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Question: A lot of interesting stuff and that's kind what Bill Merifield's idea was of this was history books have covered a lot but there's a lot that we leave out, is that human aspect to it. I mean what were the things? In fact, did you enlist were you drafted? How did you get...

Answer: No I enlisted. Are you recording?

Question: Yes sir.

Answer: Ok. I was in college when the war started and as a matter of fact I had a medium high draft number but my number came up in September of 1941. And I was to report for the draft. I called the draft board and I said I'd sure like to graduate before I go in. And Mr. Needham, the chairman of the draft board who was a good personal friend, said we're authorized to give you a year deferment if you can graduate within that year. This was before the war started. So I said fine, I was in law school, a freshman in law school, I had two more years of that so I went back to liberal arts and picked up the courses that I had to have to get a liberal arts degree and I graduated on the 28th of May in 1942 and ah, I would not have been drafted until September of '42 with the year deferment but I just went ahead and enlisted and just beat the system by three or four months. And I'm glad I did it be it, really it ah, proved to my advantage because I went into a brand new division, the 81st division at Camp Rucker, Alabama, from Fort Lewis, Washington, incidentally to Camp Rucker, Alabama

Answer: From paradise to you know what (laughs). But I got down there and the cadre was only 50% strength, so two weeks after I got there I made acting corporal, two more weeks, I made buck sergeant, three stripe, and six weeks later I made staff sergeant. And I was in command of a platoon, and about, oh six weeks or so after that I went to OCS at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Answer: So in, a lot of the people who came in in the fall of '42 did not get to go to OCS because the programs were filled up. So I beat the system by enlisting four months before I had to.

Question: So was the draft um, the draft was in place before the war?

Answer: Oh yeah the draft started in September of 1940. And an interesting aside there, my twin brother had the first number that was pulled out of the fish bowl, number 158, we'll never forget it. Pulled out, you've, you've, maybe you've seen pictures of the Secretary of War with a blind fold on pulling a capsule out a fish bowl, well number 158 was the first number. That meant that every draft board in the United States had a number 158 and those were the very first people called in. He was called up, went, checked in, took his physical, 4F, and it broke his heart. He says, 4F, I'm in perfect condition and he had this wrong, that wrong and this wrong, so he relaxed and went back to school and finished law school up in Gonzaga

Answer: And the war started, if you remember, in December of '41, has, he was called up in September of '40. In January of '42 he got a new notice from the draft board, you are now a 1A (laughs). So he went down, he would've reported immediately, he went down and checked out the Air Corp cadet program, and by golly took their physical and passed it and he, he ah, he wasn't called in for training until January of '43.

Question: Hah.

Answer: And ah, went on and became a B-17 pilot, flew to England in November of '43, flew his 47, 43 missions, I think, all together. And was still there when the war ended. He was supposed to fly 25 and then come home and be a pilot trainer, but ah, they said ok you're

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going home, he said not as long as my brother is on the ground over there in France, I'm not going home. And he stayed and flew nearly 25 more missions before the war ended.

Question: Wow! He did over, well over 40 missions, almost 50?

Answer: He did, actually he did 43 bombing missions and then another interesting thing in about March of '45, ah, the Air Force and the Air Corp in London, in England, ah, started a new system. They had a lot of fighters by then to provide fighter protection and he had checked out in the P-51 before he went into bombers, they gave each group, each bomb group a P-51 to fly as the traffic cop, if you will, for the fighters that were escorting the bombers, and he flew seven missions as a P-51 traffic cop along with his group. So he flew 50 missions all together.

Question: Wow.

Answer: And he's still alive today.

Question: He...

Answer: Going strong.

Question: ...definitely had a guardian angel looking over him.

Answer: He sure did because he had some rough times but, ah you know the old saying, the people on the ground think they've got it so much tougher because they live in the mud and the constant action and everything. Well those guys in those darn airplanes, I'll tell you, when they were in actual combat it was hell from the shrapnel, from the shell fragments, from the fighters and everything else. But ah, he took, of his crew that he took to England, ten men, he was the lead pilot, ah, only two of 'em are alive today, only four of 'em survived the war. And ah, he came home without a scratch.

Question: Wow.

Answer: Lucky, lucky, lucky.

Question: Now, so you were, when you went in you were 20?

Answer: I was 25-years-old. Kenneth and I had stayed out of the college for a couple of years to, to ah, make money so we could go to school. This was in the depression. And ah, so we didn't go to school until 1937, got out of high school in '35. Ah, so we went to school when we were 20, the normal would be 18, so we that much older. Ah, so I was, among the officers in the group that I finally joined, the 100th division, I was older than the average second lieutenant. Ah, even our commanding officer was only two months older than I was.

Question: Hm.

Answer: Ah but he was a West Pointer and, but he and I are the same age, minus two months.

Question: And you decided to enlist. I mean, you wanted to go in.

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Answer: Oh yeah, I enlisted on my own volition and ah, simply I knew I was going to be drafted eventually, so why wait around. So I enlisted and as it turned out it was a very happy coincidence of events, how it turned out for me later.

Question: Did, so, let's see, so you waited and you were through college, had the war started when you enlisted or were there still pre-war?

