

Godby, Garland Interview pt 1 8-22-95

[Speaker 2]

This is an interview with Garland Godbey. The date is August 22nd, 1995, and I am John McManus. So you're outlining how you joined the service in 1938.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, 1938. I lived in Baltimore. I was from West Virginia.

And I was shipped up to Baltimore. And from there I went to Brooklyn, where they staged the recruits. And I was there two or three weeks, and then we were loaded on Army transport.

And we went down through the canal to Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. And from there we went to Hawaii on a two-ship. And I was sent to the 8th Company of the 35th Infantry.

There was a rifleman. And because I could type in about three months, I got in the Corps. And I took typing in high school so I could get out of heavy academic work.

You know, around that time. But it was one of the best things that ever happened to me, because I got to know how to cover the contract. And I got promoted to corporal real fast.

And then I was 19 when I made sergeant. And that was unheard of in the old Army. Because I developed a pretty good reputation.

I worked long and hard to get the job.

[Speaker 2]

You enjoyed the Army.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yes. I was Army. I just never had any doubts about wanting to be a soldier.

And I made the best of it when I got the opportunity. And I made sergeant. And I became a platoon leader.

And I did all the sporting activities. I was on the swimming team, on the track team, and I boxed. Did you?

Yes.

[Speaker 2]

What weight class?

[Speaker 1]

I was 130, about 137 pounds. It was called lightweight. But I gained weight and I got up to middleweight.

But it was easier fighting middleweight than it was lightweight.

[Speaker 2]

Why is that?

[Speaker 1]

Slower. And it's like the heavyweight class today. A lot of people didn't have the speed necessary.

So I wanted to fight. And on the swimming team, I was also diving. In Hawaii, you know, that's great.

I'm swimming. We used to beat Hawaiians at swimming. Oh, yeah?

Oh, yeah. In the Navy. We competed with the Navy.

Especially in the diving, Hawaiians did. Because I took all the honors in the Hawaiian diving, too. And it was good.

But it was sort of isolating. You know, being in Hawaii then. There wasn't as quick transit.

The only way to get to Hawaii was either swim or ship. So I spent three years there. And I didn't know what to do because I was only 21.

A little over 21. When I got back to San Francisco, and I had saved the money, and there was a friend of mine who was there with me, George Corson, and we were discharged there in San Francisco. So we bought a car, pulled our money, and came back cross-country in a car.

And after I got home, I thought I'd try it. My father was a mining superintendent, and he owned two or three coal mines. And I thought I would try mining.

And I tried it. First job I had was picking slate from a coal pit, where they process the coal. I don't know if you know what slate is, but slate's unburnable.

And you have to get the slate out of the coal. So I enlisted as a private. And I was assigned to Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

And they made me a clerk tycoon. So it went along until they made me corporal. And then the war started.

And they promoted me to sergeant, and sent me to Fort Penning as a lieutenant. And I spent the time there. I was commissioned June of 1942.

And let me see. My first assignment was to Camp Forest, Tennessee. It was a brand damn new second lieutenant.

Of course, having had prior experience, I was on his shoulders above anyone else, because the officers we were getting were ROTC, direct appointment. And they didn't know, which I know, which is all right, because they learned. But he gave me an advantage.

So pretty soon I got a company from South. And I got an accelerated promotion to captain. And he got me through 19th.

And I got to train them. I mean, up and down and sideways.

[Speaker 2]
Really?

[Speaker 1]
Everywhere. I got to know them very well. And very, very close relationship.

And I went through all the training with them and took them in the company.

[Speaker 2]
So this was the D Company?

[Speaker 1]
E Company.

[Speaker 2]
E Company. Trained our 19th Infantry Regiment. 80th Infantry Regiment.

That's correct.

[Speaker 1]
And during, I forgot when it was, 43, we had, when the British commandos started, we started ranger training. And I was the chief instructor of ranger training. And one of the first rangers.

And the reason I got out of ranger is, I had a rough appendix. I was given what they call a butt manual. It's a PT with a rifle.

And I got a disaster. I wound up in the hospital. And then the rangers shipped out, the second rangers.

So I went back to the company. Then I was sent to Fort Benning. It was, 43.

We were out, at that time, desert training. The artillery trained fighters in desert. And I got orders out there to go to the advanced infantry school.

And I went through the advanced infantry class. And I went back to my unit. And then we were alerted.

While I was coming back from, from Benning, our division was shipped east. Had to catch up with them. And I got back with my company in New Jersey.

