

## Walter Boyden

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**Question:** First thing I need to do is get your name and spelling and address on tape, so if you could give that to me I would really appreciate it.

**Answer:** Ready?

**Question:** Um hm.

**Answer:** Ok my name is Walter Boyden, B-O-Y-D-E-N. I live at 6909 Opal Lane Southwest in Tacoma

**Answer:** And my phone number is 588-2002.

**Question:** Great! That also lets me set my audio levels.

**Question:** Um, so which branch of the service were you in?

**Answer:** I was Army, infantry.

**Question:** Infantry.

**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** So did you enlist?

**Answer:** No I was drafted in 1943 just out of high school.

**Question:** Out of high school.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Do you remember what you were doing the day before you got drafted or the day that you did get drafted?

**Answer:** No. I don't remember. I was 18 years old and just had turned 18, I think I was just.. in fact I know I did, I went down and, with my draft notice in hand and said well I'm ready so they said well you have nine days to clear things up and I said well I'm ready now, you know I was only 18 years old, what did I have to clear up? (laughs) Say goodbye to my parents and that was about it and they gave me the nine days and I spent that with my family and my high school sweetheart and then I was gone. Went to Fort Ord in Californi

**Answer:** That was the place where most of the northern Californians went when they were drafted. And learned a lot the first day. I got shot, you know, needles (laughs), about six times, I got issued all my uniforms, I got put on KP and with all the shots I remember this very well, I was standing at the dishwasher putting trays through and it was about 120 degrees and I passed out and the next thing I know I was in my bunk and woke up and I was fine. But it was just a, I guess the reaction to the serum and so...

**Question:** All the shots...

**Answer:** They got me. And so we were there just long enough for some indoctrination and testing, and then we were sent to different places, uh, I went to Abilene, Texas to an ordinance outfit and I was there until, from March of 1943 until uh, June of 1943 and then I went to, I was sent to Springfield, Massachusetts to do some schooling for ordinance and then

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I came back from that in August. And I had always wanted to be an air corp pilot so I went and took the tests to be a pilot, uh, at that time they needed them pretty badly so I had passed the tests and I went to Shepard Field, Texas and then to Canyon, Texas which was the West Texas State teacher's college because they gave us a six month college course. And I was all ready to go to flight training when the Army decided they needed no more pilots. So they took the whole bunch of us and shipped us to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma which is outside of Muskogee and put us into infantry. And we always maintained that they had the most intelligent infantry unit in the United States Army at that time (laughs) because all these people had been training to be pilots and you had to have a fairly good IQ to pass their tests (laughs).

**Answer:** So we trained there until December of '44 and they shipped us over to Europe and we were pretty green troops at that time. And they, we landed in Marseille and then we start trucking on up toward the front lines, which was up, which were well, the Battle of the Bulge occurred just as we reached the front lines as you may know. And that was Christmas of uh '44. And we got there just as it broke and uh, so we had a real good introduction to warfare and fire and so on.

**Question:** That was your introduction?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** I mean, that was where you...

**Answer:** That was where we got our baptism of fire. And uh...

**Question:** And so you're all of maybe 19 by now.

**Answer:** Yeah I had turned 19 in October, the former October. And uh, in fact, most of us were pretty young because, uh of the pilot training we had been in and then we had a few of the old-timers who were the cadre of the unit, the rainbow division, it was a forty-second infantry division, we went to be called the rainbow division, and we ah, then ah, got into, we got on the fringes of the Bulge, we didn't get right into the middle of it, but ah we were ready and we were doing a lot of shooting at that time. And then they moved us down to Strasbourg, which was an open city, and we were on one side of the river and the Germans were on the other side of the river and we would stand up and wave at each other and they'd come down and do their laundry and we wouldn't shoot at each other. But then they moved us. The fighting was going on north of us, the real hard fighting north of us in Haguenau and in Gernsbach it was called. And each night the Germans would take the town and each day the Americans would take it back and we were sent up there on one of the attacks and ah, we finally drove the Germans out and they were, never took it back. And in March it was kind of static from the end of the Bulge until well probably, well it wasn't really static, but it was a slow moving war until about March of '45. Then we started the final assault and that was absolutely no rest movement from that time until the war ended in May, on May 8th. We, ah, my division crossed the Rhine, we fought through Wurtzburg and through Fort and down toward Munich and we helped, ah, liberate Dachau, the concentration camp right outside of Munich. I was one of the first ones in there and it's something I don't ever want to see again, just bodies all over the place, and the smell and... and we went through to Munich and as we were getting ready to have a frontal attack on Munich or as we were attacking Munich we were informed to hold up because the SS troops were being fought against by their own Wehrmacht troops because they wanted this thing over with, you know, they were losing too many people. So we held up and the war ended before we had to go back into combat.