Answer: The war started on December 7th, '41, and I enlisted on the first of June '42.

Question: So, I mean 25 that's still pretty young.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Were you scared or was there, or what did you think?

Answer: Well you weren't around then so you can't, you can't imagine what the mood of the country was after Pearl Harbor. I mean, there's nothing, I don't think in the history of the country before or since, ah, which, which created such a pulling together of everybody throughout society, um, every aspect of our society they just pulled together, and it, ah, believe me the enlistment offices were just flooded with people right after Pearl Harbor. Men from all walks of life, from the richest to the poorest, flooded the enlistment offices and of course, the draft was, the draft was augmented as it had to be because now we're in a war. Well ah, fortunately the draft had started in 1940 and they had a running start before the war actually began. But ah, the mood of the country, individually and collectively, was one of look those those little so-and-so's attacked us, surprise attack, no declaration of war no nothing, let's get in this thing and get it over with as soon as possible. And ah, I don't know I probably thought the same thing. I was in love at the time, I was engaged at the time, ah, and my girl then, later my wife, now still my wife, ah we said together well, ok you're going to have to go just like everybody else, let's go and get it over with hopefully as soon as possible and hopefully survive it and ah, come back and get on with the rest of our life. But ah, no I, at that point in time I wasn't afraid. I don't think I was afraid of anything. Ah, after I got in the Army and started going through training and the various types of training, your situation changes of course. Especially the first time you go through an infiltration course and you know that if you stand up you're dead because there's machine gun fire three feet above the ground. Things like that. You do a lot of thinking and you do a lot of, my gosh what am I doing here, this, that type of thing. But again the mood of the country individually and collectively was one of, look they started it now we're gonna finish it. And we did.

Question: Hah.

Answer: It was just fantastic. I wish, without the benefit of a major war or anything like that, that I wish the country today could develop a certain amount of that same spirit, that same ah, feeling of togetherness, of look let's get the ills of the country solved and go on with the rest of our lives. We're a great country but we could be a lot greater. Ah, in those days it was a matter of survival. Who knew, nobody knew whether the next Japanese action would be an attack on the west coast of the United States. And if it hadn't been for the battle of Midway in June of '42 that that would have very possibly have happened. Could've happened.

Question: Yeah.

Answer: They had the capability, not for launching a major land offensive but they could have sure done a lot of damage in Seattle and Portland and San Francisco especially, if they'd really wanted to.

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Question: They just waited 40 years and bought it up. Right? Isn't that..

Answer: Yeah, that's it, that's it.

Question: What, what was your assigned duty? What, what did you, who were you? What did you do? What was your rank and...

Answer: Well I started out as a private as I said, I enlisted as a private, I enlisted in Portland, Oregon. I was brought up to Fort Lewis, ah processed and uniform, civilian clothes home, physical and so on and so on. And then put on a shipping order from there along with a couple hundred other guys all the way to Camp Rucker, Alabama

Answer: We're assigned to the 81st infantry division, I was still a private. I was assigned to the 906th field artillery battalion because I had enlisted specifically for field artillery. And believe it or not I got it. A lot of people didn't. They enlisted or, a draftee was draftee unassigned, that's the way his orders read, ah, and he went where was sent. But I had enlisted specifically for field artillery and ah, because I had a pretty good bent for mathematics and I knew there was a lot of math involved in it, and I was assigned to the 906th field artillery battalion, headquarters battery, and got down there, and as I said, the cadre which activated the 81st division had come from the 3rd division at Fort Lewis. And it was only 50% strength. They had gaping holes in the organizational structure of the ah, division, so college graduates or anybody who knew their left foot from their right foot -- ah, I had been a band member so I knew how to march -- and believe it or not I made acting corporal in two weeks after I got there. And two weeks later I was promoted to three striper sergeant. And the amazing thing, there were some of those cadre men from the 3rd division had been in the Army since the 1920's and were only three striper sergeants. And ah, in fact our first sergeant was promoted to first sergeant from a gunner chief and when I made acting corporal they moved me into the, the NCO rooms with the first sergeant. About two weeks after that happened, it was payday, he got drunk and got busted down to private and was transferred to a gun battery across the compound (laughs). So I had a new roommate and this old guy had been in the Army since 1927, ah, all through the depression, strictly the depression Army, wonderful old guy, but he had no business being a first sergeant. He, I, I did his morning reports, I did all of his administrative work, he couldn't do it. He just wasn't capable. As a gunnery sergeant you just couldn't top him, he was fabulous, but that's what he wanted and that's what he knew and pretty soon he was promoted back to buck sergeant in charge of ah, of a gun section, 105 howitzer. But I, six weeks after I made buck sergeant I made staff sergeant because I was a platoon leader then and ah, right after that I took the exam for OCS, passed that and passed the boards and they said ok it's just a matter of time waiting for, for a quota

Answer:

Answer: This is at Camp Rucker, and ah, we finished basic training and advanced individual training and then we were authorized some leave, so I, my girl, my fiancé was out here in Salem, I called her and said I've got two weeks leave but I'm broke. She said I got the money, get on the train. And she sent with the money the telegram, bottom line of the telegram, are we to be married. So I sent her a 50 word night letter giving her all the reasons why we should wait 'til I got out of OCS and so on. I got to Salem, Oregon on Friday morning, we were married Sunday afternoon (laughs). My, my dear friend had all the preparations made, it was wonderful. We had a beautiful wedding. My mother managed to come from Montana

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Answer: My brother came from Spokane (laughs). It just, it was wonderful. We've had a great life ever since. We were married 1st of November 1942.