And from there we, we staged there, I think we were there about six weeks. And they loaded us on the Queen Mary. Our whole division, less the heavy equipment, but all the personnel.

18,000 or something on a Queen Mary. It was fantastic. But you couldn't move because they had stacked bunks about.

But it, it took us, I think six days, to go to Scotland. We went to the first tribe in Glasgow, South Glasgow. And we were there, press, we were there quite a while.

And then they shipped us down to, to our departure area. It was outside of Manchester in England. And from there, we were there four weeks or something.

And they took us, it was the 10th of July, so we got on a water transport. And went to Normanville.

[Speaker 2]

Over Omaha Beach? You landed over Omaha?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I was in Omaha Beach. Utah.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, over Utah.

[Speaker 1]

And that was fun.

[Speaker 2]

Why is that?

[Speaker 1]

It was a mess. Where was I? Thousands, thousands of people.

And all the supplies coming in on that beach. On those beaches. Because we had, what, three?

We had Omaha, Utah, and the British beaches. Yeah. We went down to another beach.

I forget that son of a beach. But it was a, it was an experience. And we couldn't wait to go, because the Germans were, you know, they hadn't quit.

They were shooting at us.

[Speaker 2]

So they were shelling the ships?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah. Yeah. You know, that's when you, that's when you begin to feel combat.

Because they were shooting high burst artillery, and also anti-aircraft artillery. Because we had a lot of planes and fighters, you know, coming in. And we could strap them all the way down to the deck.

That's why it was always marked where you felt it. And we didn't have to fight off the beach. But we got up, and spread out, you know, in formation.

And then we ran into the hedgehogs. And that's impossible to fight.

[Speaker 2]

What was the worst thing about it? What made it so difficult?

[Speaker 1]

You couldn't move. You couldn't get through them. In the open fields, the Germans were right on you.

Because they were heavily defended. And it wasn't until they got to pressure behind them that they started pulling back. And then we, we whipped our army.

And they decided to take a bulldozer blade to make paths through the hedgehogs. And they made us pass. And we went through.

But that took, took a couple of weeks to get through.

[Speaker 2]

A lot of casualties there.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah. And after we got out of there, well, we went to, I'm trying to think, because I had my first real fight, you know, real chemical fight.

[Speaker 2]

It was somewhere around the San Luis area?

[Speaker 1]

It was outside of San Luis. Because we fought in different directions. And I thought, you'll be going east one day, north the next, south.

We went everywhere we went. Because we had to move, move on the opportunity. And I'm trying to think of it.

That's what we had in the woods. But I learned a lot there. I learned the control necessary to, quote, fight a unit.

See, you had to have, I call it intimate contact. You had to have personal contact with the guys in the line. Because they didn't know what was going on.

And usually I didn't know what was going on. Except I had the objective. I had it all set.

I knew what I was supposed to be doing. But anyway, we were very successful. And I learned about tree burns.

What about them? Okay, well, catch you in a piece. They severely wounded my communication system.

I got hit in the back. But it was only tiny, tiny pieces. Not any, not any real grabbers.

I got hit in the head. I got hit in the knees. But that was later when we had engagement.

[Speaker 2]

Were you standing there? Were you undercover in a foxhole when that happened?

[Speaker 1]

No, we weren't in foxholes. We didn't have time for foxholes. Whenever we could, we used the German foxholes.

Boy, they had it in the Nazis, they had foxholes. But we would dig just a little trench and get in. There wasn't any foxholes.

And we were usually attacking. And you can't attack from the front position. But I sure learned about that.

And then I got I loved the German machine gun. See, because it's rapid rate of fire and everything. You know, man.

We were all young and crazy. So, started using captured machine guns. I said, I don't want to get those bastards.

You know. See, you're not hitting me.

[Speaker 2]

Why is that?

[Speaker 1]

Because we couldn't tell where our people were from the Germans. So, I had to get rid of them. So I would know because our machine gun had a distinctive much slower rate of fire.

[Speaker 2]

Heavier.

[Speaker 1]

Because those German machine guns that's like working in a slipper. You're like, what? And all of them fire burst at six.

Fire burst at six. we were right after we broke through the hedgerows. We're trying to get bridges.

You know, if you get a bridge you can greatly accelerate the pace of work. So I had to make sure my bridge I had to go through the woods to get to it. And there was a clearing.

I had an artillery forward observer with me. And because traditionally you always had a forward observer. The Germans were on the other side of the bridge and they had these 20mm 20mm machine gun.

And I had to get them knocked down because we weren't there. So we called artillery down. And that shut them up while artillery was going.