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**Answer:** So from then on, from there we went down to a nice little village called Kitzbuhel in the Austrian Alps and we stayed there and most of our duties there was guard duty and sweeping the hills for any SS troops who were holed out in the mountains. We found a few and ah, some of them had killed themselves before they were captured and some we brought in for trial. And from there we went to ah, Salzburg, Austria, and from there I went home. And that was in May of 1946.

**Question:** What, I've got a lot of questions, boy I, again I am going to meet a lot of vets, and I can't even begin to conceive of being in the situation, I mean, and listen to them talk about how their minds adjusted for it. One question I have is, the city you talked about where you were down the Germans, you were waving at the Germans, the Germans were waving at you, why didn't you shoot at each other? I mean, um...

**Answer:** Well, it had been declared an open city and when you do that then there's no combat going on in the city itself so what happened, most the cities that were taken in Europe had to be fought for, you know, house to house. But when you open a city that means that they won't shell it, they won't shoot at you, and so, until that open city is declared null and void and you start out at each other, but we were pulled out before that happened, before the final attack, so....

**Question:** Is that a part of the Geneva convention I assume?

**Answer:** No, it was just something agreed to both, I don't know how it came about but it's the only place that you could drive at night with the lights on, you know, otherwise you had these little black-out lights and nobody ever bothered you, nobody fired any artillery or anything at you. Yeah, it was kind of a, something you don't expect in a war, (laughs) you know.

**Question:** 'Cause that gives a very, for lack of a better word, surreal, I mean in a way, if you remove the tragedy it sounds like kids playing war.

**Answer:** Well, almost.

**Question:** No man's land.

**Answer:** Almost, yeah, almost. We had various incidences where would not fire on each other. For instance, ah, at one time we had killed a cow, or a cow had been killed out in the field, and ah, the Germans wanted food, and we wouldn't have minded a little fresh meat either so we just waved the flag and both sides came out, cut what they wanted, went back and then the shooting started again (laughs). It's a, interesting the things that go on, you know, there's still, even though it's your enemy and you know he's out to kill you and you better kill him first, there's still some sort of a comrade, even though it's an enemy 'cause I've seen where we've captured enemy soldiers and the first thing some of these hardened combat veterans did was throw him a K ration so he'd have something to eat because most of them didn't have that much, you know, towards the end of the war. And it was quite interesting.

**Question:** Wow, see that's so cool, again now, I saw it in the POW camps, you know, oh well we captured you the Geneva convention says we got to be nice to you, except in Japan where they didn't recognize the Geneva convention.

**Question:** As a 19-year-old kid, what's your, what's your mind set during all ... ok, the Battle of the Bulge, do you know what it is?

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**Answer:** Oh yeah.