Question: Wow.

Answer: So that's well 57 years.

Question: So she was a war bride.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So she was here on the home front while you were over fighting.

Answer: Oh yeah. Yeah, she ah, she was home all the time. She worked, she worked for the Navy ah, um, ammunition depot up just outside of Bremerton, for one year while I was gone. Well that was before we were married she was up there. But ah, yeah, she went with us to Fort Jackson when we were stationed there, after I was commissioned. Ah, when we went on Tennessee maneuvers she had to go home ah, because she was very PG at the time and our daughter was born in July of '44. Um, she spent two weeks with me at Fort Bragg, North Carolina just before we sailed for Europe. And then I didn't see her again 'til January of '46.

Question: When you sailed for Europe where did you, where...

Answer: I was then assigned, after I was commissioned at Fort Sill, Oklahoma I was assigned to the 100th division at Fort Jackson, South Carolina as a second lieutenant. And ah, we did our, the division had been activated about two months before I got there so I finished with them the basic training, the advanced individual training, ah, unit training and then advanced unit training. Ah we did all of that between February of '43 and November of '43, at which time we left and drove to Tennessee, the whole division, and took part in winter maneuvers in Tennessee, which in many respects was worse than combat. There were three divisions there and it was the first time that the Army had had maneuvers in Tennessee in the winter. They had been having them in spring, summer and fall but some smart general somewhere said let's do it in the winter, maybe it'll be good training. And it was because the winter we spent in Europe, in France in '44 was the worst winter, that's the Battle of the Bulge winter, the worst winter Europe had seen in 50 years. So that training in Tennessee was invaluable and just the act of staying alive, you know, in those type of conditions. But ah, I moved up the ladder from second lieutenant to first lieutenant, I commanded a battery ah, after let's see, no when we went to Tennessee maneuvers I was a liaison officer which was a captain's job and I was still a second lieutenant, and when we went to Fort Bragg I became a battery executive officer and then took command of a battery as a first lieutenant. And that was the situation we were in when we went to Europe. And ah, we sailed...

Question: So did they, did they put you on a ship? How did you...

Answer: Oh yeah, we sailed out of New York on a ship called the William H. Gordon, a big two master, or two stack, what they called a P-3, the Navy, it was a passenger type ship but it was a Navy ship with a Coast Guard crew. Very interesting. And the captain on the darn thing was a 31-year-old four striper Coast Guarder. And ah, when I first saw him I said my golly I hope he knows (laughs) what this is all about. We sailed a, it was what they called a fast convoy, we had four troop ships a Jeep aircraft carrier, baby aircraft carrier, and five destroyers. And we went, I mean, just about as fast as the Queen Mary. Ah, submarine activity was still very prevalent in the Atlantic. Ah, fortunately though, two days out of New York, out of Camp Kilman, New Jersey where we sailed from, ah, we hit a typhoon, ah

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hurricane, and we were in that hurricane for about five days, you know, I mean, it was awful rough. And I didn't get sick a minute either come to thinking back. A lot of people did. But ah, as a result of that we were safe from submarine activity. They just can't operate in a hurricane. I remember the weather finally broke clear just before we got to Gibraltar. And ah, here this big old rock looms up down on the horizon, you know, and the, the ah escort vessels were close in to us as we went through the straits and we could yell back and forth to the destroyers and those kids on that one destroyer we were talking to hadn't had any hot food other than coffee since we hit the hurricane. They lived that entire time on baloney sandwiches and whatever else but no cooking on the...

Question: Wow.

Answer: Oh it was horrible. At one time, well a destroyer is from the top of the crow's nest to the water line can be about 110, 120 feet and where, we were the big ship in the convoy so we were the lead ship on the left flank. Lead ship, ship, ship, ship, ship here, and then the guards, and looking off to the, the ah port side of our ship, had one of those destroyers in the waves, the destroyer would completely disappear from view (laughs). And that's what we went through.

Question: Now did you, when you were going over there it sounds like you had some other things on your mind, did you know where you were going? I mean did you...

Answer: Oh yeah, we knew we were heading to Marseille and we were to be the first division to land in southern France after the invasion of southern France. The invasion of southern France was made by the, the 3rd, 36th, and the 45th divisions, plus some other, ah airborne troupes. That was operation Dragoon in late August ah, after Normandy in June they made the landing in southern France and it progressed nicely, they had some horrible fighting but it progressed nicely and we were the first division, replacement division to come in behind the three that made the landing. We walked to shore we didn't have to go on landing craft. In fact we got off of our ship and walked across the side of a sunken ship laying there on its side right at the pier at Marseille Harbor. Then we walked, we got out the ship with all our gear and we walked 16 miles up hill to a place called Aix-en-Provence, A-I-X en Provence. And we left our ship at about, I'm guessing now, two o'clock in the afternoon and we got to our Bivouac carrier about two o'clock in the morning. Raining cats and dogs. All our gear, oh it was horrible, that was a miserable night. We got in and they said ok this is your battalion Bivouac carrier and we turned off the road into a field, it was a sea of mud and nobody cared we just collapsed in the mud. And the next morning we started to get organized. We were only there about three days. We went, um what they called combat loaded. So all of our gear, all of our trucks, all of our guns, everything, went in the convoy with us so we didn't have to pick up equipment from over there. We had the equipment that we left Fort Bragg with ah, to go to Camp Kilman, New Jersey. So it took three days to get unloaded and organized and then we started up the Rhone River valley. Ah moving up to the combat zone.

