

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Erwin W. Scott, Jr.
Paratrooper, 517 Air Borne R.C.T.**

April 6, 2002

Interview with
Mr. Erwin W. Scott, Jr.

Mr. Richard Misenhimer

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is April 6, 2002. I am interviewing Mr. Erwin W. Scott, Jr. at his home in Los Fresnos, Texas. His mailing address is P. O. Box 144, Los Fresnos, Texas 78566. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Erwin, I'd like to thank you for taking time to do this interview today. Let me ask you, where were you born?

Mr. Erwin Scott

Houston, Texas. My birth date is 4-2-25. April 2, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your parents names?

Mr. Scott

My father was Erwin W. Scott and my mother was Ione Mae Scott.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your dad's occupation?

Mr. Scott

My father started off as a farmer in Michigan. I guess he couldn't wait to get off the farm. When he married my mother, there were 3 brothers that owned a farm. She did washing by building a fire under a wash tub and all that. She fed and clothed 4 grown men. I don't know exactly when the first children came along. My brother is 12 years older and my sister is 14 years older. They were born in the north. I was the very first one in the family to be born in Texas. I did come to Texas as an infant in arms in 1925. I have lived in the Rio Grande Valley, well, Cameron County actually, all of my life with the exception of when we went back to Houston for 5 years. My mother ran the YMCA Café in Houston. Then, Uncle Sam took 2 ½, almost 3 years, in World War II. I was discharged December 23rd of '45.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know when you went in?

Mr. Scott

I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had a brother and sister older. Did you have any younger than you?

Mr. Scott

No. Only 3 in the family. Brother and sister still alive. My sister is 90 and just recently lost her ability to drive a car. My brother is 88 and he still drives cross country in Houston rush hour traffic.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Scott

I graduated from Harlingen High School in 1942 at the age of 16. I didn't find a job in the valley, so I went to San Antonio to welding school. Both acetylene and arc welding. I worked in a ship yard until Uncle Sam called me in June of '43. I have recently run across a publication from a little museum in Toccoa, Georgia. I sent off a small amount of money for a year's membership.

Mr. Misenhimer

December 7th of '41 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Do you remember where you were?

Mr. Scott

Yeah. Down Raymondville Road. We had a house down there. It was a Sunday, fairly early in the day. I had the radio on and it was announced over the radio. I was still in school. My reaction was anger. Extreme anger. As quick as I finished high school, I approached mother and father about signing papers to let me go in the service right then. My father was willing to sign them, but my mother was not. I put together all the reasons why I should go and she gave me a hearing of maybe 2 hours. She thought about it quite a little bit and then said, No. I don't intend to sign. A week or 2 later, I thought I'd approach her again. She said, Listen. I listened to you completely and I said no. And, it's no and don't ever ask again. I don't believe I ever asked again.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, in June of '43 you went in. Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Scott

On my 18th birthday, I went down to the recruitment place. I said, it's my 18th birthday and I'm ready to go. They said, you are in the machinery for being drafted promptly. It's really better off if you just wait and let that happen. So, actually, I was drafted. I went to Fort Sam in San Antonio. We were given menial jobs maybe they were important, but one day was spent in lawn care, another day I was in the Quarter Master shop, passing out clothing. I passed out some clothing, but mostly, I passed out shoes. One day someone came through from Laredo who wore a 3 ½ shoe. It was actually taller by quite a little bit than it was wide. I wore a 7 ½. Later in the day, almost time to quit, a bunch of colored people came through from Beaumont. One of those took a 16 EEEE. In both cases, when the Sergeant realized I had 2 very unusual sizes, said give both of them 2 extra pair of shoes. They will probably never find another pair in the army that will fit them. We had those sizes. That 16 was almost big enough to be a carrying case to take a trip on. I spent some time trying to volunteer to go in the Air Force. I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I found out, it would take slightly over 4 months to take the physical to find out if I could even apply to get in the Air Force. Of course at that time, I thought the war was going to be over a heck of a lot quicker than it was. He told me, the Paratroopers are taking them right now. If you want to volunteer for that and it pays extra money as well. The flying in combat paid extra also. Yeah, the paratroopers sound fine. The next day I went on a train to Toccoa, Georgia 30577 where many of the parachute people trained. Actually, the 3rd Army Band trained there also. A very small group. They were older people. We laughed at them, because their commander was kind of getting around the edges of the exercises that we did. Standing at attention and parades. It wasn't uncommon for one of the men to stand for 15 or 20 minutes in the sun at attention and just faint and fall down. Of course, that produced a lot of laughs on our part. I did not know until some years later after hearing some other army bands, that we were listening to one of the best bands in the nation. While they were an extremely good band, physical specimens they weren't.

Mr. Misenhimer

What age do you think they were?

Mr. Scott

Oh, they were probably up to 40 years old or close to it. At the time, I thought they were older than that. They certainly had some gray hair and 2/3 's of them had some what of a pot belly. I don't think there was anybody 18 in the band. Okay. We trained 9 months in the States and the day we went overseas, the average age of our company was, including officers, was less than 21 years of age. That's pretty young. My battalion commander was the youngest battalion commander in World War II. He was a West Pointer and he was a Battalion Commander over us at age 24.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was his name?

Mr. Scott

Richard (Dick) Sietz. He is still alive and in good shape. Our Regimental - not the head honcho, but the exec under him, was Zais. He had to fight 3 wars to do it, but he retired as a 4 Star. Our Battalion Commander fought 3 wars and he retired as a 3 Star. The 517 Regimental Combat Team, which is what we were. We were a Regiment of Infantry, a Battalion of Pack Artillery, a Company of Engineers and a Service Company. All those numbers totaled up to about 3,000 people. We were a good bit smaller than say the 82nd Air Borne, which was a Division or the 101st. The 509th was a Battalion that never got any bigger than that and went into combat as 650 to 700 people.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to your training there in Georgia. What all did that consist of?

Mr. Scott

About 5:30 in the morning, you were up and rolled out on the parade grounds in 10 or 15 minutes at the most. They had a mountain called Mount Currahee. It was a very unusual mountain, because we would start out in the morning and we would run, and there were lots of twists and turns on it, up hill. Until we were pretty tired and then we'd turn around and we would run back. Physics would think that you would be going down hill. But, going back, it would seem like we were going up hill, too. We had calisthenics, and rifle training. The paratroopers had to be proficient. There were about 5 grades of how good you were with a rifle. The bottom grade wasn't very good. The top 2 grades, paratroopers had to be proficient in every single weapon with one of the top 2

grades. We were really pretty special. I did not know until well after the war, but our Battalion Commander interviewed people coming in. I remember him saying a few words to me, but I really didn't think of it as an interview. I found out later that he interviewed over 3,000 people to get 650. So, I think maybe we were pretty special. If you had a broken bone, if you had ever broken a bone, they didn't take you. If you were over 6foot tall they didn't take you. We had a Staff Sergeant that was 6'2". I don't know how he slipped through. You had to be at least 5'2" and you had to weigh at least 110 pounds. Then you needed to have an IQ the same as was required to get into OCS.....Officer Candidate School. I think the IQ level waa 110. I recall 155 was the very top. We did have 2 kids that tested 152. They trained with us. They went overseas with us. After a short time in combat, somebody went through the records and said, Anybody over 150 IQ were immediately shipped back to the States to go through OCS. I think we only lost 2 to that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which weapons did you train on?