**Question:** So you know what you're going into.

**Answer:** Well we didn't really know how far it had gone, I mean we, the only, the regular GI if you think of him. Well we were, they call them grunts now. We were dog faces then, they called us. You only new what was going on in your own little sector, you didn't realize what was happening around you. And here the Germans had broken through and they were hitting people from the rear, and they were trying to take Liege, err uh Bastogne. And uh, but you were only concerned with say, two or three thousand yards on both sides of you. And uh, at that time there was a movie put out called "Battle Ground", it was right after world war two, and Van Johnson was in it and uh, well quite a few main stars, but it was about the Bulge, they covered it pretty darn well. And it's just this one group of soldiers and it reminds me of us, who we knew what was going on because they told us, the Germans had broken through and all that, but we were only concerned with area we were covering. And uh, the big picture was left to the generals and so on, so. And but there was no way, we were running out of ammunition, we were running out of gas for the tanks, uh we were running low on food, and all we could do was cover our own territory, cover where ever we were assigned, and uh. We would have troops coming, falling back coming through us, and there was no place to go because we were completely surrounded. So the only thing you could do was go to the middle of the, and rest then come back and fight again. But as I say, we were more on the fringes and uh even we didn't know what was going on. But the Germans kept coming and we figured well, something big is going.

**Question:** I assume you could hear, you could see you saw wounded people coming back, you could hear bombings going on, I mean was it...

**Answer:** Well they couldn't fly because of the fog, so we couldn't get any air support but we could hear the German tanks and we could see the troops, and we, someone we could open fire on. But uh, it got to the point there, where you very careful about opening fire, especially if they were coming up with tanks. Because you were sitting there like a, well just almost naked out in the, in your fox hole and they just turn that tank on you and unless you had a good anti-tank gunner your a, you'd probably cash in about that time.

**Question:** So if you opened fire it identified where you were in other words?.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** So what was a day like? With the Battle of the Bulge how long was that for you, how many days?

**Answer:** Ah... I think that lasted from about the 19th of December, over Christmas, almost 'til, almost 'til New Years.

**Question:** So you had a number of weeks.

**Answer:** Um hm, yeah.

**Question:** What was a day like for you? I mean what was your living conditions? What was the environment?

**Answer:** Oh, we were in holes in the ground, and it was cold, coldest winter they had had in 85 years in Germany, in Europe. And we lost a lot of people to frostbite and just freezing.

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But ah... all you did, you got up and moved, change your socks every day and uh, otherwise you just manned your position and that was it and waited for word from headquarters and if it came or not we were always hoping we'd get the word to move out but it didn't come because they were all around us and finally it broke up when the sun broke through the fog and the air corp could come in and they started bombing and strafing and dropping, the C47's came in and were dropping food and ammo and gasoline and things like that and then we were able to break out. And ah ... as I said from then until March it was fairly static. We moved forward, took territory and they crossed the Rhine and then we got to the town of Wurtzburg, I guess it was, well into Germany, and at that time, and I can't remember the date, but everything opened up from our side because we were starting our final push and it was going to be a concerted effort and then we started moving fast. And they'd load us on trucks even, we could, we were chasing the Germans back so rapidly. And ah, as I say we went to Forte, and ah, then to Munich and it was over.

**Question:** Let me back up a bit and ask you one quick, you said we were in holes when I asked the living conditions, now do you mean traditional fox hole, or...?

**Answer:** Um hm, yeah.

**Question:** So as you're moving are you digging a hole and getting in it or what's...?

**Answer:** Well it depends on if you can stop or not, you know, 'cause we were, once we had them on the run we wanted to keep them on the run so usually nights we would ah, send one unit through another, in other words, lets say that we'd be moving all day and we had a battalion in reserve and that evening we would stop maybe and dig in -- you didn't dig very deep then because you knew (laughs) you weren't going to occupy it for very long -- and then the other unit would go through and continue the attack so we kept the Germans off balance, moving backwards as much as possible.

**Question:** So one person in a fox hole? Two, one?

**Answer:** Well it depends. Sometimes you had two, you had a fox hole buddy they'd call them, and sometimes you just dug just enough so you could lay down and your body wouldn't be exposed, it may be only a foot deep or six inches deep or something, just so, or you'd just find a, the ground where there was a dip in it and you'd get in there.

**Question:** So what do you do? I mean, you're...

**Answer:** You sleep (laughs).

**Question:** Really.

**Answer:** Oh yeah, you're tired. That's one thing they always said about the dog faces, that they could sleep anyplace, it didn't make any difference where you were you could fall asleep. Give you a ten-minute break, you'll fall asleep.

