

WW2 Vet William Phelps (1)

[Speaker 2]

Welcome, everybody. I'm Chris Magra. I'm the Director for the Study of Tennesseans and More, and it's our mission to interview veterans in our community, to record their stories for posterity, and to make sure that the world has access to those stories.

We're privileged today to be in the presence of a veteran, and we also have two guest members in the room. Dave, do you want to introduce yourself, just for posterity?

[Speaker 3]

Sure. I'm David Hearn. I'm the Executive Director of Blount Mansion.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. Chad?

[Speaker 3]

I'm Chad Rogers, retired Army.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. And, sir, do you want to give us your name and rank?

[Speaker 1]

Well, there's a story behind this rank. As I go along, I'll tell. But my name is William Paul Phelps, and my highest rank was T-5.

But I was in a jeep accident. I was in the occupation, German occupation, from May the 8th, 1945, when the war in Germany surrendered. And this happened while I was in the occupation, in Lofa, Austria, changing the governments and stuff like that.

So, I was riding with a staff sergeant, who was a sergeant of the Guard, and he wrecked the jeep with me. And I got a skull fractured, and I wore a platinum plate in the left side of my head now. So, that's how I was.

[Speaker 2]

Just your name and rank?

[Speaker 1]

But, I was on guard. He was going to put two guards at the rest camp that was on top of a mountain, at the mountain. And there used to be a TV sanatorium before the wars.

We cleaned it up and made a rest camp, because our officers were busy with interpreters at the courthouses, or who was going to run the government. We were just studying films and stuff of the Pacific, what we was going to run into when we got there. So, I wasn't on guard then, but the two guards that he was leaving up there had permission to stay for a week.

And he was going to be driving back by himself, and he asked me if I would go with him to be accompanied to come back inside the Guard. And they built some SS troops in the mountains here that I'm talking about. But, none, nobody was hooked in our battalion that I knew of.

But, anyway, we just didn't like to be by ourselves at the Guard, personally. Because that's when they'd done our duties at the Guard. And then they'd go in the mountains in the caves and stuff and hide.

We had stories of it, but I don't know nothing personal about that. When we got almost up above the timber line, he had a patch of ice. It was the 25th of July, nice and warm down there, but when we got up top, there was ice and snow on the ground.

And he had a slip place, and we had the windshield laid down on the hood and tied down, like we did a lot in combats and all. And the dashboard was a high sling, no seatbelts. Next thing I know, I was laying on my stomach on the hood, on the windshield, laid down on the hood, trying to get ahold of something, and my fingernails were scratching the windshield glass.

And I never felt nothing hit me. I went on off the side, and it went over the whole of me. So, long story short, I wound up, and I was in Paris in the hospital when they dropped the first atomic bomb.

And then the girl, the nurse, it was, my heart was down below my earlobes on the right side. On the left side, my face had longer beard than my eye. It shaved it, and it put me into a myriad of joints, and operated on me.

It took most of the night, they said. I didn't know about that. But anyway, later in the hospital, they told me that some of my fragments of my skull was about the consistency of cornmeal.

And they had to wash it out from my brain. And my speech was, I had to talk real slow. Women could just, some words I couldn't even say.

It messed up my speech on the left side of the speech notes. But that come back and got rid of it.

[Speaker 3]

Well, if we can jump back, where were you born?

[Speaker 1]

I was born in Clayton County, Tennessee, New Towson.

[Speaker 3]

1925?

[Speaker 1]

In 1925, June the 15th, 1925, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Can you tell us a little bit about that area that you grew up in?

[Speaker 1]

Well, it was this foreign country, and we had a plow of mules and about three cows most of the time for milk. And chickens were running all over the hill. You didn't know how many you had.

You can part the bush and find nests that they'd sowed out. You had to sow the eggs away. You didn't know how many.

It could be nine a month or a week or what. But we would always leave two or three and mark them with a pencil. So if you took them all out, they'd quit the nest.

If you leave two or three in there, they'd come back and keep laying. And then we'd go to that nest where they'd get a fresh egg. But it was all work.

They had lots of dogs. But we was close. I had one brother and three sisters.

There was five children. And every one of us, we wasn't big enough to take a hoe in our hand. We couldn't.

It was too heavy for us. So Dad had a blacksmith to make us a little boy's hoe. My dad was afraid we'd cut the corn down.

He'd make us get in the bulk between the two rows and cut the reeds. And I cut closer. So that's how I was taught to work.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have any family members in the military? Was your dad in the military?

[Speaker 1]

No, I was the only one. My brother Roy took TV when he was a sophomore in high school. And he had scars on his lungs.

And they brought him in for that. And I had one brother and three sisters.

[Speaker 2]

Did you enlist in the military?

[Speaker 1]

No, I was drafted. Yeah, I was drafted.

[Speaker 2]

Do you remember when you were drafted?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. I was sworn in in the armory in Baltimore, Maryland. I was enlisted on my birthday on June the 15th.

And at Delta Ward 24, a suburb, as in Westport, a suburb of Baltimore. On September the 18th, on June the 15th, I was 18 years old. And on September the 18th, I was sworn in in the armory there.

[Speaker 3]

In Baltimore, you said?

[Speaker 1]

Huh?

[Speaker 3]

In Baltimore?

[Speaker 1]

In Baltimore, yeah. And they gave me three weeks' time to do my business there. And I reported back to Fort Meade, Maryland.

And they put us on a plane about a week later. And they filled my car with beds. And I was like, the next morning, we was on a side trip.

What's that?

[Speaker 3]

Something for the nurses. Something for the nurses.

[Speaker 1]

I've never heard that before. I've been here a year. I've never heard that.

But anyway. So how did you feel about being drafted? Oh, I was angry about it.

My grandpa was a deputy sheriff and waited on the courts. And he, the man of the draft board, told him if I would come back home from Baltimore and get on the farm, it would be no trouble to get me deferred. And I said, well, after the war, I'll be afraid to say hello to some of my buddies, what they think of me.

I don't want to fight for my country. But I'd just been married about five months. And that was the hardest thing, leaving my wife that way.

But no, I didn't try to evade it at all. In fact, I kindly enjoyed it. I miss my family and my home.

But I tried to make the best of it. I liked it.

[Speaker 2]

What did your family think when you told them you were drafted?

[Speaker 1]

Well, they wanted me. See, my grandpa told my dad, if you have problems, we was living in a one-room efficiency apartment thing in Baltimore. And I was working in Baltimore.

It was in the shipyards in Baltimore. And I thought, before I get me in the shipyards, maybe I will get deferred. I actually wasn't trying to jump in.

But I didn't go to a state home since I just was married. Because I was not a local. My old boy was out of state.