Mr. Scott

Our basic weapon was the M1 Grand. A very solid rifle. Almost all of us had that. Two people in every platoon had a '03. A 1903 - bolt action rifle. It would be what was called a sniper rifle. They did have a scope on it and they were expected to make long range shots. Long range being more than 400 yards. We were all capable of hitting almost every shot in the bull at 500 yards. Now, it was a bigger bull for 500 yards. Everybody, with the exception of the cooks. They didn't have to live up to quite the same category. When I speak of cooks, not bragging or complaining, but that's just the way the army did it. If you washed out of parachute school, almost 100% they did one of 2 things with you. They made you an MP or a cook. For some reason, our group didn't seem to get along real well with MP's or Cooks. In fact, one of our cooks, and I don't believe it was over the quality of the food, one soldier was able to get another rifle (not his own rifle) out of supply and he shot a cook at 160 yards. It went through a plate glass window. One shot in the head and killed him dead. I do not remember what happened to him. I don't think he got the death penalty, but the man who did the shooting no longer trained with us. I don't know what happened to him. I'd like to find out, but there are so many of us gone. And, we're going at a pretty fast rate. We have a class reunion of our people every 2 years. When they first started having it,

it was 12 years after the war was over and they had them every 3 years. Then, as they got older, they decided they better have them every 2 years. This past year, it was in Bismark, North Dakota. Ones I have attended, one was in the southern tip of California....not San Diego, but close to it. There's a place that has a 6 story frame hotel. The electricity was put in there by Edison. They have sprinklers in every single room. It has had the honor of having a number of Presidents spend some time there. I didn't find out they were meeting for a long, long time. The address they had for me was a Houston address which is where I was living when I actually went in the service. In the Houston phone book, the Scotts took up a considerable number of pages. In the Rio Grande Valley, where I've lived most of my life and consider home, although all my kin folks stayed in Houston. They didn't find me.

There's a publication called Static Line.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard of it. Tell us what it is.

Mr. Scott

A static line. There are 2 ways for a parachute to be opened. One is you pull a handle and the chute pops out. But, the more sure way of getting it open is a static line. A static line runs the length of the airplane and it has a hell of a big snap that you snap on that line. When you get up to the door, you jump out of the door. You fall some 20 odd feet. This line is a thick nylon strap. It is strong enough to pull an automobile out that's stuck in the mud. It pulls the chute out to where it opens up. The chute is attached to the line. It takes 100 pounds to break, but your weight falling and the fact that the airplane you got out of is going about 140 miles per hour. Standing on the ground, you look up and it looks like the parachute opens so gentle. And you float down to the ground and even hit the ground gentle. But, it gives you a real jerk. When I say a real jerk, this is a pretty good pair of pants I got. In my pants pocket I have a 3 1/2" pocket knife that doesn't weigh much. But if you had this knife in your pocket with regular clothes, when the chute opened, it got right on out the pocket and right on down to the ground. Your rifle is taken apart in 2 pieces. It goes in a heavy nylon carry case about 3 feet long. It is strapped on with the same type of heavy hooks that your parachute is pulled opened with. You put it together as quick as you get on the ground which really doesn't take but seconds. You discard the case and the chute in combat. In the States, you roll the chute back up and take it and put it in the drying shed. You run it on way up in the air and its ready to be

packed the next morning. At that time, you go get it and they have long tables. You put the top of the parachute on the edge of the table and pull it out. You put the pack by the little hook down there. You open the chutes up and you pack one pie shaped piece at a time. Then, you do other things to it. In parachuting school now, the paratroopers do not pack a single chute ever. In World War II, as far as I know, every paratrooper packed the first 5 chutes that they jumped. After that, they were packed by riggers. Ones who did it all the time. I feel certain that the reason they did it was to convince us that the parachutes would open. Really open. In my time at jump school, which was a 4 week period, one chute ---- he was given a chute to pack and it was sort of semi packed. But, he was able to pull a strap or 2 and put it in the bin. If a chute doesn't open, it is usually because it has been packed for a long time and the silk or nylon kind of sticks together. A pretty good friend of mine. He came out and the chute was like a long ribbon in the air. When he hit the ground, I think everybody there thought he was dead. It fully opened when his feet were about 5 feet off the ground. The one shock that he got was the shock of the chute opening. Everybody ran out to pick the bones up off the ground, and he stood up and shook his head a little bit. They made him go back and jump again that same day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he pack his chute again the second time?

Mr. Scott

I really don't know. They were sure he was going to jump again. They figured 24 hours might make him not want to jump.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he finish the school?

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. Any paratrooper, at least when I was going through, through the first 5 jumps can say, I don't really like this. Then, they make a cook or an MP out of you. You're out without any misgivings. They just transfer you out. Once you've made 5 jumps, it is a court martial offense to refuse to jump. In combat, well, back in the States even, one of the officers in our out fit was a Doctor. This one Doctor really didn't like to jump. More than once he went up and was really supposed to jump and some excuse would be the reason he didn't go out of the plane and went

back and got out when it landed. The Sergeant of my platoon, and we were the airplane that had the doctor, was told by the company commander that he was to see that the doctor jumped first. If he really didn't, the Sergeant was to take him to the front of the plane, take out the pistol he was carrying, slide it back so the doctor could see that there was one in the chamber, and tell the doctor that he was either going to jump or he would kill him. And, he did jump. Maybe with a little hesitation. Our stick was a little late getting out, but not much. That was one jump the doctor made. Once you got on the ground, you thought it would be better for the doctor to come to someone who was badly wounded than trying to get him back. But, if you could get him back to the doctor alive, he pretty well brought him through. He was a fantastic doctor. We sure liked his skills, but we didn't think much of him because of his reluctance to jump. A couple times we felt like we needed to get him up to the front and he was slow to come. He stayed pretty far back. Didn't hear many shells. They wouldn't be shooting back there where he was. Next we moved to Fort MaCall, North Carolina.

Mr. Misenhimer

Back to Georgia. When did you take your first jump? Did you practice on a tower first?

Mr. Scott

Yes. Well, the first thing you do is come through an airplane like fuselage and jump into a sawdust pit that about 30 inches off the ground. Then you get to a tower that 28 feet with an awful lot of sawdust down there.

