kassel was not one of them, huh?

Okay, okay. So then we were on to Eisenach, Erfurt— Erfurt, Wiener. These are places where they make lenses.

Oh, Weimar, as in Weimar Republic. Jena, where Napoleon won a great victory.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, really? Yes.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, and then we went east to— Chemitz. Chemitz, yeah. And then we turned around.

Yeah, that was political. See, they didn't want us. Here's the old river.

Oh. They didn't want us out here. And so— When the war was over, we were down here.

Niederholtheim. So you went back to the Erfurt area and south to Bomberg? Well, down— Bomberg, Nuremberg, Regensberg.

I'm not sure. Oh. And— We'd be down in this area here.

Okay, down to— But let me— Into Austria.

[Speaker 2]

Into this. Okay, sure.

[Speaker 1]

I didn't know at the time. Yes, sir. But the war was over.

It was 6th of June, I believe. What, 6th of May, wasn't it? The war was over.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, 8th of May, actually.

[Speaker 1]

And we turned in our—we're in Niederholtheim. We turned— Excuse me. Let me— Has things been relatively—I don't mean to use this term, like calm, or is it— Oh, yeah, yeah.

The war has— Yeah. The big war is over.

[Speaker 2]

The big war is over.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. These guys want to surrender. They're surrendering by the thousands after we cross the Rhine River.

Okay. And the traffic on the roads is so bad that we have to take our tanks with a blade on the front of them— Push the stuff off? —to push the vehicles off the road so we can get through.

I mean, they're just abandoned tanks. Okay, so there's not a lot of fighting going on here. No, just pockets down here.

Kassel was a pretty good fight. Yeah, Kassel. Kassel, and then— Yeah, Kassel.

But there's guys dying every day, you know, and it's not over, but— Who are they fighting? Is there still German Army they're fighting?

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Or is there sniping from civilians? Well, they're doing anything they can do to slow us up. You never know, huh?

Okay.