**Question:** So the battles going, I mean, your visual contact with your enemy at this point.

**Answer:** Yeah, um hm.

**Question:** So you're laying in a, in a, you've found either a little low point or you dug yourself a fox hole and you go to sleep.

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**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** I mean, you eat in you fox holes, you do everything in your fox holes?

**Answer:** Just about, yeah.

**Question:** Now an interesting one that I didn't think about, there was a gentleman I interviewed from Iwo and he ran into another buddy from Iwo and they were talking and he finally stopped and he looked at his buddy and he said, "you know, do you ever remember going to the bathroom in Iwo?" (laughs) And his friend said "I can remember peeing on my boots in the fox hole." But I mean it's a weird thought but you know yeah, here you are in this war front, are you that afraid? I mean if you can sleep fear must... what happens in your head in that situation?

**Answer:** Well you just, you're just so exhausted and so drained emotionally I guess because there's more to it than just moving on and pushing the enemy out of the way, where's the bullet that gets you coming from? And having people drop on both sides of you and you're still going. And as far as, I don't remember going to the bathroom either except peeing, in fact during the Bulge and part of the winter you'd wake up and you'd have to pee on your M1 in order to get it to function again because it would be frozen solid. But ah... you know little things, even eating I know we had some hot meals but I can't really remember them. We had a lot of cold meals and we had ah, like sterno to heat our water for coffee. And sometimes they'd bring hot food up to us, especially when we were pulled back into reserve but actually those are kind of minor, you know, unless you stop and think about it, now where did I eat, what did we do on Thanksgiving, or on Christmas Eve and what did we do on New Years Eve and those things like that.

**Question:** Does it become a job? I mean, I still cannot understand, I mean just playing war, I mean, you're looking around and oh they're going to jump out, but the idea that there are these people with tanks and guns and they really are shooting at me and it's day-to-day... does your mind get out and make it a job? Or what, what does, can you remember...

**Answer:** I don't even think of it as a job, I just think of it as, as, being alive day-to-day and ah, it was something we all felt we had to do. And ah, I never thought of it as a job, in fact, I hate to say it but I look at that as the best years of my life, but I wouldn't want to do it again. Once is enough, well I did it in Korea too...

**Question:** Twice is enough.

**Answer:** Once is enough.

**Question:** Which is interesting 'cause that was a question I usually ask a little later but out of your whole life, when you put World War II on that time line, it was a very short time...

**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** But yet the veterans I have talked to seem to have developed these very unique experiences but the comradery-ship among these men and women they served with.

**Answer:** Yeah, there is a great deal of that. These are people you never forget, in fact, for many, many years I corresponded with a number of them and course then they kind of fade out, you know, and at my age they are passing on and my best friend who was my fox

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hole buddy and we survived together, he died of Leukemia in Texas probably 30 years ago and he was really a nice guy, a good fighting man - a little Irish man (laughs).

**Question:** Do you remember um, again not to, the only dead person I've ever seen, the first dead person I ever saw was my mom.

**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** Do you remember the first time, I, 'cause I assume you were close enough to battle that somebody very close to you probably lost their life.

**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** Do you remember seeing that, and what that experience...?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, yeah. The first few times were pretty hard and uh, then your mind kind of hardens itself, not really hardens itself but you, you're sort of like you're standing to one side as an observer and you're not really feeling it. If a good friend, somebody you fought with and lived with got it then it was pretty traumatic. But there were a lot of casualties but in most cases they were wounds. The deaths were, there were plenty of deaths, don't get me wrong, but if you look at the percentage of deaths to wounds it was low percentage. Out of ah, well lets see the people I started with in my platoon, ah, about 40 people, there was about seven of us left that were in pretty good, good shape and the rest were, I can't remember how many were killed but most of them were wounded and taken out of combat, so... and you always hoped if you're going to get hit you want to get that million dollar wound that will send you home but not cripple you for life, you know. And there were, I hate to say it, a few self-inflicted, ah and there, I know of two people who deserted, and I don't know whatever happened to them. They were caught and court martialed and may have been executed although I read there was only one execution during the war for desertion and that was that privates... I forgot his name. He had a Slavic name anyway.