Occasionally, someone would freeze up there and not want to come out the door. And really, when you came out the door, you came down a cable about 100 yards long. With a harness on and everything. One of the people in the jump school would see someone who didn't want to go out the door. He'd come up and say, why don't you want to go out the door? Well, I might fall. The cable might break. The Sergeant would say, you're going out or I'll come up there and throw you out. So, usually the guy did. We were the first outfit that took the basic training entirely before we went to jump school. Normal jump school failures were in the neighborhood of 20-30%. I think we had only 3 people back out of jump school of the entire regiment. By that time we were close friends. We had grown to know that we could trust everybody. In my platoon, you had no trouble when you took a shower of leaving your bill fold and money on your bed. I'm told that many infantry outfits that thieving was fairly often. It was something we didn't have to worry about. Maybe at the tail end, by the time the war was over and we were

waiting to come home. We were among new people in any case. Okay, when the war was over, Eisenhower gave people that had been in combat quite a bit the option of staying in Europe on guard duty and not having to go straight to Japan. Most of our people that had something physically wrong with them, medical, that would keep them from going to Japan, went back to the States right quick. A few wanted to go kill Japs. By the time the war was over in Europe, most of us had enough close calls that we weren't at all crazy about having to go to Japan. In my case, it meant about 4 extra months of service in Berlin. All in Berlin. I was transferred into the 82nd Air Borne and I think it was the 506 Battalion. Of all things, I had a company commander there, who was a graduate of West Point. He was in the 82nd Air Borne. He was in one Company, and if you were in that company or battalion, you could have made as many as 5 combat jumps. Most people only made 1. A fair number made 2. The number that made 3 was rare. And, 5 was really rare. This Company Commander, I had, had made 5 combat jumps. I don't know his rank when he went overseas, but he was a Captain in Berlin when the war was over in Europe. And, the "90 day wonders" were mostly captains and majors and light colonels by that time. That tells you something about the guy. He called me in the office one day and he offered to make me a T 5. A T 5 is a corporal that does something special. He offered to give me a T 5 rating if I'd sign up for a 4 year term. I laughed so hard I was afraid he was going to give me KP. A good while after that, we were in Berlin and Eisenhower had passed down orders – no KP for any of the soldiers who had been in combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to your training. When was your first parachute jump out of a plane? What was it like?

Mr. Scott

We trained in Georgia, 3 months or better. Then we got to Camp McCall, North Carolina and we trained there a little bit more until they had room for us at jump school. Fort Bragg was jump school and it wasn't too far from Camp McCall, North Carolina. We went to Fort Bragg for 4 weeks. We learned to pack our chutes. One chute, I packed, I put in a big bag so it was loose. When I got back to the shed and took it out, there was a bunny rabbit in it. I have no idea how he got there. We got quite a bit more training after jump school.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did your first jump feel like?

Mr. Scott

The first jump would be a good bit higher in the air than the other jumps. We were told it was 1200 feet. 1200 to the ground seems like it takes an awfully long time to get down. When you get 30 feet from the ground, you are going real fast. I thought I'd be real cute. I figured I could keep a fountain pen in there without it going out when the chute opened. I had 7 post cards. When your chute opens, you are suppose to look up and see if there are any long strips. There weren't any. The parachute has a hole in the top of it where the lines go across 6 inches around. When I looked up at that hole, and I knew I'd packed my own chute, I was horrified. That hole was big enough to put a wash tub through. When I got on the ground, it shrunk to 6 inches. I was looking at a .45 that somebody drunk was waving around one time, and I thought it was a flare pistol. A flare pistol had a shell the size of a shotgun shell and it's really thin metal. But, the mouth of it is as big as a 12 gauge shotgun. A .45 pistol is more like somebody's little finger - 1/2 inch. When he was waving it around in a bar with a live round in it threatening to pull the trigger, I really thought I was looking at a Flare Pistol. So, I really question what people tell the police when they're excited. It seemed horribly wrong when I saw that parachute opening. I wasn't going down any faster than anyone else. I had a reserve chute that I could pull at any time. When I saw I wasn't going any faster than anybody else I quit worrying and started writing these post cards. As I was falling. I wrote everyone of them coming down. I hit the ground so lightly that I didn't even realize I was on the ground until I saw the parachute fall in front of me. Now, I had some that jarred my eye teeth a little bit, but that certainly wasn't one of them. I found it difficult to believe that I got on the ground without knowing it. We made 6 jumps. We made 1 a day for 5 days. I don't know if we made the 6th on Saturday or Sunday. A friend of mine, at a recent reunion, saw the parachute towers out there. There are 3 towers and they are 250 feet tall. They have a steel ring around and you can parachute all the way around and also in the center. They carry you up and give you toilet paper before you go..... it's to make sure which way the wind's blowing. They carry 3 people up at a time. There are 4 arms, but they don't put anyone on the arm that the wind might blow you into the tower. They say, Number 1, turn your paper loose. If it goes away from the tower, they cut you loose and down you come. Number 2. Number 3. There was a pretty good size house built inside the base of the deal. We didn't know what it was for. We had a reunion there, 2 years before the last one in North Dakota. All of us old timers who had trained there

and gone to school there, the subject came up -----Wonder what that building is in the tower? We convinced ourselves that it wasn't there when we were there. I recently found a brochure that I mailed home when I was there. There was a picture of it, just like it is today.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is it still an active base?

Mr. Scott

It sure is. They quit using it for 12 years, but they started using it 2 years before we went there for this last reunion. And now, it's a bit different. Once we were on parachute pay during World War II, we got it whether we jumped or whether we didn't. Now, they have to jump 4 times a year - once every 90 days - to stay on parachute pay. Many people that aren't parachute infantry or any regular combat unit or anything else. They may be a doctor or a clerk or what ever are on parachute pay. Apparently the government doesn't frown upon it too much, because I guess they feel they don't get paid very good. But, many of them are going back to Fort Benning on a regular basis. Some go back and make a whole lot of jumps because they want to. I don't know if they have to pay for airplane time or get their own plane or what. A number go back and make the jump to continue to draw the extra money. In our case, we didn't have to. We got an extra \$50 a month and officers got \$100.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your regular pay?

Mr. Scott

It was \$50, but they helped it out a little bit. If you fired top round with a rifle, you got \$7. Then, when we went overseas and got the combat infantry badge,well, 2 things - we got 10% more for overseas pay and the combat infantry badge gave us another \$7. Of course we got the \$50 for jump pay. We were a lot better paid than British troops or French troops or any other troops that we might be close to at one time or another. A first lieutenant on parachute pay got about the same money as a British Major. Sometimes, the British really didn't like to have us around, because we would run up the price of buying a bottle of wine or something like that. Camp MaCall is no longer there I'm told. The streets are still laid out. The person that writes this Static Line Newspaper keeps track. They keep track of every single person that was Air Borne in World War II. That's how

the 517 people found me. I found out about the Static Line and got a subscription. When it came out, I got 5 telephone calls in a week. Hey, what happened to you? It was shortly before this reunion that we had close to San Diego -----we usually draw 800 to 1000 people. When people hit retirement age, they started finding a lot of folks because they went back to where they had been drafted from. In the small towns, the post master knows everybody and gets mail to them even if the address isn't the same. We really had more than 3000 people in the outfit, because as people got hurt, new people came in to replace them. Shoot, we got replacement in Italy after less than 30 days on the front line. After any campaign, you got replacements. Some it took a while to get use to, but if they were in your platoon, it didn't take long to get to be pretty good buddies. When we started getting replacements is when you had to watch your bill fold on the bed a little. Maybe a little bit. They were mostly honest people - maybe one or 2 bad apples around.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished jump school, where did you go then?

Mr. Scott

Right back to Camp McCall. We left Camp McCall roughly 9 months after we entered the service. Maybe closer to a year, because we got into Italy in May or June of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you leave from to go to Italy?

Mr. Scott

The last place we had regular barracks was Camp McCall. We went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. We spent maybe one or two days there. I got on the boat and we were on it quite a while before it left - 6 hours or 8 hours or more than that. I got seasick with the boat right there at the dock. I up chucked, but not bad a little bit. But, it was a blessing because I didn't get seasick all the way over there. Some of the guys got awful seasick. We left there, I don't remember the name of the boat,some of the fellows remember all that. We were about 12 days getting across.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in a convoy?