So we decided to attack the bridge. And we get almost to the bridge on a little bluff all of a sudden the whole wall came apart because they had blown that bridge. A big chunk of concrete had rained it down.

So we had to go back to assault posts. And nobody liked those assault posts.

[Speaker 2]

Why not?

[Speaker 1]

Well, they're hard to roll, hard to control and tippy, you may say. They load down. They were always overloaded.

Yeah, and we lost a lot that way. You know, the Germans are easy to they're smart. People, you know, they weren't any democrats under them.

They were very efficient soldiers.

[Speaker 2]

And we lost quite a few in attacking across in the boats.

[Speaker 1]

When you go across the water it's very vulnerable. You can't shoot back.

[Speaker 2]

Did you at least have an artillery barrage?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. But as long as it's on, okay. As soon as it's off it starts shooting.

But then they prearrange their withdrawals and everything. Very disciplined withdrawals. And I get I used to.

I guess it was I could never really understand the Germans because we had been indoctrinated you know, to hate them. That's not my nature, to hate. I can flare up and all that but I don't think hate is in my vocabulary.

And we used to to surrender prisoners and and I wouldn't let them strip them of everything. I'd let them get cigars and cheese and stuff. And I'd say, well now you leave your equipment alone.

And pistols. We took their weapons and send them on back to the rear. But we were always sure, when an infantry comes in you get shot in a hurry.

And I used to hate to have to use my men to send them back to the rear. So I told my auntie one time, I said, I'm going to send them back to battalion CP and my men are coming back because I need them on my line. Only about three minutes when I said, well it's got to happen because I went in with 210 men and it wasn't a week until I was down to about 100 I'd say around 170 and I got down to 130 and that's about what I wound up with.

And because you get new men in and you cannot absorb new men in a combat situation. You couldn't bring a new man in. He doesn't know how to fight and you don't know him.

And so usually they get killed. Or wounded.

[Speaker 2]

Mainly because they don't know what they're doing.

[Speaker 1]

That's right. And it's not their fault either. Because combat is something you have to experience.

It's not, you know, in order to know what combat is, you have to have been in combat. And I don't mean sitting back and you've got to know what it is on the other hand. And I used to cry when I lost new men.

But I never cried on most of the replacements because you never got to know them. Like my lieutenants. We went through lieutenants but I never ever had the luxury of more than one lieutenant.

I had two of them. Buck Lloyd got killed and Brown He's on the picture now. He got a bayonet in the leg and he dived into a foxhole.

And the bayonet stuck in the leg and he was dead. So I used my platoon sergeants which because they run the platoon anyway and the lieutenants just Well you know the motto of any infantry officer is follow me. Follow me.

And he leaves skipping that shot. So I lost a lot of lieutenants. It meant a lot.

A lot of movement up and down back and forth. That's the way Patton was. He concentrated the strength and it wasn't too long that we got the tanks.

You know Patton got the tanks. Sometime in August I forget the exact date and I had to see See the tanks?

[Speaker 2]

How come?

[Speaker 1]

Because they gave us protection. They had those they used to have 57mm on gun and they weren't too hot but they at least put high explosive out. Because you gotta do anything to keep that fire down off your infantry.

And I was real happy when I came up with the 78 and then the Germans had that that was the most fearsome weapon anyway and they used to shoot at single soldiers out in the field I love them I was one of them They were shooting at at the group and also as a morale factor. And one of my lieutenants, John White he he played pro football for the Pittsburgh and he was drafted he was 6'4 6'6 way back there and he was tall and so good in nature and he got seasick and he stepped on a boat when we crossed the channel yeah he was a riot and the German 88 got him it wasn't the 88 he was on a stone wall behind a stone wall and the 88 hit the wall and a big chunk of rock hit him right in silver plastic you know right in there and broke ribs and everything and he was evacuated but he lived oh he did

[Speaker 2]

what was the worst thing about the 88 in your estimation

[Speaker 1]

well the fact that they were so angry they were close support see I wouldn't like some choker 500 mile statue in that area I mean they were right there on the line and bam bam terrified

[Speaker 2]

is it true you couldn't hear it coming in

[Speaker 1]

no that was it the muscle loss oof bam bam that's why I was so happy because we've been in with those 57 and you couldn't compare them and I was one of the happiest guys up in Luxembourg I got a section of anchor storage tower 90mm and you could sit there and pick off pick off trucks and things 3,000 yards away