They got to be quick, you know, the way it is, to get the number. So I managed to get on the train that way. The next morning at daylight, we looked out.

We was on the side track, way out in the country. And it was from Fort, right north of the county. And that's where you did your basic training?

Yeah, that's where I done my basic training. I had 17 weeks basic training. Then they gave me a 10-day delay and left to go.

They pulled back to Baltimore. But they gave me 10 days so I could go home. And they pulled it on 10 days.

And that happened. And we got on, and the ship was backlogged all the way on up to Camp Stannis. And we took seven more weeks of training, of combat training.

After what we done, we was firing the 155 houses and the old 1970 models. And we would bring some of the infantry at the observation point and set an old jeep or truck or something out there in the field and show them how we could do with artillery to it. And they thought we was, you know, behind the lines at restaurants or something, you know.

But we showed them how many rounds it took to kind of make that thing into this, you know.

[Speaker 2]

So you're drafted into the Army. You go to basic training at Fort Brown. Are you listening to the radio?

And are you hearing the president talk about the war?

[Speaker 1]

Maybe sometimes there'd be something wrong. But I was too busy trying to do what they wanted me to do. I don't remember having a radio in the barracks or wherever it was at.

I don't think I paid much attention to what radio had come on the radio. I was really busy, you know, trying to do what commands we had from the sergeants and so forth.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have an opinion about the war?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, no, I wouldn't feel like that.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, oh, yeah. I mean, yeah. And the more you thought of Hillary from him and thought about him, the more some of you wanted to try to get him, too, you know.

[Speaker 3]

It's a good motivation.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, no, I had no doubts with it. And I know now that we have a soldier that never took a nose. And he's up there.

It says in the Bible, you know, if you're good to the Jews, I'll be good to you. And if you're not good to them, I won't be good to you. I'll be bad to you.

Well, if you kill six million of them, you're not being good to them, are you? And so I know in Bastogne, maybe seven roads come into Bastogne. And sometimes there'd be one or two columns of tanks coming down one or two of those roads.

Well, we just had 11,000. Our line was surrounded with maybe a few strikers from the 28th and the 106th and a few of them ground divisions that couldn't get out of it. And they got cut off and out with us.

But, but, oh, man. I'm just, I don't know what else I want to say.

[Speaker 2]

You're welcome. So we were at basic training, Fort Bragg. Did you go to airborne training after that?

[Speaker 1]

No, no, no. Or did you get re-deployed? I'll clear this up.

I didn't have an airborne training. That's all the basic training I got.

[Speaker 3]

OK.

[Speaker 1]

And we— When did you go into the artillery? We went, yeah, we went from— We shot for those infantry boards for seven weeks. And then the Camp Miles Sandwich Massachusetts put a bunch of them on the boat.

And we went to Camp Miles Sandwich and got our shots. And then we went, got on a train and got down to the busy parts of town on the train, down to the ship. And the next morning, just as daylight, we pulled out of Boston.

And we all could get up. There's 23,000 of us on the USS Wakefield. And I got lucky enough to get a place to stand up on the top deck.

And I thought I'd stand up on what's the coastline of Merlin, I mean of Massachusetts, as long as I could see it spectrally.

[Speaker 3]

How did that make you feel?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I didn't— By that time, I was already, you know, somebody was on this boat. A lot of us, you didn't go see this shoreline no more. And I say, you know, I was raised a Christian and I've always been one, but I've not lived with all of that in my life.

But that's one time you get down on Merlin and face anybody that fought in the Air Force combat and didn't say, oh Lord, help me. I'll say you were telling my story.

[Speaker 2]

And did you go across the Atlantic Ocean to England?

[Speaker 1]

We landed in England in May before.

[Speaker 3]

May of 44?

[Speaker 1]

Huh?

[Speaker 3]

May of 44?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, yeah. It was May 4 of the June 4, yeah. And at that time, a lot of troopers didn't have to volunteer.

Jumpers had to volunteer. And when we got to England, they put us on a train and took us to a replacement depot. And because 139 men in B battery was a man for every job, they drug 11 replacements, these recruits.

And I had never seen a glider. They were hardly going to want to iron me out. I fought at that time.

[Speaker 3]

Had you ever flown before?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, I've flown. Yeah, I've flown. I've flown a little proper cruisers.

Bacteria and, you know, once a July and stuff like that. But I've never flown in a big commercial plane before. I went by myself.

I was probably in grammar school when I first started. There was a real tendency in Henry County.

[Speaker 3]

But never a glider, though?

[Speaker 1]

No, no. Then when June 6th comes, because there were so many big ships out there, that you could almost walk from England to France 21 miles across, wherever you crossed at. Some of them ships had 16, 14, and 12-inch guns.

We had a little 105. Well, then it was a French 75. In Normandy, we used a French 75.

We had a little pea shooter. And we didn't go with gliders. So we got on the overseas.

And Susan B. Anthony had all of our guns on it, and jeeps. And we was on a different ship.

And he'd hit a mine in the channel. And all the spaces on the beach had gone up on the sand, and then it was tied to the raft. And they couldn't move, and there was nowhere.

They could have took it and saved the ship, but there was nowhere to pull it in on the beaches. It all was stuck up. And the tide was out then.

And they were in the floating. They were sitting on the sand there. And they had the—
When we got our guns and jeeps off, they tied—they chained them and took two-and-a-half-ton trucks and pulled them.

They went—they drove them off till they died. And they put plastic hoses on the cargo heads and sealed them. And I don't know, I'd say four or five feet high.

And, you know, all you could see. They said—see, I wasn't out. I was on a different ship.

But I was in this part, I guess. All you could see was that pipe was sticking above the water. But they sealed it out, and they chained them and pulled them up on the beach.

It was two-and-a-half-ton Jimmie trucks. I read that sometime or other. And I don't remember what it said, I think.

[Speaker 3]

So you all came ashore on Utah Beach?

[Speaker 1]

Is that right? Yeah, we was on Utah and Omaha. I get mixed up with just the one that didn't have a roof.

[Speaker 3]

Utah.

[Speaker 1]

The farthest left, if you're looking, coming in on your right, it had the roofs. You had to go—well, you had the sand, though, before we landed there.

[Speaker 2]

And so— Did you have a sense of the importance of this mission? Did you have a sense of you being part of something true?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I knew there was something scary as a devil about it. But, I mean, you just— Somebody asked me about how I was best at it, and I said, well, I was best at it when I was in the Aviation Institute. I started getting sucked, and I started to feel a reasonable amount of it.

[Speaker 3]

What was your job on your gun crew?

[Speaker 1]

I wasn't on the gun. I was a duty soldier. That's what somebody just told me.

I was a duty soldier. Well, the longest trip I made, when we went to Holland, me and one more guy in the pilot had telephone— spoons of telephone wire and stuff and loaded us into a fleet. And they said they needed a truck driver, and asked for volunteers.