Mr. Scott

Yes. We were in a convoy, but it wasn't a real slow convoy. It wasn't real fast either. I wouldn't know if we zigzagged.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the conditions like on the boat?

Mr. Scott

I thought the food was pretty good. I was fairly satisfied with the army food all the way through. We slept on bunks. They were fairly close together. I remember a winding stairway that went up 7 decks from where we were. Another thing that was unusual about our trip going over, we had a company of WAC's and a goodly number of nurses. Some of them, nurses and WAC's and our guys drank. They found that the lights in the life boats had denatured alcohol in them and they drank it. I think 2 nurses went blind and 1 died and about 3 of the troopers died from drinking denatured alcohol. I just can't fathom, with the medical training a nurse would have, that she would drink denatured alcohol. A lot of gambling on the ship going over. The cheapest we had been able to buy cigarettes on a base in the States was 50 cents a carton. On the boat going over, we got them for 43 cents a carton. That's the only time I ever got them for less than 50 cents. We got to Europe and we bought them for 50 cents a carton. I did smoke. I learned to smoke in the service. I liked cigars and chewing tobacco the best. I smoked as much in the service as anybody else did. It seemed liked everybody in our company smoked. I guess there were 2 guys who were Mormons who didn't smoke. The Mormons didn't drink or smoke or cut up like the other guys did. They were the nicest of anybody we had. We also had a few people who were older than myself. In my platoon, we had a guy from North Carolina who was 28 years old. He was about the best shot in the bunch. He also liked the whiskey better than anybody else in the bunch. We had another fellow who was 32 years old. The only reason he got in was he already had 2 brothers who were in parachute outfits that were already in combat. That was the sole reason he got in. Both the 28 and 32 year olds, when we had to sleep on rocks or something, we'd try to get the branches off a tree and make a soft place for them to lay down. (Chuckle) (Chuckle) They called us snotty nose youngsters anyway. They didn't appreciate being taken care of, but we thought anybody that old (Chuckle) needed extra care.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the whole 517th RCT on this ship going over?

Mr. Scott

I really don't know. I kind of think we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about equipment? Trucks? Rifles?

Mr. Scott

We didn't take equipment. We had old rifles. They were the Garand rifle, but they had 4 serial numbers. But, they gave us a brand new one when we got off the boat and it had 6 digits on it. It didn't shoot near as good as what we left at home. The mass production did something to it. The ones we had apparently were within the first 9,000 made. Maybe Garand made all of them. They were almost as good, but not quite. We were trained for the 60 millimeter bazooka, the 90 millimeter bazooka, the Thompson sub machine gun, the grease gun, the carbine, the M 1. We all loved the Thompson, but if we had to carry it, we would have taken the grease gun over the Thompson. We would not have used the grease gun the way it came from the factory. There were 2 rods there and they had a long spring that went on the rods. It fired putt putt putt. If you got an extra set of springs and put 2 springs on each rod and then put the bolt on, it wasn't as fast as a German machine pistol, but it was faster than a Thompson. It threw more lead. In Italy, there was an ammunition dump out there, where we could go out and get ammo..... 30.06, and .45 and blast away to our hearts' content. I know one time on a grease gun we fired it just as fast as you could put a clip in. We got the barrel to a cherry red and it still fired and did not stop. It used .45 pistol ammunition, same as a Thompson. We only had 3. We had that and the 30.06 and the M 1 - probably better than any pistol shell at the time. You were suppose to take a shot at a German or something up to 300 yards. Beyond that it wasn't a good idea to fire at anybody. One time, in southern France, we got to a place where we pretty well stayed in that area for a good long time. There was a Fort down across the valley. You could see, I think it had to be more than a mile, an officer at that fort. He'd come out with binoculars and look our way. This Steagall that I was telling you about that was 28, he said, "I believe I can get that son-of-a-bitch from here." One thing we were taught to do in training was estimate yardage. They would have courses where we would walk daily, like to the

chow hall, 107 yards. On long marches, they would have 100 yards marked off and you weren't to change your step but take your regular step and count them. I took 107 steps to a 100 yards. Some things you remember just like my army serial number - 38539312. I have trouble with my social security number. Any how, Steagall had a piece of paper. He had about 8 of us guess the yardage. He put the figures all down and added them up and divided them. He set the sights. They were iron sights on that 1903. He got the sling out and got down. Finally squeezed one off. Of course, we were watching through binoculars, too. The guy crumpled. So he hit him a good one. I've told people that, deer hunters, and they think you're crazy when you tell them you saw somebody hit somebody weighing about 160 pounds at that distance. Doesn't happen every day. I know that. I think I probably killed 3 Germans. You really don't know. Because, other people next to me were shooting, more or less, at the same things I was shooting at. But, I think you know when you hit something. I didn't know it then, but the next day or so when you move forward, there were 3 dead bodies - well, there were more than 3 - there that I think I hit. Another interesting fact to me, we had a Corporal by the name of Attenberry. Usually, when you saw Germans, they were a good ways off. We bumped into 2 Germans. From where Attenberry was standing to where the German were standing was maybe 40 feet. The German was in the process of bringing his rifle up and Attenberry was in the process of bringing his rifle up and he shot. Really tore the guy up. We asked Attenberry later, how come you wasted so much ammunition on him? He said, well, I only shot twice. Maybe 3 times. We told him, put your rifle up in the air and fire one round. He shot one and the clip went flying out, so he shot him 7 times. He still couldn't believe he shot 7 times. Close escapes. I survive 5 pretty good explosions. One of them here in the States. One was in a house that blew up in southern France. It had been cleared by the engineers as being safe. It killed 7 of my buddies and scratched up 3 of us. I didn't even get enough scratch out of it for the Purple Heart. It was a booby trap and a damn good one, too. The only reason it wasn't full of officers is because they hadn't seen it. The engineers had been there and cleared it. The Germans had taken and dug out, down in the cellar. There were some potatoes down there, but it was dirty. Didn't look like anything had been done to it for 50 years. Many of those house would have wine in the cellar and potatoes and cabbage. The room was cleared. They estimated later that there was 500 pounds of TNT under the floor. They poured a new concrete floor, made it look old, and dumped the potatoes on it. I don't know when they set the timer. I guess they allowed a full day after they left,