Question: Do you remember what your, when you've had all the training and all that, besides the military part, do you remember what your mind set was like? I mean you're 20 some years old over there, what do you think about?

Answer: Well, ah, this is an interesting question because among other duties I was the what they call the I-N-E officer for the unit. Um, (laughs) we used to call it intelligence and education, it's information and education, INE. And ah, I had to give weekly talks to the troops on just what you're talking about. What's this all about, why are we here, what are we doing going over and taking a chance on getting killed and so on and so on and so on and ah, there was a lot of information put out by the war department but a lot of it was the darndest bunch

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of hooley you ever saw. It was the worse kind of propaganda, I don't know who wrote it, I just, some of it was written by a college freshman I think somewhere. There was good stuff available as well and we did a lot of, of orienting the troops, keeping everybody abreast of the, of the tactical and the strategic situation as best as we could, as best as information was released. Ah, we had access to a lot of classified material of course, ah, which was very helpful in keeping everybody up to snuff with the situation.

Question: What was the, I mean before we get past it, what was, you said there was a lot of hooley they put out.

Answer: Well some of it was so, it wasn't Goebbels-type hooley but it was, it was Gomer Pyle type hooley. I wish I had some of that stuff, I should have kept some of those INE reports that we had to use, you'd see what I mean but ah. Maybe I, that's an unfair assessment because the people...

Question: What was it, like motivational or I mean, was it...

Answer: It was, it was an attempt... Well let me, let me back up a bit. You're familiar that Time Magazine has written um, for the sophomore high school level reader. Ok, now you see what I'm driving at? The material that we got was written for about the eighth grade reader. Well thunder, you had an artillery unit, you didn't have any eighth graders or eighth grade education, oh, we used to have some. We had some of the what you called the hod carriers, the ammunition haulers, people like that. Ah, bless their hearts, from the coal fields of West Virginia

Answer: My battery, for example, of 95 men was about 25 men from Brooklyn, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, 25 Jewish boys -- very smart, very sharp, very capable -- another 25 or 30 from the same area but not Jewish boys but ah, still smart, street wise, you know the type of people, 25 from the coal fields from West Virginia -- well one fella in particular was totally illiterate, a guy named Clem Waldrup, I can still see him, the biggest, huskiest, oh he was a brute, brute strength. I taught him to read and write when we were at Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Answer: And he was one of our best soldiers as a soldier. So you had to, you had to couch your I-N-E presentation to not necessarily the best, or most intelligent guy in the battery and not necessarily the least, you had to try to hit a happy medium. And a lot of the material was presented to us for use with that idea in mind. And ah, it was no easy task, you can well imagine, it was ah, to keep people properly informed, not brainwashed or anything like that but properly and adequately informed about what it was all about in the war, it was a, it was a challenge, it was a very interesting challenge.

Question: When you sat around, and again you didn't a lot of the time sit around, but what type of things did you discuss? I mean, were people homesick?

Answer: Ah, yes. You've heard the expression combat is hours and hours of extreme boredom separated by minutes or maybe seconds by absolute out and out ah, horrendous, ah, oh what's the best expression, challenge to stay alive ah, not knowing what's going to happen, stuff busting all around you, that happened lots of times and believe me, we did, we sat around and talked about everything under the sun. Ah in my little CP group when we were in that bunker that you saw in the Maginot Line, I had six or eight guys in there -- communicators, fire control people, that type of guys ah, who ah, were the more intelligent people -- and we had lots of good old bull, bull sessions. And every once in a while we'd be sitting there bull sessioning and the phone would ring and there would, the yell would be fire

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mission, and we'd immediately go into action and fire a mission. And they'd go to their particular assigned duties and we'd fire the mission that might last five minutes, might last five hours and they very often did, depending on the tactical situation that we were supporting. But ah, yeah there, I was the censor among other things. All mail that went out from the troupes in World War II coming home had to be censored. And ah, man I learned an awful amount about the men in my battery reading their letters home. You know, some of 'em were out and out pornographic, if you will, and others were, were tomes, were beautiful presentations of ah, of what they think about their loved ones and so on. But ah, ah, end some of 'em were damning officers at every turn. There wasn't a good officer alive, and down at the bottom, except Lieutenant Sherman (laughs) or something like that. Not that I was so good but maybe I had 'em buffaloed I don't know.

Question: Or did they know you were the censor?