**Question:** So they deserted once they got to the front?

**Answer:** Yeah. Well it's pretty traumatic, you know, and you can't expect young kids like that to all stand up to what we were going through 'cause many of them, I don't know why I was an exception that I could, well most of us, we knew that was our duty and we stuck with it but there were a few that cracked under the strain and it was a strain, so... in fact I read somewhere that during the war, World War II, only about 10 - 15% of the front-line soldiers fired their guns, their rifles in anger. So, and I figure all the time I was up there shooting there were five or six other guys who weren't and what was I doing there (laughs).

**Question:** Now that's interesting 'cause they said fired in anger and that's a question I have. In your mind out there, who or what were you fighting?

**Answer:** Yeah. That's a good question. We knew we had an enemy and when you're fighting like that the enemy ceases to be a personality or a person, it's an enemy. And when you draw a bead on them you don't think this is another human being after, after the first one or two, after the first one or two it gets easy. The first one is the hard one. That one kind of shakes you up badly, and the second one you kind of hesitate, and from then on you realize that these people are going to do it to you if you don't do it to them. So they just become a target and you don't associate any humanity or personal life, any desires, to them, it's just eliminate them.

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**Question:** So do you, um... (someone enters room)

**Answer:** Maybe it's your next... (interview)

**Question:** They're early if they are...

**Answer:** That guy looks familiar.

**Question:** I guess they're just...

**Answer:** I guess he's not...

**Question:** Was that any moral dilemma for you? 'Cause again that's something I just...

**Answer:** No. No, I think you have to realize that the Americans at that time, especially the American soldier had been propagandized, whether you want to put it that way or not, they had a series called "Why We Fight" and ah, in this series they showed all the nasty things that the enemy was doing and ah, so you went in kind of with a revenge factor in mind. Well I wouldn't say a revenge factor, I think more you went in with what I'm doing is right and however I do it, you know, humanely if you can call war humane (laughs), is right. And the whole thing in our mind set is destroy the enemy. As Rush Limbaugh says we were out to break things and kill people (laughs).

**Question:** And that was your assignment, your duty?

**Answer:** That was our assignment, yeah.

**Question:** And you followed orders.

**Answer:** Yeah. If you look all the training we had it was all assault rifle training, and ah, grenade training, and we were trained to kill, that's...

**Question:** Was it, 'cause it was interesting too, you said another thing about, it was the enemy, so it wasn't, did you have a hatred or not, I mean or is it this whole different thing that goes into it?

**Answer:** No it really wasn't a hatred, ah, in fact, they were fighting for a reason just like we were. And my grandma was a German immigrant and ah, I couldn't really hate them, in fact I sometimes thought ah, you know, maybe being German made me fight better or stand up to it better or something like that, German background. I don't know it's just something you had to do, you asked me before if I felt it was a job, we always said well it's our job to win the war but we never thought of it as a job, per se'. But just as something we were going to accomplish and then the world would be back to where it was when we started and that's what we wanted, we all, everybody wanted to go home.

**Question:** You wanted just to get it done.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** What was it, do you think it was an advantage being so young?

**Answer:** Yeah, well maybe so. We might have been too dumb (laughs) to realize what was going on, but you know how young people are, they're, they think they conquer the world