because it blew at 2 in the morning. I do believe that the Colonel and the Battalion tops would have been in the house if they'd seen it. It was that nice a house. I was in one of the rooms, but it was closer to the outside of the house. It got a few scratches and a lot of dust up my nose. My ears rang for quite a while. One guy we dug out and he was alive for sure. We had trouble with his leg because we didn't think it was his leg. It was bent at a 45 degree angle - the whole thing. We knew it was broken. He came back to us from the hospital, 30 days later, with x-rays. And, it wasn't broken. I would not have believed it. It just blew up by itself. It was on a timer for 2 in the morning. Also in Italy, this Steagall, again, and another guy who liked to drink real well. This was real early in combat. We hadn't been there a week. There was kind of a garage like building, made out of stone or plaster. We were clustered around there. We weren't expecting any artillery or anything like that. We knew we were back a ways. One of them, walked in and said, oh, look. Here's 5 gallons of good wine. Old Steagall said, that could be booby trapped. He was kidding. Nobody believed that it was booby trapped. Not a thought. A parachute has 28 cords and they are 28 feet long, I think. They are a good bit smaller than your little finger - a little smaller than a pencil - and they'll carry 400 pounds of weight. You'd cut them out of your parachute - 1/2 a dozen of them - real quick, wrap them around your fist and stick them in your pack. They came in real handy. He said, "Well, here is what will we do." Steagall pulled out a piece of line and wrapped it around the top and said, we'll get outside and pull on it. The guy said, if you stand in front of the door and it blows, it'll kill you. Okay. So Steagall stood away from the front of the door and pulled on it. Boom!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Man, it went up. Rocks came at us and everything. No body was hurt enough to go to the hospital - maybe a few to the aid station. One was an 88 shell that landed 8 feet from me. I was laying perfectly flat on the ground. Okay, artillery. They have a lot of different kinds of artillery pieces. They weren't all 88's. The 88 was real fast. They were as fast as our deer rifles of today. They don't whistle very long. This Fort I was telling you about... they had something that threw 500 pound shells at us. They'd fire one. Several things really helped us out and all GI's. About half the shells were duds. They wouldn't go off. The first one, this time, was a dud too. If they got anywhere near us and they were duds, they would bounce and go down in the valley and you'd hear them hitting this that and the other for quite a long time. There's another story that goes with that, but you can hear those things whistle. You hear it whistle a mile away or maybe more. In a matter of probably less than a second, you know whether it's going to hit way out in front of you

or whether it's going to the left or right or over your head or whether it's coming right at you. I've had a couple of the slow ones, the 500 pounders, sound like they were coming right at me. I was able to run close to 100 yards and my ears told me within a second or 2 when it was going to explode. At that point, I dove to the ground and got as flat as I could. It went up alright, but when you're that far away and flat on the ground, you don't get hurt. Maybe your ears. When the 88 went off, I couldn't hear anything for the rest of that day. There is an art, and you learn this if you survive and 88 or two, you don't get down, you kind of pull your feet out from under you and get flat. We had this little thing for the Stars and Stripes. The first 2 or 3 I saw, I though were stupid. They had one, the day that I decided they were good, they were catching Joe and Willie. They are catching a lot of artillery coming in. Joe tells Willie, I can't get no closer to the ground, my buttons are in the way. They were my favorite cartoons from then on. One hit 8 feet from me. I couldn't hear for the rest of the day, but not a scratch. The 88, the wine, the house. I can't think of the other one right now. In Italy, the Germans shot at us with machine guns. Again, I dove flat to the ground. And, you know how big a pack is. It set the pack on fire and I didn't get a scratch out of that. These were the close calls that made us not want to go to Japan and fight Japs. More than a few of us felt like maybe our time had run out. Maybe the good Lord was trying to tell us, since Eisenhower was kind, we ought to take advantage of it. We weren't in that much of a hurry to get home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land in Italy?

Mr. Scott

Naples. There weren't any Germans shooting at us. We were able to walk off the boat. We walked down a road and there were tons of little kids around. You know what a rifle belts like? Many people carried cigarettes in their rifle belts up til then. But as time went on, they may have carried a little, but mostly they carried ammunition. I usually carried cigarettes in a rifle belt and 2 bandoleers. I figured that was enough for any fire fight.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many clips did the bandoleers carry?

Mr. Scott

5 or 6 each. That's 40 shells each and I always carried 8 in the rifle. The kids would run up to you and in less

than a second, they'd get that package of cigarettes out of there and off to the side. Of course, we were in a compound that had a pretty good fence. The kids would be outside the fence and we'd go over there and talk to them. They'd tell you where there was a hole in the fence. And, of course, they had a sister who was a virgin that would service you. They didn't get inside the fence. You just wouldn't believe it. A couple packs of cigarettes didn't bother anybody because we could get cigarettes. When we got to Berlin, you could get \$100 for a carton of cigarettes. Not a carton at a time. You had to sell them a pack at a time. This was exactly the same money we were being paid in. They had the airplanes coming into Templehof, bringing in supplies. Well, the crew would bring in cigarettes. They could not get out and they certainly couldn't sell many in 2 hours time. With our bloused out trousers and jump boot, you could carry around at least 6 packs around both legs there. No telling how many cigarettes we sold. We'd buy them at Templehof Airport for \$20 a carton and then sell them a pack at a time for \$100 a carton. The people that enjoyed the really nice night clubs there in Berlin, and there were several made there real, real quick for officers - major and above or privates. No in betweens. The Generals in there had to know we were selling cigarettes. We were selling them to the Germans. In Italy we were paid in Lira. In France we were paid in Francs. We were paid with the legitimate currency of the country we were in. The first bill I saw in Italy was about 4 or 5 inches by 9 inches. They had bill folds that folded in 3 pieces. The English pound was that big. If they ran out of the country's money, the US Press would print dollar size lira or what ever. When you got your money, they would set up a table. The captain would count out your pay and you would sign for it. They'd do that in the combat zones just like they did back in the States. In Germany, apparently there were 2 kinds of German notes. The good German notes were just like ours. The hardest to get used to counting were the British pounds.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you exchange these for dollars anywhere?

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. People over there would have the right kind of money to give up. If you were in a heavy black market zone like Berlin was, you could only send home 100% of your pay plus 20%. Everybody sent that home and still had plenty of money in their pockets. I brought home a wad of money like that. I don't know what ever happened

to it. I was never able to get rid of it, but I was able to send 4 months pay home at 120%. I usually was able to send some money home. You aren't always where you can spend money. A lot of the time you are where you can't spend money. Maybe a Red Cross deal, where you could buy cigarettes. We could always get cigarettes. Even our food rations had cigarettes in them. The least was 4 cigarettes. Sometimes, you got a package that was only 10 cigarettes. But, many of the things had full packs of cigarettes. When you only got 4, there were usually 3 packs of 4 - breakfast, noon, and supper. I sent a picture home and I had circled something in the picture. I didn't have a helmet on. I had on a beret. They said they could tell where we went by the amount of equipment on the ground. The boats that brought supplies to us, brought raw flour and powdered milk and God knows what all. What they would do, and I don't know who did this - maybe engineers or something - would find bakeries and things like that. They would unload a truck load of flour there. The Baker would make it up and he would get to keep maybe half of what he made. We ate a lot of biscuits and canned meat. A slice of bread! I was overseas probably 90 days before I saw a slice of bread. I never did see a fresh egg, ever. I never did see any fresh strawberry jam, ever. I never did get a glass of milk that wasn't powdered. We did pretty good about making powdered milk better. We would take a 5 gallon can and mix up powdered milk and add a small quantity of vanilla and let it sit over night. We would take a mosquito net, which we didn't need, and strain the milk through it to get any lumps out. I maintain it was about as good as regular milk. One time in France, we were in an orchard and we had our mess gear. There were a bunch of bees and an apple orchard. I said, I bet we could make a good apple pie. We had time. Wasn't anybody shooting at us. Guys went out and picked apples. We built a big fire not too far from where the bee hives were. Some fellows put mosquito netting around them and a couple of heavy jackets. He'd walk over to a hive and pull the honey combs out. He'd hold it in the smoke till it killed all the bees on it. We got some honey and mixed it up with a kind of graham cracker to make the dough. We put it on the top and the bottom. We cooked the apples in pots of boiling water. We made one mess kit for every two people in the platoon. We had what was really good apple pie. You were hungry, when you came back from overseas, for so many things. Never saw a tamale or anything like that. There were so many things we never saw, but it was our own fault. I told the guys, Look. Sometimes the food is better than on other days. If you tell the cooks that it's good, when it is good, it will get better. No body took me up - maybe one or two. At Camp McCall,

I don't ever remember being in chow line that the 10 guy in front of me that got coffee would take a sip and say, who pissed in the coffee? That was everyday. One day, the guy in front of me was half way friendly to a cook and the cook leaned over to him and said, don't drink any coffee. I didn't drink any coffee that day, too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to when you first landed in Italy. How long did you stay in that first camp?