[Speaker 2]

good weapon yes

[Speaker 1]

did anything to protect did everything and tanks anything to help but he also had army artillery it's controlled army core artillery and we had some experiences with core artillery well one time I was up checking the front checking the troops now look all these guys in trench coats and everything and I went up and I said what in the hell are you doing I said G2 I said well you're going to gain death if you stand out here I said good thanks a lot and I got out in the next day or so now long time I was up big artillery and we had we were defending along here and out in front of us we came up behind us came up a section it was platoon and they moved in front started displacing and I don't know what I said where's your lieutenant he's over there what are you doing he said we're up here to support you I said for Christ sakes we're back there even though so they dug in behind us but they we had good good relationships and the engineers too particularly all the engineers deserve the best from anybody because they worked and they fought

[Speaker 2]

sometimes at the same time right

[Speaker 1]

oh yes I was always sorry that they didn't have combat inventory badges and that was ridiculous

[Speaker 2]

because there were many times when the engineers were actually in front of you guys yes you bet

[Speaker 1]

but they were doing meaningful things and I never left them alone you know protected but I used to admire their fortitude never heard them complain other than the ordinary hitching and griping which any group of men will do it's more of a fraternity you know but that was a good experience in France too the greatest people in the world were the F.F.E. they used to call F.F.I. French I mean they would attack Germans they were going to hand them and they'd come through the lines capture guns ammunition and they'd go out and fight in a

very small type operation of course they were fighting for their land you know and I had a chaplain Boucher he was Bruce French I've never seen such a chaplain he was close to God but I don't know a hell raiser he literally walked out of the night

[Speaker 2]

he was really out there in the thick of it

[Speaker 1]

well he wouldn't wear his helmet and he'd go soldering up in the town and Patton would go on and on I mean old Patton was all up in the story

[Speaker 2]

what did Patton say to him

[Speaker 1]

put your god damn helmet

[Speaker 2]

on

[Speaker 1]

god damn helmet on your head

[Speaker 2]

how did Boucher respond to that oh yeah that's how he responded to Patton was he a chaplain priest

[Speaker 1]

yeah he was a good company see the men liked him he could understand he went through everything we did and we had other chaplains you know in the division but you rarely saw him except our division chaplain he used to be on the line anytime he was the division in fact he's still alive he was a fine man you know just a good man we let him pull he was a quiet he was the quietest man you know a chaplain has to be quiet you know we weren't quiet we didn't know anything

[Speaker 2]

the men of course respected those two chaplains what about the other ones who they never saw well

[Speaker 1]

holy joy see them on Sunday they went back to go to a gathering these guys came up and held their chapel with soldiers didn't have to go back because when you went back to the battalion you could be going back as much as a mile and pulling soldiers out and they didn't want to go anyway that's one reason we admired but the others were were okay it was just different Patton didn't care much for them

[Speaker 2]

the other chaplains how come

[Speaker 1]

he was he was his own man he didn't want to say he relied on God you know because he considered himself equal to God he did this is true like when we were in the vault we were getting hell beat out of couldn't get any air support he ordered the chaplain he said make up a prayer for the cares over there but but he was Patton no I liked Patton oh yeah you can't stand him but I said I loved him because he was a prayer and that's what we were supposed to be doing we had one division commander early early on that used to have a slogan dig and live you know dig and live you don't dig no god damn hole he said I want you up and shooting he said I don't give a shit you get anything going on you get a gun fired that's why we got ammunition send the Germans home alright alright I also liked him because he'd get up in the heat of combat he'd be right up on us we were on the forward slope one time outside of in the hill dug in and the string gun section was dug in with one of my platoons and Patton came up and I'm checking because he hated oh we were out of gas then he hated to stop and he came up to check the line had his machine guns all that and I had a Lieutenant there Spinoza and he said Lieutenant get down behind that damn gun Spinoza got down behind the gun Patton said what the hell is this he was probably going trees sir Patton said damn right that's all he sees is trees he said move that damn gun out they're not my they're not my guns sir he said they're my damn guns he said I don't care what guns I have move that gun and Spinoza never got over it he got wounded short back

[Speaker 2]

did Patton ever say anything to you

[Speaker 1]

nothing except soldier no he never

[Speaker 2]

never do you think that his leadership style saved you casualties

[Speaker 1]

oh yeah anytime we stopped really yeah when we ran out of gasoline I lost hell of a bunch of men because we had to dig in and we were in the woods out post out I think it was October raining and miserable you don't know what misery is you get transferred can't get your seat back and he had his G4 the division G4 come around handing out socks on me now this a full colonel out with boxes of socks he said those troops will have and you'll attack them out there and he took yeah we got a lot of transfers in fact my feet were I didn't have it as badly circulation bad