Answer: Well oh yeah, they knew I was the censor, yeah and I had to sign my name to their letter but ah, all things considered out of the hundreds and hundreds of letters I censored home I can't remember no more than a half a dozen times that the black ink had to be used. But ah, no, back to your question, there were lots of times, lots of times when we just literally sat around, everything was in good order in the battery, all of the logistical elements were taken care of, ah, the sand bags were all in place, the camouflage was perfect, the guns were laid perfectly, the ammunition was stacked properly, everything like that was done, when you really didn't have anything to do. And it was a, it was a real job to keep those guys occupied. You only had so much reading material, ah, the donut dollies only came up every day or every other week, whatever. These are the Red Cross ladies that came up with a truck and served donuts off of the tailgate of the truck. Ah, and we had 'em come right to the battery position lots of times. Ah, but you can only do so much of that. You can only worry about the hot food you're not getting so much of the time. You've got to, the smart ones kept themselves occupied improving themselves one way or another. We even had training courses during the course of the war in the, when we were in the static position ah, that ah, people could take advantage of, things like that.

Answer: But ah, it was really interesting trying to maintain number one, the fighting efficiency of the unit, and number two, maintaining the morale of the unit. And a lot of maintaining the morale of the unit revolved around the availability of mail, the availability of good food, the availability of a little R and R even if it meant taking number three gun section out for cleaning so they didn't have to stand tall and ready in case of a fire mission, ah and things like that. Ah, thinking back on it, that was one of the real challenges of the guy in charge, and believe me you were in charge 24 hours a day. You weren't working an eight hour shift it was a 24 an hour a day job. And you had to keep those things in mind all the time. Another way in my particular battery that we, we ah, accomplished meeting the goal of maintaining efficiency and so on, I rotated people throughout the battery. I took guys from the gun sections and put 'em in the CP so they could see ah, why is that smart little Jew boy in that CP where it's warm, you know, and he can write letters at night, he doesn't have to worry about doing it with a flashlight and so on. Well when you take an ammunition handler and put him in there to do the communicating where they fire direction work and he can't do it. He develops a very different attitude towards that guy sitting up there. And I did that a lot and it worked, it worked beautifully.

Question: Hah.

Answer: I took the smart guy and put him down in the gun and let him do the digging and the ammunition hauling and so on, and so on, and that created a, a very changed, ah, notion in his head of what they went through down there.

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Question: Mutual respect.

Answer: Ah, you bet. And it worked, it worked beautifully. Ah, some of the ah, units had a lot of trouble like that because of that inbred resentment of hey this guy's got something that's a lot better than mine. Well you change it around a little bit and it really helped.

Question: Was there um, and you kind of answered it with that, a normalcy or did you, I mean I can't, I've never been in war, I don't understand what it'd be like that you're out there, 'cause it's not like oh we went over there for a day, we were over there for a long time in this war. Are you constantly afraid? Or do you turn on and off or?

Answer: Ah, I can only speak for myself, I don't know. There were people, there were people in every unit, who were absolutely constantly afraid that oh, that next bullet or that next shell or that next whatever is going to get me. Ah, and those people very often wound up as what we call section eights, and were evacuated for psychiatric evaluation. Ah, I had one man in my battery, we sent him out with a forward observation, or a forward observer team, and ah, he came back after two days. He was a big, burly guy, smart as a whip, and a good soldier. He was, he was literally in tears. He said lieutenant, I can't stand it, I can't stand it, you can shoot me, you can do anything you want to but I can't go back out there. And we kept him around for a while and ah, used him in other jobs but because he wasn't out there where he should have been, he was a scout corporal, who has the direct support of the, of the forward observer lieutenant, and a very valuable cog in the, in the forward observer team in support of the infantry. So ah, somebody had to go out instead and the guy who went out instead, as a matter of fact, was killed. He was killed in action. Ah, what that really makes you think about this. Should I have treated that guy? Should I have accepted his, I can't stand it attitude, and made him go back out with that team where he belonged, where he'd trained. He trained with that team for months before we ever got into combat. But ah, there was something in his background, I'm convinced, that ah, he just couldn't stand it. In World War I they called it shell shocked. In World War II they called it combat fatigue. In Vietnam they called it ah, P ah...

Question: Post traumatic stress...

Answer: Post traumatic stress disorder.

Question: Yes.

Answer: PTSD. All the same thing, exactly the same thing. And ah, you were lucky in an outfit, in a combat outfit, if you didn't come up with two or three percent of your people being affected like that. The infantry, and I spent a lot of time out with the infantry, as a liaison officer and as a forward observer, we rotated the officers the same way, ah, through the various jobs, you had to because of the stress and strain. But ah, ah I was lucky nothing happened to me. I got a few scratches and that's all. But in the "heat of battle" let's say, when the stuff is flying and people are dying that's when the well balanced individual comes to the fore, his, his mental ability to absorb and resist it, it comes fore. Whether the people in World War II were better able to do that because of their generation and generational things, the Great Depression, a lot of hardships that they'd gone through a lot of people, I don't know, I'm no psychologist or psychiatrist but I do know that, that you could usually pick out the guy who's not going to make it in combat. And if you check very deeply into his background, you're gonna find out number one, maybe he was a "mother's boy" maybe he was a single parent child, things like that which led to a lack of ah, ability to withstand that kind of stress and strain. Again, many, many books have been written about this type of thing and I don't

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think anybody is smart enough to say well this guys gonna fail and this guys gonna make it. Ah I just don't think that capability exists. But we all saw it, it happened in every unit that went into combat. Whether they were on an airplane or a ship, in a tank, or on the ground as a doe footer, or an artillery man supporting them, it just happened everywhere. Fortunately it didn't happen enough to really impact the fighting capability of the units. And it, it could be controlled but it was, that was a tough nut to crack.