Mr. Scott

A week or 10 days.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you first go into combat?

Mr. Scott

Fairly close. We stayed in combat about 30 days. We walked up Italy. They had just taken Rome and we weren't in on that, but were right behind it. Took it up about as far as Leghorn in 30 days time. Real fast. Then we went back to training camp.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were moving up here, was this patrol action? How did it work?

Mr. Scott

Yeah. We patrolled. We moved real fast. Many of the Germans occupying things weren't top line troops. They were people in countries they had over run and put them in. We went across a 40 acre field. At the top was a little line of brush. There were machine guns well hid. Really well hid. When we got close, they raised their hands and not a shot was fired. It changed the way we approached things, drastically that day. We realized they would have killed an awful lot of people when we were in a more or less open field. You get real smart real fast.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did it change how you approached things?

Mr. Scott

All kind of things. Of course, none of us started off knowing about hearing artillery shells. If anybody whistled, you'd warn them once and then hit them in the head if they did it again. This was a life and death situation. We

went back to training camp and were there about a month. We stole all kind of jeeps and everything else and hid them in the brush. We were about 10-12 miles out of Rome. Many of us were able to get into Rome and back. We got fussed at a bunch. Another thing, we threw away gas masks right and left. That was a big bulky thing. You could get all the blankets you wanted to carry that you wanted. But, if it was really cold, you couldn't carry enough to keep warm. You had to carry things. There were a whole lot of things I would have liked as a souvenir, but I didn't want to carry the weight. Then, we jumped in southern France on August 15th, 1944. The bunch in Normandy had gone in June. We met up with them real quick.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't jump in Italy at all?

Mr. Scott

No. One jump only and that was in southern France. I'd say the majority of the paratroopers didn't make but one jump.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you jump behind enemy lines?

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. Anytime you jump, it is always behind enemy lines. We jumped into an area that had pretty highly trained Germans in it. And dark. Also quite low to the ground. I can't tell you how many seconds it was until I was on the ground, but it was pretty darn quick. At the end of the first day, we had maybe 12 together. We were really scattered. I found out later 73 miles from the extreme one end to the extreme other end. We had pretty good size companies in 3 days. We pretty well had our own company in a week's time. All my people were pretty close in. We had artillery close to us one time and we got close to a bunch of German shooting – Pack 75. They had leather harnesses and it took 8 people to pull that gun. And carry ammunition and all that. One time, the Germans were shooting at us, not very far away, we were able to turn it around and started shooting those pack 75 shells, which are a lot less than an 88, and the Germans gave up in a hurry. Over 1/3 of my platoon is buried in Europe.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your job at that point?

Mr. Scott

Rifleman. I never was a squad leader.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you lose quite a few there in Italy?

Mr. Scott

No. One guy blind. Taggers from Florida lost a leg. They tried to convince me since that he lost it in France. I don't know. He still makes the reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you jumped into France, your fighting there was rougher than in Italy?

Mr. Scott

Some. The only real, real, real bad was the Bulge. It wasn't the fighting, it was the weather.

Mr. Misenhimer

But, here of course, you were behind enemy lines. There was a landing on the beach at the same time.

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. Two divisions were able to come in the first day. Our main objective was to keep any reinforcements from getting to the coast. Which we did - virtually completely. We lost a lieutenant. It didn't look like a power pole to me. It barely looked like an anemic telephone pole. He told our supply sergeant to get up there and cut the wires. He looked up there and said, I don't think I want to do it. The lieutenant said, Well, that's an order. Get up there and do it. If you want those wires cut, you better get up there and do it yourself. I'm not going to do it. I'll have you court martialed when I get back. The lieutenant did climb up there and took out the wire cutters and put them on there. It was pretty high voltage of electricity and it electrocuted him. The Sarg turned around and said, well, that's one thing I don't have to worry about. We didn't lose many in France. Really and truly, the only place we lost heavy was the Bulge. For 17 days, the warmest it got was 14 degrees below zero. That's what sent me to the hospital. I had one foot froze. The other one didn't. One foot. I was in the hospital in England for 3 or 4 months. The doctor can tell which leg it is. I now know it's the left leg, but I had a hard time trying to tell

anybody which leg it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

You parachuted into France on August 15th. Then you just kept moving up. Is that right? What other battles were you in?

Mr. Scott

Yes. Little ones here, there, and yond. Mostly, you felt like you were a mule. We didn't have trucks to carry stuff or anything. Hot days and cold nights were pretty much part of it. Very little time off. Really, the only time I had off was after I came back from England. Well, time in the hospital of course. We sat there in the hospital in England and snow would be that deep on the ground and the radio announcer would say, It's 5:45 (or what ever) double British summer time. Some form of our daylight savings time.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you get involved in the Battle of the Bulge then?

Mr. Scott

On truck. They carried us there quite a number of miles. Night. Cold. We had been in a rest area. They had issued us brand new rifles. The only way, or the best way, we could get the cosmoline out of them, we built a big fire out there in the center of the parade ground. You'd hold your rifle there until it would melt the cosmoline and it would run out. When you got to where you could see through it, you could put a round in it and fire it which would get it all out. I tried to get the rest out, but it was hard to do. Heat was the best way. We had about 3 hours notice to get on the trucks with new guns and everything. We got into the Bulge when it was that cold. We had pretty good jackets and everything, but not near enough clothes. We had a lieutenant who was smart enough that he got a jeep and took it to where there were airplanes - somewhere close to where we were. He got the jeep in the airplane and flew it over to England. He hit the biggest supply depot. Who was supposed to get them, I don't know. We weren't supposed to get them. He got some parkas and a 4 ounce mummy sack with a 100% down. You could almost keep warm in that sleeping bag - mummy bag. You couldn't turn over in it or anything else. That much of your face was out. I slept in it a number of nights..... I was walking when the foot froze - doing some walking.

Mr. Misenhimer

What part of the Bulge did you come in at?

Mr. Scott

I have no idea.

Mr. Misenhimer

But about the time the Bulge started, right?

Mr. Scott

Yeah. We were probably in it, if not the night of the first day, certainly the second day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in Belgium?

Mr. Scott

Yes. Belgium. We weren't too far from where the other paratroopers said nuts.

Mr. Misenhimer

Bastogne?

Mr. Scott

It wasn't Bastogne, but it wasn't too far from there. I don't think they had any Stars and Stripes up there. The newspaper. We just tried to stay warm. For every 10 people in the hospital, the weather put 9 in. The Germans only one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you holding a cross roads, or anything like that?

Mr. Scott

If so, I don't remember it. My memories are trying to stay warm.... doing things to try to stay warm.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned, you shot 3 Germans somewhere. Where did you shot those?

Mr. Scott

France. I didn't shoot anybody after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fire at anyone after that?

