

Pulliam, John C. Interview pt 2 9-11-95

[Speaker 1]

Oh, we stayed around, we went back to Burleigh and our company was, had a little contest. They said, I mean, drill manual arms. And they said the company that did the best was going to furnish an honor guard for General Gaffney.

But to be an honor guard, you had to be about six foot. But anyway, we had been in and in, and in the meantime we had a new company commander. But somehow or other, we got down there, A company, and we got a solid command.

You knew, you practiced, you knew what you were going to do. And somehow or other, we won that one. And that was a straw for our, that was a pheasant for our new company commander.

We didn't have to, we didn't have to spend no more revenue, no more formation, nothing. Yeah. Great.

Yeah, and we had a, we stayed in some apartment buildings, I hardly survived, I don't know. And we had a kitchen, we had a kitchen serving room out there, south side. And I've seen American soldiers, I've seen, well there's a lot of them that get through evening.

They walk up through there, and here come these German civilian kids. They have a container for coffee, and then they have another container. Every coffee in this container, you can just dump your musket in there.

You take it back, you know, everything together. And they'd fire over there, watch you from the muskets. And you'd think the time wasn't tough here.

And then one time I seen, I seen this fellow, the old fellow's been going to pick up cigarettes, wishing there was no music. And one of my friends kicked him in the bottom. He was about seven years old.

I said, they don't take much nerve to kick an old man like that. I said, how did you kick one of these big, I want to be a husky fellow coming back, you know. Coming back, he got released somewhere.

Some German soldiers coming back. I said, why don't you kick one of them fellows? I said, they don't take much nerve to kick an old fellow like that.

But it is what it is. And we had a, we had a, had a, each company had a, in Berlin they had a bar. Of course this man, he was short of beer, a weak beer.

But anyway, I never, I had an old girlfriend. I never did go down to the bar very much. But anyway, this is the one you go close to Missouri.

The Russians could come in our zone any time, but we couldn't go in theirs. And them Russians just bucked the wagon. So I told them, and they had a horse wagon, wagon, and hitched it up there and went in our bar.

And this old boy from Missouri said, watch me how this is going. He gets in there, unties them horses, gets in that wagon, and down the road he goes. As far as he goes, he gets out down there, a little later, as far as he can go, or so far, and he unhitches the wagon, and runs the wagon in the canal, and turns the horse through.

And soon all of a sudden he jumped, and then he cried. Them Russians must have been smarter than you think they were, really. It wasn't long before they come down there, and they beat him.

He had some old Burke guns, they'd wave them around, they'd bite him.

[Speaker 2]

They caught up with him? Yeah, they did get up and bite him.

[Speaker 1]

They tried to.

[Speaker 2]

I can see why they'd be angry.

[Speaker 1]

One time they had a little fuzz. That little bitty replacement, he'd come in, and they brought a bus, and a buddy called, his name was Glower, little bitty paratrooper. And we was going down, we was going down to the Russian zone, and he was driving a truck, an American truck that had a load of sea rations.

And when he stopped to lie down there, we jumped off, and he, his buddy and I threw out a box of rations. So we was down there kind of peddling them rations, and here come the Russian, I don't know what kind of, who they were, they had little old caps, looks like they bought them at the dime store, little old caps in black boots, often made of antiques, didn't they? And they wanted to see everybody's tags.

So, and there's civilians and all, and then he says, come on, come on that tour, there's two of them, I think, he says, come, come on that tour. Oh, what can we do? We started out, and I said, that's old buddy of yours, but this ain't gonna work, I said.

We'd go down, we'd never be back. So we'd lag behind, lag behind, and he'd keep saying, he'd keep saying, come on, come on, we'd lag behind. First he was saying, they didn't know where we dragged, we jumped behind, we got behind these buildings, and of course went back to the company.

A couple of days later, here come the NPCs down there, and the Russians had their tags. They put two or three together, and come down and picked us up. We told them we was down at the company, and we'd get some girls.