Question: Now you were, and I'm gonna jump around here a bit, you were at the Battle of the Bulge...

Answer: Ah, our division ah, we were not specifically in the Battle of the Bulge we were, we were in the, what historians are now calling the other Battle of the Bulge. But at the time the Battle of the Bulge started, on the 17th of December 1944, our division was on the left flank of the 7th Army. And on our left flank is the 3rd Army, George Patton's Army. We're attacking generally in a northern direction toward the Bitche sector, in the Bitche sector. The Battle of the Bulge started, and actually our division front went kind of like this. It went north and south and east and west. So we were kind of a spear headed in toward the Siegfried line and so on in the Bitche sector. When the Battle of the Bulge started, as you may remember, George Patton diverted three divisions from attacking this way and diverted them to attack straight north into the shoulder, of the southern shoulder of the Bulge toward Bastogne. And his, one of his divisions relieved Bastogne. In the process from going from a division front in, on the 21st of December when that movement started we had had a division front about 3,500 yards which was normal. We went from a division front of 3,500 yards to a division front of 15 miles. And we're still in this exposed position. And these divisions went this way. So we sat there. We pulled back a little bit from our attack position, and, and set up defensive positions. And on the 24th, no 25th of December I'm in a battery position at Petite Gredershing and they pulled us out and moved us about five miles to a place called Magdan, we served our Christmas dinner off the tail gate of the kitchen truck and then turned right around and moved right back into the battery position that we had left that morning. And we stayed there. Then on the first of January, actually the 31st of December, Operation North wind started which was the second Battle of the Bulge. And the attack was on our left flank and on our right flank. And the stated objective of the Germans was to cut off the 100th division and capture. And believe me they came close to doing it because on the left flank we were spread awfully thin and on the right flank we had a cavalry recon group, 106th cav recon, in position and they called our division headquarters said we're gonna, with this attack going at midnight, we're gonna have to pull back a little ways, they pulled back five miles and literally left the right flank of the division open. Well fortunately there was a reserve battalion in division reserves that managed to plug that up. But we sat there and we fought there for the next 17 days. And killed a hell of a lot of krauts in the process and the Operation North wind also on our right flank way over here, over near a place called Niederbronn and Strasbourg in that area, they attacked ah, in varying strength as well. These were German troupes. I saw dead bodies that were beautifully equipped. They had Arctic clothing, they had white camouflage uniforms on. Ah, I was with the infantry at the time with the first battalion of 398th infantry, and ah, ah, we were just God awful lucky that they didn't penetrate enough to seal off the division. But because of very extensive fighting over here and over here and continuous fighting on the point of the thing ah, we managed to survive it. Ah the, the ah, there were several units that were brought in on the left flank, the 63rd division and the 70th division without artillery, they brought in just the regiments and put them on our right flank. And the 101st division after they were relieved from Bastogne, believe it or not they were diverted down and put in on our right flank. And they stayed there for two weeks and then they pulled 'em out and sent 'em back for much, much needed rest and replacements and so on, to...

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Answer: Hah I was in my unit ah, with the battalion commander and the telephone rang. "Is this Keith Sherman?" "Yeah." "Well this is Smitty." "Well I know a lot of Smitty's but which Smitty are you?" "I'm Ken Smith." He was in my section in OCS in Fort Sill, Oklahoma in '42, '43 and when we were commissioned I went to the 100th division and he went to the 101st. He was a young artillery man and we had a talk on the phone and the next day they pulled out and sent 'em back home, way back into France. But ah, it was sure good talking to him. I knew he was in Bastogne, but I didn't, and I hoped he had survived and he did.

Question: I'm going to jump ahead a little bit and then we'll come back, it's just we, 'cause I want to talk about some of the other places you were, but one question is, what um, what do you think the major messages you'd like to leave with the generations to come?