Mr. Scott

Yeah, I guess we had some fire fights, but may not have known the out come of it. We had more artillery shells at us. Artillery got more than a few, because as we advanced and the Germans retreated, they were able to measure the distance to a given spot - like a cross roads. They were able to drop the first shell there. Of course, sometimes it was a dud. The duds saved us a bunch, really a bunch. About a half.

Mr. Misenhimer

You say about a third of your platoon was left over there?

Mr. Scott

More than a third are buried over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

From the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Scott

Here, there and yond. The house that blew up got 5.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was that?

Mr. Scott

Back in France. As we were moving up pretty rapidly. Several times we moved fast. We moved fast in France from the jump. We moved fast from there until we made contact with those that came into Normandy. I know one of our Chaplains, who was assigned to G Company, was able to get to G and he wasn't dropped by parachute. He had a driver and he took his driver and drove straight through to Paris. He got in some dutch a couple of times. He got in dutch in the States once. From playing poker with enlisted men. That's a real no no. But, I guess he was liked. He did stay in hot water off and on the whole war.

Mr. Misenhimer

Here at the Battle of the Bulge, when they pushed the Germans back, were you all part of that?

Mr. Scott

I was in the hospital then. After 4 months. The most off time I had was when I went back to France, and they didn't have the foggiest notion where my outfit was. They did know where our supplies were and I got assigned to be in there - a supply guard.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go to the hospital?

Mr. Scott

I went December 27, 1944 - 2 days after Christmas. Because of a frozen foot.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they do at the hospital? How did they get you there? Fly you over?

Mr. Scott

Oh, no. No. (Chuckle) You had your own aid station. Then, you had a bigger aid station fairly close by. Those doctors - there were more than a handful of doctors there and all the nurses were in fatigues. I hit about 7 of those places ... some of it was traveling on the train, before I got to the English Channel. At least two before I got to the English Channel, they started to be spit and polish. The nurses had on white uniforms. The doctors did, too - white coats. They were inside of a building. Then we went into England and went into a good size hospital. I have no idea how big, but it was big. In there, it really seemed like it was spit and polish, but I'm sure they were looking at you and treating you and doing those things, but they seemed to be more concerned about if the beds were lined up perfectly or what have you. Somebody that I made a friend, because he was in the next bed, and I decided, because we could see what was going on and they had patients who could be on their feet and do things - serving breakfasts and picking up the trays when they were through and sweeping up the floors, making the fires. We could see sense in a lot of that. The thing that drove us up the wall, was lining up the beds to a quarter of an inch. I don't know how they got out of line from one day to the next, but they always seemed to. As soon as we could navigate - there were wheelchairs that we could get hold of and we knew where the PX was - The PX opened real, real early and stayed open real, real late. We spent the day at the PX. After about a couple of months of that, the doctors had enough of it. They got there at 3 or 4 in the morning and gave us jobs. One of the jobs I got was

building fires, which I didn't mind. I was good at it and I saw the need of it. Carrying food and this and that. I don't know how many jobs I had that day, but the last one was straightening beds. This wasn't prearranged or anything, but my buddy and I were there. I was standing like I was facing the beds and he was standing with his back to them. He wasn't a sergeant. He was a private, too. I said, Sergeant. He snapped to attention. I said, beds dress right, dress. And, he threw his arm out like that. They sent us to the nut ward. An older doctor there, 35 or 40 years old, reached in his drawer and took out a Baby Ruth. He said, What's this? What? What's this? Baby Ruth candy bar. Okay. Several more things and some squirrely questions. I hadn't quite figured it out and I said, Sir. Would like to know why we are here? He said, Yeah. I told him the whole bit about the beds. He laughed a long time. He said, I can send you back, not to there, but another one like it or to these Pyramidal Tents out there. I think they held 16 cots. He said, it's certainly warmer in the ward, but from the tents there it's possible to get a pass to town. I did. I got a pass to town that was right close. And, I got a 2 day deal to London. I found out we were 160 miles from London. Which direction, I have no idea. I got on a train and rode. Stayed in a good hotel in London and ate good food. Did some sightseeing and one of the assembly stations was Eauston and that's pronounced Houston. I knew how to spell Houston. I asked directions 2 or 3 different times and finally a guy said, There it is right there. They speak English, but we don't understand their English to a large degree. And, I wound up spending 4 months in Berlin on guard duty. Strictly guard duty.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up. What did they do to treat your foot?

Mr. Scott

I have no idea. They did some things, but we're talking about 55 years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you did get to where you could walk on it?

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. Yeah. We started to be able to walk on it when we went out to the tents. I guess we really could. I know I was able to walk when I got to London. It wasn't long after I got to London that I got to get back to France. I don't know what part of France. There wasn't a town of any kind or size. The amount of barracks bags

we had, you wouldn't believe. 3,000 barracks bags.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in London, were there any buzz bombs or anything?

Mr. Scott

I was gone by the time they got the V2's coming in. Mostly buzz bombs when I was there. You could hear them and mostly stay out of their way. I didn't really see any. I heard 1 or 2, but they were a long way off. Actually, we had to hunt to see damage. But, where there was damage, there was lots of damage in some places. You almost had to have a taxi driver take you somewhere to see it. I'm sure there was plenty of it and we did hear sirens at night. The hotel I was in didn't have any broken windows or anything that I was aware of. When I was at a convention in California, just over a little mountain, a pretty good earthquake hit and I wasn't even aware of it. Other people felt it, but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

So they sent you back to France to a supply depot. How long were you there?

Mr. Scott

A month or more. I was there when Germany surrendered in May of '45. Then I went to Berlin. We were broken down into 3 Battalions. One Battalion went to college - like book school. One went to calisthenics and drill and like that. The other ones guarded properties. We pulled guard duty all over Berlin. You could get a shave. We had real good rooms. You could get a haircut for 1 cigarette and a shave for 1 cigarette. Not a pack - 1 cigarette. This is where we could sell them for \$100 a carton. They really told us not to give them more than that. There was no KP. We pulled guard duty and that was the only thing. We saw the Russians. We didn't see much of the French. The Russian part was next to us. After 3 months there, I headed back to some port and again got on a ship. It landed back at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Trains that left Camp Kilmer after I did, got to Houston before I did. It took 4 days on the train to get back. We could usually tell the way the train was going and we could get off and run to a little store of some kind. The things we bought were fresh milk. No body was after beer or whiskey. They were after things they hadn't had like milk and 101 things, even fresh eggs. Some were breaking eggs on the train and drinking them in a glass of milk. Bread. Things we hadn't seen like canned tamales.

Talking about the cooks, the entire time in the army, I never had good pork chops. They were either cooked way too hard or they were still bloody. The food that was delivered to us was good food. There not too many ways you can ruin powdered eggs and things like that. When we got to Berlin, they had cooks. Flour was given to them and we had real good eating. German cooks. First time you got a shave from a German barber you kind of watched, but they weren't about to give us any trouble what so ever.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the German people friendly?

Mr. Scott

If you had contact with them. If they worked for you or something, they were friendly. Very definitely. They were scared of you for one thing. The females were very friendly. Berlin had a pre-war population of 4 million people and when we got there, there were 360,000 people. Something like that. Most of them were kids or old people.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave over there to come back home?

Mr. Scott

I don't know. I came back straight on through. 4 days on the train and everything, I got back 2 days before Christmas. We probably started back about the first of December. I guess we were on the boat the same amount of time coming back as going over - maybe a day less.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons or medals did you get?