About a week later, First Sergeant calls down, says, here's your passes, said they didn't have enough evidence to hang you. So there's a lot of good moments and bad moments, and I don't really, I don't feel I don't hate nobody here. I know if I'd been in Germany, or you'd been in Germany, we'd probably have done just about what they did.

Other than a few of those, oh, come back on the boat, got on a troop ship, what do you call it, division ship, North Atlantic, and the last, not the last, it was in December, left Berlin. I'd come back and had enough points, I'd come back before the division did. At Purple Heart, and pre-service, and things, I'd come back before the division.

And they sent me, first thing I know, I'm all on myself. And come back down to camp. France, I think town around Calais or something, one of them camps, they talk about a secret company, they call them different names.

Anyway, no middle weather. It's a big old cast iron stove in a tent, which they had a big coal in this one. Kind of like England, you couldn't get enough blankets in England to stay warm in the middle of summer.

We'd be used to hot here in the States, and over there, and it's colder in England. Anyway, there in this tent, I was working on the ship, and this fella says, I won't build a fire. And he went and got a gallon can of gasoline, and he sat down in this cast iron stove.

He threw a match and closed the door. And I thought, oh man, I'll be getting something to say to Spock. And that thing smoked for a little while, and roared, and that thing turned red hot, and of course it turned red hot, and that thing never did explode.

That thing, the left gas didn't burn off. You ready? We're all good.

I was getting ready to leave. And then they put us on a boat, and it was right in the middle of winter. It was right before, I finally made it home for Christmas.

Anyway, it's rough, and nobody goes on wind down below deck, nobody goes on above deck, nobody, except the captain. And we didn't see daylight for about 12 days. They charted every day, and propeller, some of the boats would go down in the water, and propeller would come up, come out of the water.

So we come into Staten Island, middle of the night, here's a Red Cross, what you boys want, coffee or milk. That's the first milk we drank since we, except in powder milk since we left, you believe.

[Speaker 2]

It was good to be back.

[Speaker 1]

Oh yeah, then they took us over there, gave us a bath, got us a bath. Oh, before we left Europe though, they took us down and had a portable shower, three years ago. And then they sprayed you, it was like spraying a cow.

But they can get that rid of them skin. Yeah, no milky looking stuff. And then they gave us a bath there, in the state, and they put it on a train to Fort Bragg, I got home and quit.

[Speaker 2]

Well that must have been nice.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, our company won that thing in Berlin, and then they had the Donner card for Gavin, and they had chrome helmets, and chrome wrists, and that and the other, and all they did was look pretty for the general.

[Speaker 2]
Right.

[Speaker 1]
Well that's basically not very exciting, is it? No, it's exciting enough.

[Speaker 2]
Probably more exciting than you would have liked.

[Speaker 1]
But none of this, I never did see or heard of anybody, just like a short movie, just dabbing one another and all that stuff. Always, about the most I ever seen in the crowd was about 50 people.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah, there wasn't a lot of hand-to-hand combat or anything like that. No.

[Speaker 1]
Mostly small units, you know, just three or four people together, and that line up at the front, they'd get a crank wound up, and he'd be a hundred miles down the road before the other guy could stop in the middle of the night. They didn't have no heavy equipment, not much, you know, just men 20 feet apart, two men with their rifle, what can they stop? Right.

[Speaker 2]
Not a lot.

[Speaker 1]
Oh, there in the Battle of the Bulls, they found some, I seen a jeep come down the road there, and had a couple of fellows, one fella sitting out on the hood in his long underwear. There was a lot of crowds that, that, some of them were American soldiers in American uniforms, but they were Germans.

[Speaker 2]
Right. Yeah. How important was it to, to know the guys you were with in combat?

[Speaker 1]
Oh, it was very important. And, you know, they got so, you know, they used to have a password, and then they got so, they didn't use a password no more. You just told them your name.

There was no password, because the crowd, they think the crowds was so close, they heard somebody yell out the password, and they just got rid of that password, you know, called out the password. You say one thing, he say one thing. No, they just showed your name, and they didn't recognize you then, because they called you, they took somebody's name.