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and we were no different. We were brash. I guess you could say we ah, believed in our cause and we loved our country, and it was an affront to us to have somebody declare war on us and attack us. In fact, when I was 16 it was when Pearl Harbor occurred and, I think I was 16, and I remember we were sophomores in high school or something and every one of us wanted to get down and enlist right then, you know (laughs). It's ah, but of course, you know, you're no prayer so we just waited until things settled down and then we waited 'til we got our draft notices, which we knew were coming. That was one of the disadvantages I suppose we had still being in high school and trying to make good grades and everything, you knew where you were going to end up. But on the other hand, the way it worked out, the results and the GI bill and everything that came after, my grandfather and my father had both worked for the Navy yard in Vallejo, and ah, this is where most of the fellows in my hometown would end, were supposed to end up working. But as it turned out, most of the people I went to school with went to college, the university, became various professionals, and ah, I think that's what got me started in the foreign language teaching business, otherwise I could ended up just like my father and my grandfather working for the government which I didn't want to do and most of the people who worked there after the war were the people who were brought in from other parts of the country to fill the war jobs, and that's how California's bay area got so full too... But when I came home, you know, everyone was saying boy we're bringing a bunch of killers home, you know, this is going to be a terrible country with, never happened. We all settled down, went to college, and then I joined the reserves to help pay my way through college and got called up to Korea (laughs) and that's about the saga, from my point of view. I was just a rifleman, I was a second lieutenant in Korea but I was just a rifleman in World War II, and followed orders. But none of our orders were unreasonable, you know, like the SS and so on would tell people to go out and shoot the Jews and all that. Nothing was unreasonable. We were never ordered to kill a prisoner or do anything like that. And most, once we caught a prisoner, he was a human being like anybody else. Once they surrendered.

**Question:** That's the other thing I was wondering about war. So your troop was, ballpark how many people?

**Answer:** My ah...

**Question:** Your platoon.

**Answer:** Oh my platoon was 42 people in.

**Question:** So communication on the battlefield. How did they get information, I mean were you always aware of what you were supposed to be doing or for a while you were sitting there going....

**Answer:** Well quite often you just sat there and waited to see what was happened and you were in eyesight of the next fox hole on either side and so, and you could crawl over and talk to them and crawl back, and crawl over to the other fella and see what's doing, and we had our little communication, ways...

**Question:** So you'd crawl over and say hey Charlie how's your day going or...

**Answer:** All quiet over here Charlie, any movement out there? and, I haven't seen a thing, you know. Ok how 'bout Tom over there. No he hasn't said anything. So, and then we had a little pile of stones. If anything, if we wanted their attention we'd throw a rock, a stone over (laughs).

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**Question:** Did you have any contact with home or were you on the move so much that you...

**Answer:** With home?

**Question:** Like mail.

**Answer:** Oh yeah. We got mail pretty well. They kept up with us very well. Yeah, I never wanted for mail. Except during the Bulge and we weren't getting it because nothing could get through. Yeah they were, they were very good about that. Whoever handled the APO, I'd get letters from my girlfriend and from my parents that were written maybe three, four days earlier.

**Question:** Wow.

**Answer:** Yeah, so they were flying them over and...

**Question:** Was that hard, getting things from home or were they writing saying they were proud of what you were doing and...?

**Answer:** No. Well it was harder on them than it was on us, because when they got a letter from us you know, they didn't know if we were still alive or not so. But there, you'd hear about what was going on in the home front and how everybody was and they missed you, and all that, and it was a good morale lifter. And once in a while you'd get a package of Toll House cookies through, (laughs) or something like that. My sister was great at that. She was a little girl then when I left she was twelve, and she would make me a batch of Toll House cookies every month and send them.

**Question:** Wow.

**Answer:** And the platoon would enjoy the heck out of them (laughs).

**Question:** Everybody was your best buddy that day.

**Answer:** Yeah (laughs), oh yeah.

**Question:** Hah. Again that's one of those interesting ones, the communications and... Did, when they reported to you what was going on at home, did they have the same view, because you talked about the propaganda, their view of what was going on and your view of what was going on, was there a discrepancy or...?

**Answer:** As I recall, it was never brought up. It was all just good old home town stuff, you know, and what they were doing and that's what I wanted to know anyway and ah, course there were a lot of things we couldn't write, you know, we couldn't tell them exactly where we were or, but it was very interesting. When we first hit the lines we had,.. coming over on the ship we were told to take off all of our rainbow patches and to get rid of anything that would identify us as the Rainbow division. And the first thing we hit the lines, the loudspeakers on the other sides said welcome to the lines Rainbow we're glad to see you (laughs). Somebody had talked too much when we were in New York City getting ready to ship out and they knew we were there. And I could never figure out, so what, so if they knew who we were, who cared?