Answer: Well I've done a lot of things with Veteran's groups since I've retired and of course we looked at the veterans as being the most patriotic, the this, the that, ah, after all they fought, they bled for their country. And that does require a certain element of patriotism among other things, of course. I mean you're fighting not just for your country, but for your family, for civilization, for freedom, and all of those things. I would hope that the current and future generations could develop a little bit more, and ah, it's hard to quantify, but develop a little bit more of the attitudes that we had in World War II. Number one, we don't care who's first, what we care about are the freedoms, and the liberty, and ah, the things we enjoy in this country. The ability to do what we please -- within reason of course -- the ability to say what we please -- within reason, you can't stand up in a crowded theatre and yell fire or things like that, but you can say and do and think what you want generally. The ah, the realization that a heck of a lot of people went before the current and future generations. People who did endure hardships, who did endure pain and suffering and the dislocation and ah, all sorts of things and especially in World War II. The whole country was involved in that war. I mean everybody was involved. From the little kids to the grandparents. The grandparents stood block watch, they did, they helped take care of people who couldn't get out and take care of themselves. A lot of them worked at an age when they would normally be retired. They worked in the war industries. Ah, this country became the arsenal of democracy. And ah, would that ever happen again? Is the, is the attitude of the current and future generations such, that we, the United States of America, could become the arsenal of democracy? I don't know. I have a son who served in Vietnam and proudly served there. He was in the Army for five years. He went in as a private and came out a captain. He did well. Ah at the same time when he came home in 1972 he had to get out of his uniform just as soon as he could. I came home from Vietnam in 1967 the second time, I got into civilian clothes just as soon as I could. Now that's a hell of a note. And, and the people who created that situation, I honestly and firmly believe that they're not good Americans. They weren't then, they aren't now, cause they can't forget what they espoused in those days back in '67, '68, '69. Ah, sure maybe that war wasn't the right war at the right time. I'm not here to say that it was or it wasn't. But the motives behind getting into that war were good. And ah, time has proven that to be true. But be that as it may, ah, what will happen in the future heaven only knows. I just hope that the country retains enough of the spirit that was so prevalent in this country during World War II so that if something like that were to happen again, the same ah, the same feeling of total involvement, of total participation, of total ah, ok we're in this together, we've got to do this together to save and protect our country as we know it, as we love it, as we've had it, and as hopefully we'll have it in the future. I don't know whether that's true today or not, I really don't. I would hope that it is but I don't know whether it is.

Question: Did you leave um, World War II with animosity towards a certain person or people, I mean what, 'cause now we're this global world supposedly.

Keith Sherman

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Answer: When World War II started of course, it started with the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. I was in college at the time in Salem, Oregon and two of my very best friends were Nisei boys. A guy named Ben Tsuga and a fella named Tall Watanabe who wound up incidentally, as the vice-president of the Great Northern Railway and the president of the biggest savings and loan corporation in southern California in later years, and as the trustee on the University of Washington. Those people literally were crushed when that attack took place. Given the nature of the attack, the surprise attack, the no declaration of war and so on, and so on, and two months later they disappeared, they went off with all the Japanese Americans to relocation camps. Ah there was, immediately after Pearl Harbor, there was a sense of hatred in people in this country against the Japanese. Because of the sneak attack, the killing of 3,000 Americans which we didn't know about incidentally until December of 1942. That was one of the best kept secrets of the war. The total affect of that attack of Pearl Harbor was not revealed until December of 1942. Ah how the government managed to keep it that quiet with the media capability we have and so on, I'll never know, but that's beside the point. In that era with the sneak attack and especially on the west coast there was an element of hatred of the Japanese, and unfortunately it carried over into the evacuation of the Japanese from the west coast -- critical zones they called it. That was an abomination in many respects. Especially given the fact that the young men who were evacuated, a great number of them wound up in the 442 regimental combat team and in the 100th infantry battalion, all Nisei. And two of the finest units in World War II in the European Theatre they did a fantastic job. A lot of those people wound up as, as ah, interrogators of Japanese prisoners in the Pacific. Another program that was, was totally secret until 20, 25 years ago. Ah and they did a fabulous job. A good friend of mine in Spokane today, ah was in that group, he retired as a full colonel in the Army. He stayed in as a regular Army officer. Ah, going the other way, I don't remember a sense of, a similar sense of hatred of the Germans, albeit they started the war. Ah, the German population in this country probably exceeds that of Germany, I don't know I, that's a guess but I think it's a pretty good guess. So ah, my wife is half German by descent. Her grandfather came from the Alsace Lorraine area when it was a part of Germany. Ah, but as the war developed and as the ah, well the plight of the POW's in Germany became known and of course the concentration camps became known, and the treatment of the Jews, ah things like that came out and more of the true ah, picture of Nazi-ism arose, I think there was an element of hatred toward the Germans, maybe not so much hatred but wonderment of how the German people whom we know as the creators of Beethoven and Brahms and Mozart and ah, Pabst beer and things like that. How all, how that group of people as a people could put up with the things that the Nazi's did. Ah, and a reflection on that point, when we actually moved into Germany and were fighting in Germany and occupying German towns and so on, and German homes, we never found a Nazi. We never found a Nazi. I wasn't a Nazi, see that house down there take that house, that's my brother, he was a Nazi. Things like that, I ran into that on several occasions. But so far as a hatred of the Germans, a la the hatred which immediately arose after Pearl Harbor, I didn't see any of that. I don't think it existed. Ah, we knew the Nazi's were, were ah, were vicious, what ever you want to call it, well annihilators of the Jews, among other things. We saw as we got deeper and deeper into Germany some of the atrocities that they had committed. But it was, it was entirely different. When we started realizing how the Japanese treated our prisoners of war, believe me that created a hatred I think, as much nearly as did Pearl Harbor. And I have several friends who survived ah, Japanese POW status, who to this day, they just can't tolerate anything Japanese. Ah, and I don't blame 'em a bit. I've often said when you go out to buy a car some of the best cars are made in Japan, but I'll never buy a Japanese car, so I buy a German car (laughs). Ah, and I wouldn't buy a Japanese car not because of Pearl Harbor and the POW treatment but it's because of the way they treat our automobile industry verses the way that the Germans do.