[Speaker 2]

there really wasn't that much you could do no except to change

[Speaker 1]

try to change socks every day keep them from getting all wrinkled but it was miserable and we got a officer's got a whiskey ration about once a month I think he got a bottle of bourbon a bottle of gin and when we were in France we got a couple bottles of cognac and that was enough and I used to give it out to the troops and I had to one for ten dug out to get away from the treavers to for defensive purposes and all the Germans up on the little boat really didn't know what to do but I was determined to get something and I used that for a second

and I crawled up there in the tank track I mean crawled and I got out there and I said okay Buck, this is Buck Lloyd I said here's some booze for you guys he said oh weed drinker no

[Speaker 2]
he didn't want it

[Speaker 1]
okay

[Speaker 2]
why do you think that was? why do you think that was?

[Speaker 1]
I don't know I just that was for three guys you know platoon leader and platoon guide in the same hole you want a drink? well Buck Lloyd's the one that got the congressional number one really?

[Speaker 2]
how did he get that?

[Speaker 1]
I was trying to think where the hell we were we attacked at night got in this town what's the next one? well the German let us in the town and then that night I had to go back and get the order so we were attacked at daylight heavily heavily defended the Germans machine gun it was one of the prime areas for their defense and we got got in there we couldn't use the tank like we normally do and we had to attack the next morning and we hit that machine gun and Buck got nervous and he cleaned out three machine guns single handed wow how did he do that? just by guts one from one of the other that's an alright clean out machine gun and he cleaned them out and he permitted us to get out did you put it in? see when you when army sends you send Lloyd back you know and I told Lloyd I said did you stop?

are you going back? no sir I'm going back he said Lloyd no I said yeah but I said they required well just let him come get me and he got through because he wasn't reckless in a sense reckless the people in strength there everybody has moments of glory and sacrifice everybody because I had private it was great you know I'm a close organ trailer and all that allows it you get them in combat and you clean up every man cleans on the internet that's nearly really team work

[Speaker 2]
do you remember any incidents of privates like that who did things beyond what you could ever imagine do you remember any specific incidents

[Speaker 1]
no oh yeah now I had one man he killed snipers and he had the best eyes he could take a sling shot and knock a bird out he had a quick reflex in the eye and he could see a movement because they used a lot of snipers

[Speaker 2]

yeah I was going to ask you about that as an officer if you were a prime target I didn't wear an insignia or anything like that I did

[Speaker 1]
right on my helmet

[Speaker 2]
really

[Speaker 1]
yeah

[Speaker 2]
did you ever have any close calls with snipers were you worried about it

[Speaker 1]
no you can't be in a way when you get caught up in movement and everything it becomes a secondary issue I can't remember the town except this town where the Germans withdrew they got out of the town and went up on the high ground and I don't know I had ten boys a big guy and he was a Greek a couple of ten years up the houses were such that they kept the cows inside they lived around the cows and they had an opening in like a bag it was part of the house and we were in there staying away from the snipers and ten boys stepped out to call somebody and right between their eyes boy that hurt me you had to understand he was a Greek and he had been a platoon sergeant in Camp Carson Colorado and suddenly one day out of command he said I've got a sergeant what do you mean you've got a sergeant he said yeah he said okay he said you can't get along with him but he couldn't because of his breast you know the Greeks were very strong very strong and he couldn't he didn't have the ability to leave he could not leave this is all bullshit but I took him and let him be my bodyguard because he wouldn't let me go anywhere because I was come in from Kentucky he carved a Kentucky bagel he was a good scrounger he never went hungry

[Speaker 2]
so you'd gotten to know him pretty well when that happened

[Speaker 1]
oh yes I knew I got to know him yeah very close anywhere I went because I got captured temporarily so you were with him what happened I was out one night movement got me and I had to go back and when the company finished moving I was gone now Peckins was my first sergeant and I was coming back from the and I misdirected myself I had my radio off and and I couldn't find my tooth couldn't locate it so I went over to my little hill and sat down and and and there was about three guys there I think I guess well they were lost we sat there the guy was from no Amherst Fritz Flint we talked he told me about it and finally we got up and started looking for for a unit either his or mine

[Speaker 2]
five of you guys walking around

[Speaker 1]
I didn't know and I heard a Fritz squeak I said is that you sergeant? I said is that you top?

he said yeah where you been? he said I've never seen anyone in a bodyguard so and those who came from the bodyguard