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**Question:** So when you wrote home, did you try, I talked to one gentleman who was talking about Guam and he just wrote Guam backwards and the guys didn't cut that out. But did you try to give information or did you just kind of wrote them and said I'm ok?

**Answer:** No, we, I'd put somewhere in France or somewhere in Germany and anybody who had access to a map knew where the Americans were in what area and the British and the Canadians and so on, so they could pretty well figure out where I was. But I just wrote them how things were going and didn't complain too much and didn't know I was in any danger. So I think most of the guys did that just to kind of keep them from worrying. Because my dad worked in the shipyard at that time and then my mother worked also. She always said I want to help the war effort. And my little sister kicked in and she did all cooking and housekeeping and so it was pretty good morale at home and my mother would write and say is there anything you want? I'd tell her well mom, what I want is your favorite meal and you can't send that (laughs), you know.

**Question:** That's interesting because the gentleman I talked to that was in Luft Stalag 113, Luft Stalag 113 German POW was telling me that the thing they thought about the most was food.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Buttered, pancakes with butter and syrup. That's what kept us, and that's what they talked about all day long.

**Answer:** I'll be darned.

**Question:** H

**Answer:**

**Answer:** Yeah. My favorite was my mother's ah, baked brown beans. Oh they were so good (laughs). And pork and beans and her, she made big strawberry shortcakes, you know, and in fact I sent her a v-mail once where I drew a soldier walking guard duty with a picture of a big shortcake over his head (laughs) and she kept that, she had that the day she died (laughs).

**Question:** Hm. What do you think the history books have left out?

**Answer:** Gosh, I couldn't say that, I thought they did pretty well. I've read an awful lot about, well both wars and the Korean war and I don't think they left much out. There might have been things that we wouldn't want to know about but, but ah...

**Question:** Did you realize you were part of history while you were there?

**Answer:** I didn't give it a thought, just something we had to do. I suppose, something must have gone through our minds, because you can't be in a big conflagration like that without thinking, gee I'm part of this, or something but I just don't recall.

**Question:** You were just a 19-year-old kid that, you know, should have been at college.

**Answer:** Yeah (laughs).

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**Question:** Now, Dachau, that had to be, I mean, did you know before you got there what you were going to be coming upon or...?

**Answer:** Well we had an idea because some of the camps had been discovered by the British but we didn't know at least, we didn't, the GI, didn't know that there was a camp in Dachau and it just happened to be in our line of advance but as we came up to it, we could smell it before we could see it and we knew there was something up there that we didn't want to go to. But you do anyway, and we skirmished, we had a skirmish line, and then we moved up and then we saw the barbed wire and the people hanging from it, waiting for us and then we knew we were going to see something worse than anything we had ever seen. And then we went into the camp and it was absolutely a horror. So... luckily they didn't leave us in there very long. They brought other troops in and other doctors and nurses.

**Question:** So you basically were there for the overthrow but you weren't there for the trying to get everyone out and home.

**Answer:** Um hm. No, no we went on then toward Munich but we did see those thousands of bodies and we saw some of the camp guards beaten to death and, then they said move on out. And I said thank God! And we saw the crematorium and the death pits where they machine gunned these, all these helpless people. And ah... that's something really that surprised me as horrible as it was and the young fellows that were with me that went through it, that as soon as we got out of there we blanked it out and we tried to be, the comradery was almost over-done in trying to wipe it out of your mind.

**Question:** So it wasn't something you guys, so once you got out you didn't want to sit and talk about it, I mean, it was let's get on...

**Answer:** No. Not 'til later and then they turned the camp into a Red Cross central supply area and after the war we had driven back there to pick up things from the Red Cross. But as far as, you know, remembering it, we, the memories are vivid, but we just kind of blanked it out and then afterwards, after the war, when everything came out, and all the pictures, and all the movies, and everything on it and then you kind of look at it with a detachment. I think you just program yourself for that and the same way in combat when you're being shot at and shooting at people you become detached. I know in Korea it was the closest combat I had was from me to those chairs over there and we were shooting at each other and I was moving around real fast and shooting and ah, you become detached while doing it. I remember the last thing I thought was God, take care of my family because I thought I'd had it. But I came out.