Question: Now you were also at ah, Alsace Lorraine?

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Answer: Alsace Lorraine?

Question: Alsace Lorraine.

Answer: Yeah, we, the, our major combat was in Alsace Lorraine. That's where we entered combat when we relieved the 45th division on line. And we fought in the Alsace region from October, November, December and then we stayed after Operation North wind petered out in January, we sat in a static position for about not quite two months in Alsace Lorraine, ah, we finally broke through into Germany on the 15th of March '45.

Question: We know what, what, the history books tell us about Alsace, but what, what don't we know?

Answer: Well Alsace Lorraine is one of the most interesting parts of Europe. It's a region that was back and forth like a ping pong ball between Germany and France. If you remember before Napoleon it was a part of Germany. After Napoleon it was a part of France and it stayed a part of France until the Franco Prussian War of 1870 when it became a part of Germany again. Stayed a part of Germany until 1918, the end of World War I. Was now a part of France. In 1940 ah, Hitler conquered France and it became a part of German again. And ah, it stayed that until 1940, well until we liberated it, we and the rest of the 7th Army in March of 1945. Strasbourg, the capital of Alsace Lorraine was actually liberated in November of '44, and in Operation North wind ah, we wanted to withdraw from that sector so that Strasbourg would again, would have become part of Germany and ah, De Gaulle said we will not evacuate Strasbourg, if you, the 7th Army, evacuate Strasbourg, I will cut off your logistic tail coming across France. This created quite a battle between De Gaulle and Eisenhower and it's well written up in the history books but ah, the story, that was the basic story. The 7th Army, the 6th Army group, which consisted of the 7th U.S. Army and the French 1st Army, stayed in place, never did evacuate Strasbourg. But Alsace Lorraine is a fantastic are

Answer: They speak two languages, of course because of all this back and forth. Right now it's French and hopefully will stay French. Ah when, on our last tour when we were stationed in Saarbrücken, we were just 15 minutes from Alsace Lorraine, and we went over, many times, over into that area for lunch, to the crystal factories and so on and so on, and ah, we went into a little town called Lemberg which had been on the front lines from the 20, or from the first of January until the 15th of March, our front line went right through there. And ah, I spent a lot of time in Lemberg in that period and there was a, a fellow who was a "German soldier" from Lemberg drafted into the German army, who was ah liberated, well he wasn't liberated, he was wounded in Russia, came back home, managed to get back home to Lemberg, the day that the 398th infantry liberated the town. That was in December. (Name Inaudible Begh?) was his name. And when we were there in 1970 ah, we went to his crystal store and we started talking, he spoke pretty good English, spoke perfect French of course and perfect German. And I said well you know where were you during the war, and his story came up well I was in Lemberg the day the 398th infantry liberated it. I said, you were? I said, I was in the 375th field artillery supporting that operation at the time. Were you in the 100 division? And I said, yes, and he went tearing into the house and came out with a division patch and held it up and he said I want to take your picture. Well the upshoot of that was when Liberation Day came the next year, he sent us a letter and invited my general and myself and anybody else I wanted to bring over for the Liberation Day ceremony. We went over there and I'll tell you, it was something else. The whole town turned out. The little kids, everybody, they had a town band. They didn't have the music for the Star Spangled Banner. The mayor's wife was an American, she went to the band practice and sang it for them, about seven times, and they wrote it down and they played it beautifully. And I wrote a speech for our general to give at the ceremony and he gave it in very good French. So Alsace Lorraine

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holds a very special part in our hearts, both during the war and our last duty station at Saarbrücken.

Question: When you were there during the war, I mean were you in a war zone? What was it like? Cause now you're in this beautiful are

Answer: ..

Answer: Yeah oh it was beat up like mad. Little town of Lemberg was pounded all to pieces but ah, ah, the people ah, it was interesting, the people were some of them were just tickled to death to have us there and others were out and out rabid Germans. I mean they'd been German for 50 years, well not quite, since 1918, well they'd been German from 1870 to 1918, and then from 1918 to 1940 they were French. And then they were German again. So their ancestors were mostly German and there was, there was some resentment and some antagonisms and, but most of the places, I went over to that, to that area in 1994 for our 50th anniversary of the liberation of Alsace Lorraine, and we went to two ah, towns, Lemberg, Bitche, and Petite, ah Raon-l'etape which was the first town that our division liberated in France. And oh my gosh, they all turned out, the town. There were 50 of us on this bus, all veterans of the 100th division, and they turned out the town and feted us and banquets and luncheons and it was just amazing in all three places. We just had a fantastic time. But ah, yeah it's, it's a really interesting part of the world I'll tell you that. Going back and forth like that from nationality to nationality. Um, talking about my wife, her grandfather's name was Dameroux and, which is a good French name, but he was German 'cause he came out of Alsace Lorraine when it was occupied by the Germans. And we have a dear friend ah, Dannielle Lloyd, Dannielle Dasamoux married to another colonel friend of mine. And she asked Jean what her maiden, grandfather's name was, she said well, Dameroux. He was not German he is French, he was French. So that's Alsace Lorraine. It was, it's a conundrum.

Question: Ok I got to switch tapes here.