And I said, no, it's good when it drives. And I volunteered fast. And they picked me, and I took a two-and-a-half-ton truck loaded with one or five pallets of ammunition.

That's the M3 it was. One or five M3. Anyway, it didn't have as much powder.

I think we just had charge four. And the artillery and the ground artillery had charge seven, you know, that way. And so we was close.

[Speaker 3]

You were more close to four.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we was always right behind them all. We received a couple thousand rounds. Where we could hide our guns, you know.

We had six pouches for the regular ground. They had four in plain, you know. There weren't five thousand.

They had four, and they had two batteries. That's what we had. You know, so we just had two batteries.

In the battalion, we had two batteries and a headquarters in service, that way. And those three batteries, they were made up of 907s. We just had it in that way.

[Speaker 2]

So when you take us back to England, are your officers telling you this is what you're going to be doing? Are you volunteering for certain actions and dropping behind?

[Speaker 1]

Everybody did it. I did it. Just threw up one of them things on a package line, see.

And actually, I never did go to combat. That's... We just went to Holland, and those guys, the Japs and the other battalions, went regardless of them.

But for some reason, I don't know why, they don't tell you nothing. Of course, you ask no questions. If you did, you wouldn't get no answer anyway.

But our whole battalion went by LST boats. And when I got shot down, I mean, got hit, what happened to hit the...

[Speaker 3]
Hit the mine?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, hit the... The German bomb, and I got up and sunk. There was a...

I was a tall old man. I wasn't... But anyway, that's something.

My folks had a great-uncle lived in Portland, Oregon. He kept trying to get some of us Tennesseans out there. And he fell on this idea to, like my dad, and say, Ed, why don't you come out, get your family, and come on out here.

Your kids can work in the fields where they grow beans and tomatoes and stuff. And where they can, and they can pick beans and stuff. And you could...

Roy was getting all his TV produced, and he could kind of work some. He could get a job at something, and you could... The shipyards would need you for sure.

And... But if you're staying back there, all you're doing is just hacking out a living, maybe getting some food to eat and some clothes to wear, and you're not helping this country a bit. And Paul's over there fighting.

My dad got working on that. He had an auction sale, and sold everything out the vault. He sold every chicken, everything.

And Mom sold all the furniture, even sold the vegetables and jellies and stuff she had in the basement, that she canned. And they caught a train and went out there. You know, there still are.

I'm about the only one back there. I'm the last one alive. My three sisters and brothers died.

Of course, Mom had been there a long time. So I'm the only one in the family. But I've got California and Washington and Oregon.

I could buy a meal every day down there with the nieces and nephews. They call me more from Oregon and Washington and California now than they do from Knoxville. That's about it.

They... Jody sends the pictures out there on a smartphone, you know, to them. And they can't believe it.

They think we're a manufacturer in some of them stores we're sitting in.

[Speaker 2]
So your family moved to Portland, Oregon.

[Speaker 4]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

And they're writing you letters about this in England. Hey, we're going out to Oregon. Yeah, yeah.

What did you think? Did you think then, well, after the war, I'm going to go to Oregon?

[Speaker 1]

I didn't... We went to Oregon, actually. But we come back here.

When I was discharged, we come back and bought us a little house in Knoxville here on Scott Street out Central Avenue. And... And my oldest daughter was...

About a year later, I was discharged on the 18th of October, and she was born on the 12th before. But I almost waited a year before I had a baby when they called. So I went to work, you know.

Well, I'll bet you did. But she was eight months old, and my mom couldn't... I was the first grandchild.

I was the only one married in that family. I was a child. I was five children.

So my mother couldn't wait. Her and my baby sister got a Greyhound bus. They come back on the Greyhound bus just to see her.

And they talked us into renting our house. We put... It was a five-room.

We put all the furniture in one room and put padlocks on it and rented a four-room spot. And I drove a 36-gear cab.

[Speaker 3]

That was a long trip.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it was a long trip. It took about, I think, four or five days. Wait for yourself to deny it.

[Speaker 2]

We're going to have another drink. We can wait. So you're in England, and your family's telling you, hey, we're going to move.

We're going to leave. We're selling everything, all the chickens, all mom's jellies, and we're going to move the whole family out. Were you angry at your family for doing that, for leaving the family farm?

[Speaker 1]

No, I was rich in my mother's life.

[Speaker 3]

It was a good opportunity.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. In fact, it was a heck of a ride, too. I welcomed it.

I didn't think badly about it, by the way.

[Speaker 2]

So your uniform's next to you, sir. Well, that's not my uniform. Oh, okay.

[Speaker 1]

That's... There's a gentleman who lives up between here and the Clinton Highway. What's that road?

Anyway, he lives there, and he just comes down here. He's retired from 31 years in the Army, and he comes down here and just visits. And there's Sam.

Some people were saying for us up in the dining room here, and he walked up the hall and seen this calf. Four of those years, he was in the 82nd Airborne, and he didn't say why. It was just four years, but he said he was...

He had his jump wings and stuff, you know. He was a jumper. But anyway, somebody, I was sitting there listening to Sam.

Somebody had come up behind me, and they started to tap me on the shoulder and said, Would you come out in the hall with me? I'd like to talk to you. And so I said, Sam was done over and gone at the last of the hour, and he was still sitting there talking.

And the next day, he came back to see me the next day in my room. And that day, he brought me a canteen cup that's a aluminum cup that you set your canteen in, and you put them in a pouch, a pistol pouch, you know. Well, anyway, he brought me just a cup for that.

And the next time he came, he brought this. He went to a surplus store and bought that. And I don't know where he got all this stuff, but this coat, all these original buttons, but that one, and that was missing.

He bought one then and put it on there. But I had the ribbons for these stuff here, for most of it, but I had never seen them ever. And of course, this one was for France, and this one was for Belgium, I believe.

And he was a sergeant major, and he said that was one of his jobs. So if anybody got any kind of medals, to see if they issued them medals.

[Speaker 2]

Do you remember some of the ribbons that you got?

[Speaker 1]

These here, this one. It says on there, but my eyes won't let me see. See, here's my Guadalupe wings.

I have my Guadalupe wings. And this one, this was a European theater. It's green and white.

See, that's, I just had the ribbon that you, that was like this. See, that's the president. That's the president's citation up there.

Yeah. This is the president's citation. And I had.

[Speaker 3]

Presidential unit citation.

[Speaker 1]

Huh? Presidential unit citation.

[Speaker 3]

Unit citation, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

I got that, yeah. And this, and this, and what it tells, World War II. That's a good, that was a good conduct for one of them.

Other than this war.