[Speaker 2]
oh yeah

[Speaker 1]
they were happy yeah

[Speaker 2]
so that's how Pete got assigned to you and all when he got killed how did you deal with that in the context of the situation you have to stay in charge

[Speaker 1]
well you try and decide yourself you can't get over I'm not even over today you know you cannot get used to death you know people think yeah you're going to wipe them out and all that you see somebody that you've known dead and you can't it used to hurt me so bad when one of the old guys got killed took a part of me but it's something you have to deal with and that's why you have this I don't know post traumatic for us everybody had a combat you do you have to go through a a process within yourself that lets that fade back got me on my first went home and they gave me a 30 day leave from the hospital and I went home and it's sharp noise put me in a tent put me on the floor graduating because I spent nine months in the hospital

[Speaker 2]
in the hospital oh after after you were wounded

[Speaker 1]
and that was the last experience

[Speaker 2]
you were wounded what exactly happened

[Speaker 1]
well head split open two photograph here crushed and I got moon back here shattered

[Speaker 2]
was it an artillery shell that came in or

[Speaker 1]
no it was in a tank hit my head on a gun with no helmet on an 88 hit the tank I never even passed out I got out of that tank this was Christmas day or Christmas eve and I just had a little little headache and didn't get evacuated until the 17th of January a couple of weeks and the only reason I was evacuated is I couldn't I couldn't close my eyes you know I couldn't rest the brain was swept I didn't have nothing

[Speaker 2]
so you had been walking around with crushed vertebrae

[Speaker 1]

finally I went back to the battalion aid station George Bedersky was a surgeon I told him you need it you need it they had a bowl they gave me some two of them I took it I had to ask him how you doing I said why me he said you had a cognac he said drink this I did and I slept 24 hours

[Speaker 2]

how did they discover there was something wrong with your neck

[Speaker 1]

well I was evacuated when you are evacuated you go back to division 30 and then you go back to an evacuation hospital and they send you from there and I went from there to England they threw me back to 1049 hospital in England it was in Chester they made x-rays and I stayed in bed and no work for 10 days that was a joke next day I got up next thing I knew they finally got me out it's been quite a while

[Speaker 2]

they had to do surgery on you

[Speaker 1]

they couldn't

[Speaker 2]

how come

[Speaker 1]

it's supposed to bring I had to learn by ping pong really two times and I played with them air force fighter pilots they had lovely ankle broken nobody in the hospital could beat me oh I had to get my eyes because this eye I had to get the optic nerve healed

[Speaker 2]

and that knocked you out of the contest forever well

[Speaker 1]

yeah yeah because after I was up in the hospital and they put me for a retirement and I said well I'm going to retire I said I won't I said I'm I'm Army and that's all I'm going to do I don't want to leave retirement I said well that's all about it and they called me back and said well we're going to keep you on but you're out of the industry they said no no put me in a better place

[Speaker 2]

the worst probably that would be the worst

[Speaker 1]

that was a good medicine because I got to do a lot of things that you don't get to do in the industry not right on your own took a while to learn the techniques and all that but I didn't take no involvement I got to I was in the airborne I had the number three number three in the airborne and I had to have a graduation for 8th Army and number 3 control the D.N.G. health control I had to guard the meeting site I had to control bunkers and everything take

the wood out of the fortifications pull the wood out so that so that and I used to have to protect the warehouse and I got to train a platoon of guard dogs I was a Korean dog crew two dogs oh yeah well they used to raid the warehouses after you got the dogs cause they were definitely afraid of dogs and life was good

[Speaker 2]

back injury is not something that goes away for the rest of your life

[Speaker 1]

I had bad arthritis and my knees but I don't have the I have a lot of numbness all over my right side and I used to have headaches it took a long time for the fracture to heal

[Speaker 2]

so they just let it be open after it could be done

[Speaker 1]

no no no yeah that's my problem cause my back is cute but I put my neck right there I couldn't swallow food I don't know I don't believe that I don't know I don't believe that I don't believe that I don't know neck operation they went in to let me brain stem and all of that and I said well are you ready to go for the operation I said well answer me are you sure this will take your throat I said oh no I'm not sure he said well what percent success would you predict he said about 5% 5% cause you can't get up in that area I had enough trouble back I had 2 operations but it's ok now I'm 75 and I never thought I'd think I never dreamed I thought I'd be lucky through combat make 30 good make 30 go for 40

[Speaker 2]

shorter than 10 years at a time I would imagine at the time in combat you weren't thinking too far past 24