**Question:** Is there um, do you think there's a message for future generations from World War II?

**Answer:** A message?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** Yea, well there probably is but nobody gets it. It's, the same thing's going on today, you know, except now we have more horrible weapons and a different type of warfare. Guerrilla warfare is, they can almost handle any army that, if the Germans had gone guerrilla we would have been in real trouble, or if we had. But I don't know, I really can't speak as an expert to that. But Vietnam was a good example of what a rebel can do to an organized army. Which we shouldn't have been in anyway. But I got out before I went.

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**Question:** So we, it sounds like what you're saying is, is that we haven't learned, that history could repeat itself.

**Answer:** Yeah. I think it could. I think we're seeing a lot of the same thing in the Mid-East. The Arabs, Muslims, want to get rid of the Jews again and how else would they do it but to obliterate them like Hitler thought he was going to do. The only difference is that we, well there's not really a difference, we're standing by and letting it happen. We're sending troops over there, yeah, but what are they going to do? If I were in, if I were in that situation that they're in now in the Mid-East, the American troops that is, the Mid-East and in Bosnia, I'd resign my commission and get out.

**Question:** What's your best memory of World War II? I mean, I know that's kind of a weird question.

**Answer:** My best memory?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** Ah, that's a good question. There were a lot of good memories, in fact the good memories tend to come to the top and the bad memories seem to go to the bottom. I think one of the best memories I had was when a couple of friends and I were pulled out of the line and ah, we were in France and they send us back to Nancy in order to pick up equipment or something and ah, we used that opportunity to get a bath and clean underwear and clean uniforms, and to, I don't know the only way, to get drunk (laughs). And we were gone two days and we finally came back and boy our commander was ticked off at us (laughs). But he could see it, he was a very understanding guy.

**Question:** I assume that was kind of your, self-medication?

**Answer:** That's right. It did more for our morale. They had a base there right in the middle of town where all the rear echelon troops were stationed and they treated us royally. They had a big swimming pool, we got to swim, nice gym to work out. Then we saw some of the town and then we went back, continued where we were. But we were clean (laughs), and rested. Slept, I think we slept about 12 hours straight. But there were a lot of good things that happened, and there were a lot of terrible things. And as I say the good things kind of come to the top and the times you remember were something you can laugh at.

**Question:** Did you come home proud to be an American?

**Answer:** I just came home, another guy coming home, you know. Yeah, I was always proud of being an American, and I wish that pride could permeate the country now rather than what it is. They're looking at America like you know, we're the big, bad guys in the world, and I can't see that. No, we felt we had done a job, we had liberated a lot of people, we didn't really think about the people we left in captivity behind the Russian zone but we just felt we had brought freedom to the world and it was the typical, almost teenage mind set, I think, whereas the older folks, especially the service, they knew they were still facing problems, and we thought well, it's all over now and we can go home and we can begin our lives again. But one thing I didn't realize is that you can't go home again. You know, you go home and you expect things to be just like you left them. And they're not. You've changed. People have changed and a lot of them didn't come back. And even though I went to the same college that was my high school, they had made a community college out of it, and I started out there, it was a whole different generation. A lot of my friends were there but our whole attitude had changed and the things we used to think were fun were kid's stuff.

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**Question:** I assume it was a combination because you left a kid and...

**Answer:** Came back a man. Yeah.

**Question:** Saved your country in between.

**Answer:** Um hm. Even though I was only 21 when I came back, the change was amazing.

**Question:** What do you feel when you see the flag in a parade or being raised at National Anthem or Star Spangled Banner?

**Answer:** I still get chills. I still believe in my country. And I see a change coming to go back to that sort of thing. I think we went through the 60's, I know I taught in California in the 60's when all that unrest was at Cal, Berkeley and the Clinton gang was running things and even then I didn't get too discouraged but as that group got old enough to run this country that's when the discouragement set in. But I still love my country and I still honor the flag and salute it and I'd do it again, even now.

**Question:** Well I appreciate your time.

**Answer:** Well you're more than welcome.