[Speaker 3]

World War II right there?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. And this is from diving. I load the ammunition from England, putting it on the LST, and going to France, and going on into Holland, diving it to Holland.

From England to Holland, I hauled a two and a half ton GMC from a trailer. Both of them loaded with, both of them loaded with, With ammo? With ammo, yeah.

That's a risky job.

[Speaker 2]

This was for supplying the forces at D-Day?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. No, that was in, yeah, that was in Holland, the base. D-Day is what we call Normandy.

and, see, this was, this was in September 18th. It was September 18th. Yeah.

But, when we invaded Holland, it was two, 82nd and 101st Airborne, and Americans, two British, and a, and a Canadian, I think that was the rest.

[Speaker 3]

Polish?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 3]

Polish.

[Speaker 1]

About 60,000 troops jumped into Holland. We fought there 73 days under Montgomery. We drank old rotten tea, and, and, and eat ox tail stew, and, and Irish stew.

One of them had just a few potatoes, and a whole lot of carrots. Another one had a whole lot of potatoes, and, and, and just a few carrots. That's the biggest, and the meat was a coarse grain.

I don't know what it was. Somebody, they, the one, the one we got around, it was, it was put up in Argentina, and they said it's, but, it isn't anywhere some wild animals. They said something, it wasn't, I forgot what it was, but it wasn't beef, they said.

[Speaker 2]

How did you get that GMC truck from England over to Holland?

[Speaker 1]

Well, you know, I had never been in the front seat of one of them at that time. I didn't know where the goods was. I didn't even have a driver's license.

Old Sam, my buddy, I, I met him in a fight. That's another story long one. I don't know if you need to hear it.

I just, I mean, maybe I better tell you something about it. He was our first truck. It's, it's, and the L10 was across us from Battery Street from where our mine was, and, and we, they let us out about 30 minutes out of the place early to go and kind of brush clothes on and follow up for inspection.

And then we'd go from there to even for supper and eat with a dress clothes on. It's a mess hall. and I'd, I'd went to the shower house.

There was constant huts in the shower house and the auditorium and the dispensary and different things like that. But the rest of us was in tents, you know, about, I think, 12, 15 beds in each tent and four animal tents. I, when you first stepped in the door of the tent, I was first bunk.

And it was made out of two or fours. It was a straw that's clamped down in the sheets and it's a mattress, you know. but I, I found an old wooden box that something was shipped in, made me a footlocker out of it and set it at the foot of my bed.

And I was sitting on that trying on my jump boots. The jumpers had to fit because they issued us jump boots and we wanted jumpers, you know. You know, that's the truth, don't you?

Well, after Normandy, they was glad to give us little boots because he said, I've had one or two of them say, just a smoke screen that you get us across one of them fields where, in the woods there's, there's thick wood Germans and you shot them smoke screens over there

and we made it to the other side. Anyway, that was worth your, you know, I don't more about that smoke screen. that's, that's, what did you do?

Well, if they'd been from there, there's a wood there like in a pasture field or something, they go from, from one place where they can hide and cover out in the open, and we hit them with a shell just like the high, the high,

[Speaker 3]
high explosive shells,

[Speaker 1]
they, they throw the fog, you know, just like if they didn't make artificial fog and they could get in that and, and, you might, they might run out of it once in a while, but that, that got a lot of them over without getting shot at because they couldn't see them, you know, but they, but anyway, they, they'd seen then that we, we, we hit them more than we hurt them at all.

[Speaker 2]
So, where were you at and what were you doing at that particular moment?

[Speaker 1]
We were different. The things, I was ...

[Speaker 4]
...

[Speaker 2]
That's right. Take your time. You haven't had another drink of water.

[Speaker 1]
I was, I was a duty soldier. I might have been going to or to get, with a jeep and a little quarter-ton trailer, get more ammunition for those guns, or I might have been going to the water point getting plastic sets. We didn't use water guns, we used plastic sets.

And they'd hold five gallons, but you'd fold, and you'd feel them, you'd fold it down about twice, and there's a clamp you put on, and they'd come off from a parachute through your hand, or anything, I'd say, that way. And when you'd go, I'd come back to the guns, and I'd put off one limb to each one, and if it's cold, you can take your bandaid off your pistol belt, and chop you some ice, and put it in that canteen cup, like you brought me, just exactly like that. You could put it in that, and put it on that little pump-up shoulder, if you ever had one of them little pump-up shoulders, and you could melt that ice, and it gets you a drink of water, or wash your face, or whatever you want to do, so that way it's safe.

[Speaker 3]
So your main job, in the end- I was a duty soldier.

[Speaker 1]
If they had a, I've done this time or two, maybe a message sealed, and they'd want everybody at the headquarters about to get to them, and they didn't want to put it on the radio, or something, like that it'd be picked up, they'd give it to me, and I'd deliver it the way I see how. And I think we had one of the boys, all he done was that way, and he rode a

Christmas scooter, and I drove a Jeep, and rode a little trailer, and I'd get five gallon cans of gas, or against the water, the truck that purified the water, it looked like a cement mixer, and it was just turning all the time, see? And you'd go, and you'd just fill up them bags, and you'd throw them in the trailer, just like a four-wheeler, or something, stack them in there.

[Speaker 3]

Did you carry a sidearm, or did you carry a rifle?

[Speaker 1]

I carried an M1 rifle.

[Speaker 3]

M1 rifle?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it's got a little small, it's not about a little bigger than a .38 pistol's body.

[Speaker 3]

Oh, an M1 carbine?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. The carbine? Yeah, the carbine, yeah.

In fact, I've got one, I gave it to my great-grandson, he killed a deal with it up on a farm in Claiborne County, I just gave that to him.

[Speaker 3]

My grandpa gave me his.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I gave it to him, I loaned it to him, he grew up around here, he killed a deal with it, and I gave it to him, and he's got it now.

[Speaker 3]

That's excellent.

[Speaker 2]

You mentioned several times trucking supplies and ammo. Yeah. Were you attached to an ordnance group?

[Speaker 1]

No, I was, no. They mostly colored those trucks to the seaport, and they'd come as far to a certain place, and unloaded, and we went there with jeeps and trailers, let the windshield down, and if it was a hedgerow, you could get pretty close to the guns. All else, we had to do that overnight, and pack them up enough ammo and carbine to do it.

Would you guess how many rounds we fired in hauling in 72 days?

[Speaker 3]

5,000.

[Speaker 1]

27,600 and something.

[Speaker 3]

And every one of those had to come from the dumps to the forward areas.

[Speaker 1]

That's right here in this book, I'll show it to you in a minute. I didn't know we had kept no count like that, but when they released us from hauling, we finally got, we got them to let us loose, and relieve us, we come back to the farm. We walked back to the farm, probably a half a mile from the front lines, and waited on trucks to come, convoy trucks to haul us out of there.