[Speaker 1]

no

[Speaker 2]

you had officers being killed around you you had a huge turnover how did you survive 6 months almost 5 months in combat

[Speaker 1]

I don't know I just got light wounds there we go I don't know I really really have a strong faith in God I had a wife and 3 children you did at the time 3 rugrats and twins 4 and a year younger child 3 and I don't know it just really goes cause I had a lot of my best officer friends almost all of them and one foolish one guy died but it wasn't foolish it was accidentally cherished are you familiar with the jeep not the Humvee the old jeep I'm sitting down in the jeep and I was carrying a carbine I put the carbine down and I came up to

[Speaker 2]

right up to his chair basically

[Speaker 1]

blew the top of it and got hurt bad just went through a little carousel not a lot a lot of carousels almost killed 10 or something out of combat off the line back cleaning up cleaning up in here and I was sitting up under a tree cleaning my way 9 to 45 out in the street cleaning my way and I think I flipped and let the slide pulled through the glass another inch raised from there

[Speaker 2]

I mean he was a little mad at you

[Speaker 1]

oh he was very understandable was he you ok dude yeah no he had more combat than I must say you know usually first sergeant is not up on the line off the line he was always up there so I told somebody to go up there take care of business back here and he kept one of the planes yeah he was simpler but he was never a rouser you know well none of us were none drinking is just not part of the scene you drink after you get out you know after you're away you know but you need all the judgment you can get

[Speaker 2]

were there a lot of other company commanders in your battalion who were killed during your time

[Speaker 1]

hmm I had two or three yeah we had several when we'd leave

[Speaker 2]

leave

[Speaker 1]

oh yeah

[Speaker 2]

what was usually the biggest reason

[Speaker 1]

they just couldn't you know they could not couldn't name any and they were transferred out oh that's fantastic

[Speaker 2]

what was it that made them fantastic what was it that determined a good officer

[Speaker 1]

well I can't remember now now they were they were leaders they led by example they didn't talk down they didn't go on their rank their ability people would follow they'd go eat with the men where did a lot of officers they had the idea I'm an officer Sam Williams a major hero one of the best leaders third battalion commander was Blackwater and we lost Eric during commando and he was replaced by Paul Bandy and Bandy he led himself he was never out and never out observation observation was one thing the secrets he did and and third battalion second battalion first battalion and Bandy was there when I got hit but I

didn't have any officers there was a lieutenant was not an infantry officer because we didn't have any

[Speaker 2]
they were all gone

[Speaker 1]
he was a major but he did a good job and he went through through the end of the war and I had John Lake in the three men he was rather nurtured him as a second lieutenant all the way from second lieutenant taught him how to live and feel and he was with them quite a while then they pulled him out he went up to the S3 section and worked there and he stayed with the battalion hmm but not on one side

[Speaker 2]
he was a platoon leader originally probably

[Speaker 1]
yeah of sorts yeah and I made him my executive officer because he was also good at detail and observance then he went up to the battalion S3 which was a very important job and and in fact he was at U.N. Border Patrol oh yeah he's in bad shape is he he can hardly walk I talked to him about three or four weeks ago

[Speaker 2]
he sounded alright oh yeah

[Speaker 1]
he's in good mood he's got I think liver but that's the end of it

[Speaker 2]
did you ever have was Edgar Wilson ever here at Fort Observer anytime yeah a lot you got to know him pretty well

[Speaker 1]
oh yeah you worked pretty closely

[Speaker 2]
in combat together

[Speaker 1]
yes sir we used to make boxes and circles that's predetermined fire you know you got a box of a certain type a circle and we used to plot them on the map but he never lost his cool

[Speaker 2]
yeah that doesn't surprise me

[Speaker 1]
no yeah yeah he lost a couple of Fort Observers

[Speaker 2]
pretty dangerous job

[Speaker 1]
they're out there doing

[Speaker 2]
he would usually be out there ahead of you guys wouldn't he someplace on his own

[Speaker 1]
yeah yeah yeah I used to any of them because I got to ride in a jeep

[Speaker 2]
you had to walk

[Speaker 1]
well we had only one jeep no we had two jeeps some kind but they were loaded down with essential equipment yeah we used to walk the other way you'd try you'd get off and I'd have to navigate at night and you'd have to dabble with weapons and we used to part of the training was you had to find your meals find your next meal and you had to do it entirely yourself you know the relating ground to the map there was a lot of company around there of course I was lucky I think I learned that through the whole school