But shortly after you, you know, you knew your friends, and things like that, you know, but they, they, they get away with the password. Yeah. Something else I can't say enough about.

That's funny. Maybe we'll come back to it later.

[Speaker 2]

Something else, I guess I'm taking up a lot of your time here. No, no. Is there anything else?

[Speaker 1]

I'm trying to come up with something. I thought of something and then I, something real funny and I forgot what it was now. Oh, a lot of the American soldiers, this is a different thing, a lot of the American soldiers got to go with them German girls, you know.

And there we is, the kids were ready to leave. The eight girls would come down and we'd see them all. I'll come back to see you honey.

I never know one fellow, he wasn't even in Iraq, he was in the quarter, he wasn't back with them Germans. I ain't got nothing against them. I don't think about that.

Right. And the longest time you couldn't fraternize with them. Then they lifted that.

There was no correspondence with the Germans unless it was strictly non-aggressive. You didn't go down fraternizing. Did you think that was good rule or bad rule?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I guess it was really.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, and then they lifted that. And the Germans were, by the time the war was over, shortly after the war was over, they just, Oh, that's the friend of the American, I'm talking about the civilian, that's the friend of the American soldiers, Oh, I heard the Russians were coming. First thing you'd ask is Russians, Russians who come, Ruski come?

Nix Nazis, Nix Nazi. Ruski come? Everybody's a Nix Nazi.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, you couldn't find a Nazi anywhere.

[Speaker 1]

Nix Nazi, you couldn't find a Nazi anywhere.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, they were really afraid of the Russians.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, man, yeah. Oh, yeah. And I think it was them Russians or something else, they didn't put up no, Oh, once in a while in Berlin you'd see a grave, and you'd have little red picket fence, little big little thing around it, and you'd have some red, black old men, no good well heads or whatever, some Russian that killed or something.

And I saw that building there in Berlin with all Hitler and all that stuff.

[Speaker 2]

So you were in Berlin during the occupation?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I stayed there for a month. Oh, I guess from about September till December. Left there on Thanksgiving.

On Thanksgiving. And we left Holland on Thanksgiving. And a year later I was leaving Berlin.

About Thanksgiving. Right. I didn't, I wasn't there all that long really, but, I don't know.

And I, one of these fellas, one of my old buddies, he'd been in the Army all, about four years at the age of six. And he'd come along, he'd say, I should have got killed and hit a long time ago and I wouldn't have to be put up with this. That's what he said.

Once in a while I'd have seen him kick a German dead soldier. Heil Hitler, just in case we lose. He's kind of an irreverent kind of guy.

And then he was, he was crawled up on their tank, there's some tanks along the side of the road, he was bitter cold. And I didn't get up so far, but two fellas got up further I guess. First thing you know this one, his name was Brown.

He's limber as a rat. They got him out there and they walked him up and drove him around. They walked him up and made him breathe.

Kind of got him to breathe. They'd give him an aspirin to get him going. Finally got him going.

So they sent him on to Holland, England for a rest. And he'd come back, I mean, they sent him to England for a hospital. And he'd come back.

And while he was gone they made him a staff sergeant. He went from PSC to staff sergeant, do you believe it? Quite a leap.

We called him Gase Nontone. And he'd had a tooth out all the time, but when he went back to England they put him to people now. Really?

We'd say, Donald, let's see your tooth. Brown, we'd call him. He'd juggle that thing up and down.

He'd juggle it.

[Speaker 2]

His claim to fame.

[Speaker 1]

And then one time, some little German did stop time when the war was over. He said, let's go out and have a drink tonight. I never did do this with him one time.

He'd bang on the door. He said, MPs, looking for comrades. And there's Germans coming in.

And he'd just bust right in line, going down to the basement, running around for some drinks or something. Next time he'd come back, he'd take a bottle of ketchup or something, see. And one old fellow didn't like it.

On the way back, Donald picked up a brick and threw it right in that man's face. Right at the door he did have, the black window. I said, I don't want to go to the U.S. War.

[Speaker 2]

Guess that was about it, huh?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. I guess so.