This is a farm in Holland? Yeah, this is in Holland, in Holland. Well, I left to skip some of them, I guess, and on the 17th, or 18th, 17th, that's how we do it, in September, that's when they invaded Holland, and we got out of there, we got our Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday after the soldiers gave us Thanksgiving, and on Sunday we ate our Thanksgiving turkey, and we just got back from hauling, to Montmelon, France.

That's over Fort Montmelon, it was a World War I French Army base that they built in World War I.

[Speaker 3]

Did all of the 101st go to Montmelon, or did they divide you up?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I don't know, all of the battalions, you know, there wouldn't be 11,000 in that one fort, I don't have any desire to go to that. I didn't even know where all our artillery was at, let's just, you know, for the infantry, we sometimes, if the 501st needed us, we'd back them up, and the 506th, and the 503rd, and the, I don't know, yeah, the 501st, and the 306th, it was, we supported all three of them at different times, you know, that way. In fact, in Bastogne, we'd be firing that way, supporting one, and they'd all want to come tanks behind us, and we had to, before you put your trail for the kick of shock, where you put it around, all around, we had to dig that trench all the way around, because we might be, and they, the German assaults, because we had that little M3 short barrel, so we could get in the grotto, and then have, you know, they thought we was tanks, the Germans thought we was tanks, and that's why they went, the tank commander, one of them, as this book tells us, he pulled back and went in the cave and slept, but you got a good night's sleep, and that gave us time to get, when we first went in, you know, because they thought there was a lot of tanks, and it was foggy, and it was snowing, too, and it was so foggy, you couldn't see over 40 or 50 feet, and so I, he was afraid we'd run into a bunch of tanks down there, and it was just, it was just our one of five houses, you know, and they cracked it from a gun, well, I guess it was the same two, probably, that they used on, but they mistook them for something, so they just faced some tanks.

[Speaker 3]

Well, let me ask you, you said you went into, you went into reserve at Mormillon, when did you figure out that they were gonna let, well, I knew, when did they set you to move to Bastogne? From Mormillon to Bastogne.

[Speaker 1]

Well, when we come out of the hole, and I can say it was, it was the 30th of November when we, hey, we got back one or two days before that, and on the 16th or 17th of December, we thought we was out for the winter, we wouldn't have to go until the summer come, but we was gonna set, move our takeoff point from England to France then, so we had airports and that, but we wasn't in no hurry, we was just resting in, and we was gonna have a big football team that's used up A by then, B by then, and have us a football game for Christmas. Well, on the, I think it was the 16th, it was the 16th, wasn't it, when they started, I believe it was about, on the 17th, well, they woke us up about two in the morning and said, be ready to roll by certain time, I said daylight, but maybe it wasn't daylight, maybe it was noon or something. Very short amount of time.

They gave us about time to be ready to roll, and the Germans had broke through up in Belgium, and so I was lucky enough, it was raining, and I was lucky enough to get in the truck and have a cup of coffee and all that, but I seen some of them 18-wheelers were just like on the road, with a big long cattle rack on the flatbed, and soldiers standing cheek-to-cheek, and it just pouring rain, and it got cold and it got to snowing later. I don't know how them poor boys, but I was in the back of a truck, and everybody could get in the back of that, I think it was a ton and a half or something about that size, it was a smaller truck, and I credit that same old boy that knocked me coming out of that tent, when I was trying to shine my boots for inspection, and I got sidetracked on that one.

[Speaker 2]

Sir, you've been holding this book this whole interview. Did you want to share that with us?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, sure.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, this, that was our handle.

[Speaker 1]

This is Hogan. Hogan, when they started the hauling, they were running to follow on this channel, and Hogan and one or two of these other boys, I forget some of their names, but I know old Hogan real good. He looks like a big guy.

Yeah, and he refused to go, finally, but they, last round got him a may rest. When they got going to cross the channel, they got in that thick fog, and all at once, their tow rope, instead of being straight ahead of them, it went back over to the side and over the wing, and it was jerking them sideways that way, but there's four of our riders that had to ditch in the channel, and his did, and they was, so many boats and stuff going over there. Somebody said, we didn't lose a man.

But there's a picture of them, three or four of them laying on the wing of one of them.

[Speaker 3]

Now, you guys, they were Waco gliders?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, Waco. Waco gliders? C4Js, CJ4.

C4Js, CJ4. This is Colonel Nelson, and this is us out, but there's all these pictures. This is a gun crew, and this guy right here was a, he was a sergeant with a gun, and that was Colonel Nelson.

He was a, you know, Colonel of the top, of 907th Field Artillery. That's the gun we had. These are all boys.

This was the last boy, right here, John. He was the last boy that got killed in Battle of the Bee. He was all of our friends, and he was a, that was, them three up there was in his forward observer.

This guy, I don't know how he got in there, but this is his picture with his nephew and niece on his last furlough home before they went to England. Of course, that's him there, and, but- He said he was killed at the Battle of the Bee. But he was, he was up there directing fire for us, and the 88 shells started falling, and them two were both from the same foxhole, and he started to it, and he thought, well, we're going to be too crowded, all three of us, now, and he chose one, this little farther, where the 88 shell hit in the tree above him, and he'd hit him about the navel and split it open, put him up to his chest, and he died instantly. That's John, but he's shown them several other times, but this, this is this man, and there's one or two of A Battalion.

This is when they first got there. That gal was, she was on Dutch Underground, and, but, let's see, my, my glasses, my eyes- She's one of the few women in these, in these pictures. Yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Do you remember her?

[Speaker 1]

Was she important? I never met her myself, no, not, not, but I, I heard a lot about her. This is, this is, this is our captain.

He's a Battalion B, every man is a sheriff. He's a captain, and this is his jeep driver, and this is, this, this is the pilot of this glider right here, and that's, they was right there on this, and after this, when this picture was made, they got in this glider, and this is another, and he's got a good picture. Yes, sir.

There's a, there's a plane that's towing this, this is from the glider. We're higher, we fly higher than the tow plane does, so. You, you, you, sir, do you want me to hold that for you, or I, I, I, it's not easy.

Well, you can just, you can just turn it, and I can tell you, you can hold it. Yes, sir, yeah, I can do that. This is Lieutenant Danverney, and there's Joe, right around with a Dutch girlfriend.

And, well, I, this one, one of these, Vultberg, he was, I can't see their face good enough to tell you which one it is, but one of them, Vultberg, and he was a good friend of mine, and this guy's name right here is Googly Minio. Googly? Googly Minio.

From New York? I'd say, where you from? Oh, maybe I better not say it, I'll miss that.

[Speaker 4]

I'll miss that.