[Speaker 2]
you mean when you were originally doing the service yeah right

[Speaker 1]
they drummed it into you

[Speaker 2]
yeah

[Speaker 1]
yeah that's why you can't well I was on top of a ridge and it's a monumental ridge and it's like look at that okay and the hoist it

[Speaker 2]
that's like being a hand in combat oh yeah

[Speaker 1]
it was bad see people you never know exactly cause you never know in those situations you don't have enough facts and you have to make a lot of decisions based on instinct and experience and going through the woods was hard I don't know cause you've got to you've got to cause you get lost you know and I was scared to death walking down this ridge and at some point I was checking I was at a point way out and I was checking and I was checking the direction and I started walking home and we hit a herd I thought the world would come to me but there was a pig at that time too

[Speaker 2]
he ate well those guys

[Speaker 1]

were cooking

[Speaker 2]

you thought they were Germans yeah

[Speaker 1]

attack ambush yeah they were taken for that

[Speaker 2]

did you get ambushed really

[Speaker 1]

no I had one platoon fighting another one but that was mixed up in the dark and you don't have time to go through the photographs and everything cause it shoots you in the back

[Speaker 2]

and it's it's tough to get a conception of how dark it was at night nowadays when you have street lights and you're out there in the middle of various countries

[Speaker 1]

no light and you got a little flashlight cover on it but it doesn't do that much good you've got to hit that old and it's added comfort in fact I've still got my book yeah so it must be yeah it is a lot of good timing can't it it's not being what is it like I don't know if you can hear that rest up, clean up that's what I used to do get off the line, go back and clean up

[Speaker 2]

stay human again do you think it changed your mindset when you do that

[Speaker 1]

it risked it because you're living right on the edge when you're up in the combat and when you get away from it it takes that pressure off that's pressure cooker next step might be that

[Speaker 2]

it's almost like you have to be alert every second

[Speaker 1]

you do that's what I should say before going

[Speaker 2]

yeah how do you feel about that do you think that word glory even belongs in the same sentence as the word war

[Speaker 1]

no there is no war anymore human being as I say I was taught to hate it but it's good to me because I'm a good man doing my job doing my job you know I never let it threaten me again it horrified me that moment of seeing you know what Peter

[Speaker 2]

after you seen that it didn't it didn't make you want to shoot any German prisoners that you got

[Speaker 1]

I always felt that I'm not shooting at any of my friends well being human doing our job but a lot of people you know poisoned that's why not many German commanders survived very long couldn't stand the pressure it didn't mean they weren't good for nothing they weren't good for personally have you ever

[Speaker 2]

when you were talking before about how difficult it was to kill other human beings do you ever remember a time in combat yeah

[Speaker 1]

I had a great joy what used to hurt me was standing with dead horses and cats now that sounds callous but you know when you're a soldier you got to take what goes with the job and I used to 50 caliber machine gun from the army a couple thousand rounds and shot them German and we got out in the basement of the house and ambushed and always wanted a German leather coat long black leather coat and we were always cold I got me coat got me coat and I put it on and one evening it got dark and I opened it and sat in my closet and I went vroom vroom I said quit it and my doctor took off that goddamn coat

[Speaker 2]

got rid of that for her

[Speaker 1]

and we relieved ourselves tank battalion was cut off one night we had to wade through ice cold I mean cold up to our chest to get up to get up on the road going into town and the Germans had outposts and saw a couple things off the side and I said what have to do what have to do and I said have to do and I said what have to do and I said to do and I said what have to do

[Speaker 2]

and I

[Speaker 1]

yeah they were glad to see us because to protect us now we call it little united nations we were there five days we were cut off waiting for the army to take us

[Speaker 2]

is there any way to describe how cold it was uh

[Speaker 1]

what was cold was the icy rain snow isn't cold you know in that sense but what gets you is that ice is drizzled you just can't get one unless you go inside a house that's why we take every house you get a house you get so cold just for no reason in the snow so you can burrow down in the snow get out of the wind and you get wet and you can't see and you can't eat properly and that's all you just try to keep up with the kitchen and you get out there and you've got a mess kit in your hand and you see bacon and frost I used to like it when they brought the food up in the mermaid tanks it was a heavily insulated tank and a lot of food for the troops and the tea I loved the tea V.I.T. the V.I.P. sweet and warm

[Speaker 2]

hot food can make quite a difference

[Speaker 1]

but then we had these stainless steel aluminum cups you get some hot in them and some burn in them

[Speaker 2]

held the heat a little too well

[Speaker 1]

I don't know it wasn't like the stuff they developed later like mylar not mylar