[Speaker 1]

I forgot, this is, this is A Battery's tent. Back behind the lines, they can make coffee or something if they got it, or whatever, but that shows them how muddy it was. And these are, I done this over nights.

That's either a 30 or a 50-caliber. Most of, most of them are 30s, and here's two. I bet you our guns will sit right in them woods out there somewhere.

Well, that's another one of our forward observers that went in our little plane, and he lost his, got lost and got a little far, too far in over the Germans, and they shot him down, but that's the other one. They had two of them, and they killed, that guy got killed. That's part of the gun crew there.

I used to know part of the name. This is Marmorom Fence, that's Fort Marmorom up there where we lived from that place right there when we went to, when we went to, to Bastogne. That's where they woke us up and told us to be ready.

And that's, that's the kind of vehicles that I, you know, had to cover, that I got to ride in. They don't show one of them big cattle truck things, and this is a 105 this way, and that's, he's got a shell fixing there. It tells you down there what you're doing.

You're fixing to load that for another one to go away. Birkhead, and one of these boys here, his name, that's Hogan Montley, is that, and I showed you where it wouldn't, he wouldn't go back. What happened to Hogan, when they, when they got, picked him up, put your oil in the boat or a plane, seaplane, they took him out to, I don't know what that's called.

I don't know what it's called in English. And they got four riders and loaded him, and about four or five days later, they just fixed him to send him back. And he didn't have a life jacket, and they left him.

And he said, he was ordered by two or three officers, and one of them was, it wasn't a service, he was a captain, I don't know which one it was, so they sent him down to Georgia. And he knows enough Army law that says you can refuse to go back into battle if you've not got the right equipment, and if you ain't got the full equipment. And that's why I refused.

I don't have no life jacket. And they said, oh, you won't need one of these. I did a while ago, the other day, when I got one down, I'll not go if I get one.

Now, I think that every, how often everybody went to hunting for a life jacket, so they got him one, and then he went. But after he made that kind of a deal, he kind of put himself up a notch, everybody kind of saluted him. But that's a weapon.

Yeah, that's the one. That's the one over there, see? That's, it's 65 pounds, about that weight.

And that, it goes in there. And that, this, this is my stone. Our captain said, this is a railroad.

I want to build up the churchill. You know, build it high, that way for, I guess the ground is soft at times, and I said, but after Patton come and got us out, they sold us 19 turkeys in there in December, or January it was by that time, I think, before we got them. But I've slept, if the wind was blowing one way, I slept on one side of that building, and if it was coming up, I got around somewhere where there would be a wind wake for me, and I slept outside, that old barn thing.

Cold? Yeah, oh, I mean, it's cold all the time. My feet wouldn't warm up, and they're warm.

But when Captain McGowan got this sure, if the AGs were shooting at us, if it cleared the railroad tracks, it hit behind us. But if it was going to hit us, it hit the railroad tracks first. We didn't lose a man in that.

We didn't lose a man.

[Speaker 2]

Not a shell fell on our guns in that, no. I like this, use common sense. My wife tells me that all the time.

She does, use common sense. To all members of the American forces in the Bastogne area, use common sense.

[Speaker 3]

Do you remember when, was it General McAuliffe? Do you remember hearing about the surrender request? Yes.

Yeah, how did that, what did your friends and?

[Speaker 1]

That's the only crystal card I got.

[Speaker 3]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

I've got the original one, and it's from the same guy that's been resetting. Me and him made buddies, and he, I didn't know it, but my mother was a strict Christian and a real prayer. And she'd write me letters and say, you know, pray and trust in the Lord, and he'd bring you back, you know, and stuff that way.

Well, he, when I'd be out and doing my duty, he'd be at the kitchen somewhere, or maybe it was a day off, and he'd look through my, I'd save, put it in my backpack, my letters and read them over the next day or two at a time. And then when I'd get four or five, I'd write one of

them or a part of that, so. But he got Mama's address and seen how worried she was, and he wrote her a letter.

And they corresponded, but I didn't know it. They corresponded, yeah, he never let me see them or answer for my mother, and I don't have any letters back and forth that they wrote my mother, you know. But he promised her he'd watch after me.

He was from Louisiana, Kentucky, and when he was in high school or got out of high school, I believe he said one, him and a guy got in a fight. He's a fighter. He had, if you said fight, both hands went like this pretty quick, you know.

He's, but he had, he had double bones in his, I don't know, one I ever seen in my life, his ribs, and the outside ones come out like this, and if you hit him in them bones, your fists hurt, and he just laughed, yeah. But anyway, when he come in there, he walked in and I was popping that leg, sitting on that stool, on that old box, it was a footstool, where I kept my socks and that kind of thing, you know. And when he come in, I just, when he got in the door, I was the first one on the ride, and when he, when his body got, set the light off, I wasn't looking up where he was going, but the shadows changed back on him.

I looked up in his hand, and he just had a big grin on his face, and I just nodded at him and started to pop again. And I had, on that box right beside me, I had a brand new set of box of ox tail, I mean, shoe polish. Ox blood.

Yeah, yeah. I had a brand new, I just, I opened it, maybe that, well, it wasn't long, because I hadn't been there for a few days, maybe less than a week, I'd say. I had never spoke to him when this was done, because I'm a chatteler, I'm not the one with another pork chop or something.

But anyway, he took his hand and just hit it in there, which that way he had a handful of that shoe polish. And I had come from a shower place, about, it seemed like a quarter of a mile down there, and down through that little tents. But I'd just come from, oh, and I hadn't put my shoes on, I just hadn't, I'd just taken a shower, and I hadn't put my top shoe on or my under shoe.

He hit me right there on the neck, right there, with that, and come right around my face. And in 15 or 20 minutes, we was supposed to be having an inspection, I think. And it was that far before I could get any more water, and I just got around my canteen, and I knew that I was going to have to have a soap and everything to get that off.

So, when he done that, I stood up and made a haymaker out of him, and he just blocked it about halfway through. And when he did, he hit me right here in the chest, right down on my chin. He hit me so hard, I thought my thumb was hitting the line.

And I went, the back of the street out there was a wheat field before we moved in, and they made streets and put big blocks, big as a fist and bigger, and then rolled and rolled and rolled, and then put the final blocks. So, when he hit me, I landed out there in them blocks, almost all fours. When I come up, I had two of them biggest blocks that I could get.

And he was standing in the door of my tent, and then, and he's up back in that tent, and he see me as trapped, and he's down on his knees trying to get enough to roll out under, and that rock went that high above him, all the streets they were trying to get out of. He'd hit that canvas tent and pop like a shotgun. And I know that I couldn't follow him in, because I had to make time to get that stuff.

I couldn't, I don't know what that officer had done, but he seen the smile and stuff on my face.

[Speaker 3]

And his name, tell us his name again.

[Speaker 1]

His name was Cartman Williams. And we called him, we called him Slim. Yeah, he was six foot, two or three inches, and weighed 200 and some pounds, I forgot now.

But he loved to fight. How come him to be in the Army, when he's in high school, I broke away. When he's in high school, I just got out of high school, which is the graduate I fit.

He was in a fight with a boy, and the boy was getting the best of him. And he wouldn't take a weapon, he'd pull his knife out and cut him. And that's the end of the fight, of course.

And they tried him. The judge said, you got a yielding day in the pen, or take, join the Army. He said, I'll take the Army.

He was in the Army in peacetime, right from December the 7th, when the Japs attacked us. But his term hadn't been up yet. But he went to Cook and Baker School.

He was Staff Sergeant. Got in a fight with some boy, under his rank and stuff. And they busted him back to Coach Cook again.

He's still at Coach Cook. But anyway, but he come back to, in England, it got dark about, I'd say 11 o'clock or something like that, pretty close to midnight. And it was just getting a little fuzzy, a little, the sun was not going down.

Anyway, sure, he'd come back in a grin, and that same old braggart, you know. I said, yeah, walk it up towards me. And I said, don't bother me, I'm not mad at you.

Now get over and leave me alone. He said, no, I come to apologize. He said, he kept talking back at me.

He said, I'll tell you what, we're gonna have, so he said, we're gonna have a chicken tomorrow, and I've got it just laid out to starve down at the kitchen at Hesco down there. And I'll get us a nice chicken breast, I'll make us biscuits and scratch and chicken gravy, just as good as your mom could make it back home. I'd forgive somebody for that.

I, well I did, and I, but, when we got down there, he didn't tell me, well, then he didn't know about my mom, that was just from the beginning. And, but anyway, that, when he's off, and even when I was off, he was in my tent, well, his tent was straight across the street from mine, but they didn't have to follow up for no inspections or nothing, see. He was, I was his

day off, and he'd come out, he had old, dirty, fatigued zone, and he just looked like a bum almost, you know, but he had to clean up before he went to the kitchen tomorrow.

They, they went, yeah, they changed, these on-the-day and off-the-day, when they cooked, when they cooked and fed us out our dinner meal, our noon meal, they just left everything in the kitchen dirty and like it was when I left, and then they would come clean it up and start to supplement it, see.

[Speaker 2]

What do you remember about the food? Do you remember the food being scarce?

[Speaker 1]

Hard to come by? Not that, not that, that was before the invasion, see. That was a few days from, I mean.

[Speaker 3]

Tried to fade you all up.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, in May, yeah, they was feeding us good, you know, there, I didn't have nothing. The worst thing I had to feed the food was on the boat, going over and down in the replacement depot. I actually ate rat manure in my oatmeal.

[Speaker 3]

Oh, no.

[Speaker 1]

I had, the first morning, I could see brown streaks in the oatmeal, and it had just melted it all, you know. And I stood it up and finished eating it. The next morning, or maybe the second morning after that, it wasn't melted, and I could see like, well, I didn't eat no more of that.

I went to a PX and got me a whole box of Milky Ways, I believe it was, three mosquitoes or something. And all I do, I go to the coffee, it was outside the kitchen. I go and get my canteen full of coffee, come back and get me a couple of candy bars.

Somehow or another, what's that? Little coffee and sugar. Little sugar, you know, I couldn't think of a little sugar in that room, but that's it, that's it.

[Speaker 2]

What can you tell us about Bastogne?

[Speaker 1]

Bastogne, well, that was a hard thing. When we got there, I think it was 18th, we met. Well, we got, the Germans were trying to get to Bastogne because it had seven roads coming in and getting out of the township, so they had big tanks, the five, fours and five, whatever they called them.

And they was trying to get there so they could get on the seashore there. And that town, I can think of it 10 times and forget it once.

[Speaker 3]

Antwerp? I forgot, yeah. They were heading for Antwerp, I think.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, Antwerp, yeah, yeah. Well, anyway, the 25th Division and I think it's 106, 106 was involved, they was on each side of us. And we got there first and it was about two miles from Longview, it was coming down the road from Longview.

This is the 101st you're talking about? Yeah, the 101st got, we got, went in the city and they was about two hours away or something like that.

[Speaker 3]

The German spearhead was two hours?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, and they was called the tanks. It was infantry walking on and some people, some soldiers riding on the top of the tanks. And it was coming slow from Longview and then, I think they already took Longview but they was on the way to Bastogne.

And our captain and the colonel Ewell of the 501st, I believe you would say, 501st, I think. They got in a jeep and went ahead of us and when they spotted us up on the hill, they looked at them through the binoculars, come back, we was the first battalion, we were before a battalion, I'll say it that way. Then they stopped on one side of Bastogne and we was almost there, we were on two.

Instead of four, four you get railroad tracks or that stuff. And we started firing and after about an hour, less than an hour, they started retreating back into Longview, that's the way it was. And the next day or two when we got back to us, they hadn't picked up a dead outside.

And the people that was not able, ones that not able to get up and go, and the ones that was aided. And the rest of the time, we laid aided them down to the ground with our artillery. We was the only ones firing in that, so we would.

Because they didn't have anybody able to sit up.

[Speaker 3]

Did you destroy any tanks that day? Was it just infantry or did you destroy any of the tanks?

[Speaker 1]

See, I wasn't up with the infantry, I didn't see around the miles, but I know what happened, and I know what's in that book that I was reading about all of the sitting out there. Yeah, but I didn't see that. We weren't in sight of the Germans hardly ever.

There was one night, me and Sam, we was the first troop. Me and him stood guard together every night for either four, six, or eight hours. All my guns were on Colonel Nelson's building and he had him, his officers had their officers and stuff.

We, usually we got, we drew one of the guard, you know. He was a cook and I was a, they thought me, whatever you think of me as a duty soldier. I didn't know, I didn't know what it was until I got out and looked at my discharge.

And that's what some of them, they called me a duty soldier. Have you ever heard of them?

[Speaker 3]

Sounds like you were a jack of all trades.

[Speaker 1]

I've got it, you know, on my old discharge, it's on the floor. Would you like to see it?

[Speaker 3]

Yes, sir.

[Speaker 1]

We don't want to wear you out. Oh, I'll set you up the door. As long as I was, if you need a break or something.

I was, I was nervous. This, this was a way, when they told us, take your discharge and before you, the kind of folks, folks, have it put on a record die and have you a copy made and then put your, and this, this is four or five pieces in all of your, that you can kind of look through it, but I can, I can see it enough to see what.

[Speaker 2]

You want me to help you out, sir? Can you get that out of there? Absolutely.

All right, my hand. I can't even get things out of my wallet. Driver's license or whatever.

[Speaker 3]

Here, we'll use this.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, use that right there. We'll use this. No, you got that for me right there.

Yeah. You know what that means? I don't know.

You know, they want me to.

[Speaker 3]

It basically just says you're awesome.

[Speaker 1]

Is that what it says? That's what it says.

[Speaker 3]

Well. It's her achievement for being a who's who in Tennessee long-term care.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. That surprised me and I still didn't know what it was. See if it tells.

[Speaker 3]

Yeah, that's the top of it here. So Phelps William F. Oh, sorry.

William P. William P. And it's got your, let's see.

It's got your battery. It's got your intro and your discharge, I believe. Does that say duty soldier back there?

Yes, sir. Duty soldier three. So they must have different grades of duty soldiers.

[Speaker 1]

That's what makes it fast. Yeah.

[Speaker 3]

So is the T-5, is it technical?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, that's a corporal, that's what you get.

[Speaker 3]

Okay, I got you.

[Speaker 1]

That's it. So. That's it, yeah.

[Speaker 3]

So how did they, did they address you as corporal?

[Speaker 1]

No. I don't know if they addressed me for anything or not.

[Speaker 3]

Just use your last name and sent you somewhere.

[Speaker 1]

I don't remember if I do it. I got you. They didn't have it on my everyday clothes or my combat clothes or nothing like that.

I didn't ever ask, they'd just give me more pay before they got me, you know. See, when we first went in there, we didn't borrow no extra scrap pay. And we had no good business, just like the Jekylls.

They had the bombs here, but the artillery didn't. And they just paid us that even though they had 139 already for that, that they thought someone was going to get killed and there was going to be more. And about a month or something like that before, that's why they, they don't, they don't pay for them, but headquarters and everybody got what they wanted.

But we, when they went to Normandy, we had 150 they took instead of 139. And that way they could, they had some sort of help on that way.

[Speaker 2]

So you mentioned before, when you were discharged, you came home and you had a newborn daughter and you had to get a job. Were you in any of the post-war parades? No.

[Speaker 1]

Post-war parades, yeah, I've seen, I've seen, yeah, that's the day they don't engage me. That's the first time I've ever, and they brought me a post from here, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

And after the war, what did you think about the war?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I was glad we won that thing, I'll tell you that. I know that we needed it. We, we, we need to have, we had to, let's, yeah.

[Speaker 3]

Let me see your slip. I want to make sure this gets back where, is it on the floor or is this chair? No, over here.

I just want to make sure this gets put back right.

[Speaker 4]

Yeah.

[Speaker 3]

You mentioned the Pearl Harbor attack earlier. Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it was, we were on a farm and on Monday, before I knew about it, and we was helping, well, we had tobacco that we grew up, we grew up, we, they just let you have a lot, a lot, some of that tobacco, you know. And we was only allowed to grow six tenths of an acre, whole, whole yard of water, you hear me? Yes, sir.

I don't know if that's it.

[Speaker 4]

No, no.

[Speaker 1]

The McKenzie's had about a 200 acre farm and a lot of pull in the courthouse. And they had about two acres. And we'd rent a half acre or an acre or something.

I think one year it was one acre and another two or three years it was just a half acre. We was either over at their farm working on that tobacco or we would do the work for them on the farm. If we had time, we had our chores all up and our crops all tilled and everything.

And Ms. McKenzie was a witty woman and she had no way a dog would live with her. And so they took the Knoxville Journal. We didn't even take a paper.

We didn't have, my dad never did take a paper. We didn't have no electricity. We didn't have no radio or nothing.

We didn't know it till we was there and the postman come and he brought a list of these paper.

[Speaker 2]

Knoxville Journal, that's what you read about?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, it was on Monday. I threw it out on Sunday. So I was the first to know about it.

And so, of course, in 41, I was born in 25, but maybe in what, 16 or something like that. A couple more years and I was doing, I had two, three, four.

[Speaker 3]

When did you first learn about the Germans' treatment of the Jews?

[Speaker 1]

I don't even remember when that would be. Was that prior to the Army or after you? No, I didn't know anything about it prior to.

We had no radio or nothing. I mean, the outside world. But you could walk and get back a certain time as far as we went away from home.

And you didn't get to four or five houses till that time. That's, houses were that scarce in the country. A lot of people had 200 acres or 150 acres or 100 acres.

It was about six miles on a chassis. But we was just allowed, the chassis was allowed.

[Speaker 2]

After the war, what did you do? What was the job that you got when you got out?

[Speaker 1]

I went in the sales because I was real, my nerves were bad and everything at that time. And I didn't get a job, but I just went down to get some kind of a little job. I discharged from Kennedy General Hospital with a total disability, disabled, 100% disabled.

But 100% disabled, that was just \$115.

[Speaker 3]

115 a year? 115 a month. A month?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 3]

Now it's almost 4,000.

[Speaker 1]

Is it 4,000?

[Speaker 3]

Almost.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, well, I was- \$3,600. A surveyor was in the Navy and they was launching a depth charger or something. And it went out prematurely and busted his eardrums.

He said he dogged 100% and his wife was living. She got some, but he said, we get a check for \$2,500. I said, man, all that?

But at that time, this Veterans Administration here cut me down to, I was on the low end 50%. I don't remember what that was. But when we decided to go to Oregon when Judy was eight months old, I got a job out there and we stayed for almost four years.

[Speaker 2]

This is you, your wife, and your daughter? Yeah. Anyone else in the family?

[Speaker 1]

Well, my other daughter was born when I was there. And she's about two years and something younger than my, first of all, we stayed there almost four years. She was born that time.

[Speaker 3]

What's your daughter's name?

[Speaker 1]

My daughter's Judy.

[Speaker 3]

Judy?

[Speaker 1]

Justice. Yeah, she's got cancer. So she took her chemo and got bad news and took her chemo in Lexington.

That's where they take her to take it. I talked to her on the phone last night. Her last chemo, the number she gave me, I forgot what they called it, was 11.

And this time it's 24. So they're changing it and they're putting it on the phone so I can, I don't know, I don't have it. My youngest daughter died a year ago last July.

I just got the one child.

[Speaker 3]

How many grandchildren do you have?

[Speaker 1]

I don't know, let's see. They each had, Judy and my daughter, my youngest one that died, she had three children. And I only had two, so that was five of the grandchildren that were these greats.

I've got a great great coming in August.

[Speaker 3]
Congratulations.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, it'll be a long sometime. In August, I forgot her name, but maybe you can get her name and everything now. Pictures, I've been seeing her pictures.

[Speaker 2]
Isn't that something? Well, thank you very much for your service. And thank you very much for spending time talking to us today.

[Speaker 1]
Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 2]
Thank you.