Mr. Scott

I got the Purple Heart. I can get a license plate for \$3 with that. That was for my frozen foot. Combat Infantry Badge. We got various and sundry kinds of things something for being in Belgium and 6 battle stars. Those were points for coming back. We had all kind of unit citations. We only had one guy got the Congressional Medal of Honor. The reason there weren't more Bronze or Silver Stars, there weren't officers around to see things. He's still healthy. I saw him at the last convention in Fort Benning. He and I were pretty good buddies. I asked him what his blood pressure was and he said, I don't know. I haven't been to a doctor in 15 years. And, he is slightly

older than I am.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is his name?

Mr. Scott

Melvin Biddle. He was from Anderson, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Scott

Well, I was in a little kitchen one time. On the side was a burlap cloth. Somebody spilled gasoline and it burned up the oxygen almost instantly. There was not a breath of air. If we hadn't been able to get that burlap down - It was real frightening. When you can't breath, it gets your attention immediately.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was that?

Mr. Scott

Italy. Not long after we were over there. Having your pack shot with a machine gun and catching it on fire on your back, gets your attention. Having an 88 landing 8 feet from you gets your attention. The fellow in the bar that had a .45 and was waving it, really gets your attention. He was really drunk and upset about something. He was cussing and swinging it here and pointing it there. That had to be in France somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any contact with the USO?

Mr. Scott

Minimal. I missed seeing Bob Hope. He was at Camp Toccoa, Georgia the week before I got there. He was in Germany. I missed him by 2 days. I missed him in France by 1 day. The closest we came to having in our outfit Yasha Heifits was there to play good music to us. Most of us were used to country music and we didn't appreciate good music. He was the one notable that we got to see. The 2 days that I had a pass to London, the Red Cross Deal was at what they called Rainbow Corner. It was a monstrous place.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it Red Cross or USO?

Mr. Scott

I guess it was USO, but it more or less did the same thing. I think the Red Cross out there was a more or less doughnut deal. I got to talking to one person and she turned out to be Fred Astaire's sister - Lady Estelle. They put a dance piece out there. I think I was the only paratrooper in the place. We talked quite a bit and she said, Would you like to dance? I said, I don't know how to dance. She said, Well, you're going to learn. She drug me out on the dance floor and we danced. Then, she told me they had something called American Eagle in Britain, which I had never heard of. It was a 30 minute program and they had 4 different people that they pulled out of the audience. They had a tanker, a paratrooper, an air force guy, and a sailor. They asked us questions. It was an interview type deal. We were told that our parents would be notified and be able to hear it 2 week after it was done. They were given a little record of it, which I don't have anymore. But, the folks back home were able to hear my voice and the little interview. Those are the only 2 things that were kind of notable that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer

What about the Red Cross?

Mr. Scott

Very minor. We may have gotten a bath one time. Changing clothes everyday is under a lot of circumstances ---I am sure we didn't take any clothes off in the Bulge. I mean nothing. They brought in massive trailers and you didn't get your pants or shirt or underwear back or anything else. You went in one door and took everything off. You stood on some little wood boards and they had tons of hot water and soap. You got an A number 1 first class shower. A good towel to dry off with. You got brand new shorts and undershirt. I think you kept the same boots. But other than that, you got everything brand new. I know you didn't lose your rifle on that one. I only had 3 rifles total - training, 1st one overseas and the 1 going into the Bulge. The were all Garand. You had to know the numbers on all of them. I don't remember them now, but one had 4 digits and I think the 2nd and 3rd ones were 6 or 7 digit numbers.

Mr. Misenhimer

The uniform you wore was a special paratrooper's uniform?

Mr. Scott

Yes and no. The pants would be the same. The shirts would be the same. You could buy gabardine wools in the States, if you wanted them. The boots were our own.....nobody else's. They were paratroop boots and a little bit different color than any other. Instead of wearing your pants out, you cuffed them (bloused). The boots came up to here and you put a parachute retaining cord and they'd keep your legs warmer. When I got back to the States, I had trouble with my legs being cold for a while 'cause I quit wearing my pant legs bloused (Chuckle) when I got home.

Mr. Misenhimer

The picture I was seeing - the paratrooper uniform seemed to have more pockets than the regular infantry uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer

We had quite a few pockets, but I thought the other troops had them, too. We run into the little jacket one time like Patton had - the Eisenhower Jacket. I think they were available from the supply. We didn't see them in the States. We saw them overseas. We pretty well had the same uniform. The gabardine wools were mostly only in the States. Come to think of it, I had them in Berlin. Maybe I found them over there. We looked sharp. We got PFC back to Congress, but we never wore the PFC stripes. We thought they would ruin the uniform. A lot of the corporals wouldn't even wear them. The sergeants all wore them. The others didn't. I know the Captain had to bribe us one time to put on stripes for some special inspection they were having. He said, Just put on for the inspection and we'll take them off tomorrow.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about getting mail when you were overseas?

Mr. Scott

It came fairly regular. The only place you carried it was in your hat. Your toilet paper and your mail. We didn't have matches 'cause everybody had good Zippos.

Mr. Misenhimer

As I recall, the K Rations had a little package of matches with them too.

Mr. Scott

May have. If it did I never used them. We all had Zippos. Another thing, when I got back to the States the most surprising thing was, it seemed like every GI I saw had on a pair of glasses. For 2 ½ years, I hadn't seen anybody wearing glasses. Nobody in the paratroopers had glasses. Apparently, that was part of the selection.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you wear glasses now?

Mr. Scott

A little bit. I have had eye surgery. I have had cataracts. I've got 20/25 here without glasses and 20/20 here without glasses and I can read without glasses as long as there is good light.

Mr. Misenhimer

When Germany surrendered in May of '45, where were you and what was your reaction at that point?

Mr. Scott

I may have still be in baggage guard. I didn't go in combat again after I was in the hospital. From the baggage guard place, we could get a pass to Paris. Both Biddle and I separately got 4 or 5 trips to Paris. One of them was the day of the surrender. Of course, the town went insane that night. That's where we were then.

Mr. Misenhimer

In August, Japan surrendered. Do you recall where you were then?

Mr. Scott

I don't. I was in Berlin, because it was still going on when I had the option of going to Berlin or the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall?

Mr. Scott

I guess I could talk for a month, but that's a pretty good oral history from one GI.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some funny things that happened?

Mr. Scott

The 5 gallon wine bottle in Italy had to be hilarious. The booby trapped wine bottle. Lots of laughing over that. In Berlin some of the soldiers got dyed hair. Some one you know real well and you don't recognize him till you hear his voice, because his hair is a completely different color. I guess the bunch of us trying to make the apple pies that time. There was a lot of laughing that day. No body got stung by a bee that day. They were sure good that day. I don't know if they would be today. I got back to the States without a scratch. He got back the same time I did. I and a friend got bach to the States and he went to Chicago. He got off the train and stepped on ice and his feet went out from under him. He went up in the air and fell and broke his neck. Killed him. A pretty good friend of mine. I didn't find out until I first started finding the guys and going to the reunions. I didn't do that for a long, long time. Pana and I have been married for 20 years and 6 years between - 26. I was married to my 1st wife, so it would be between 26 and 34 years ago. I know was married to her the first time I went out probably 30 years. We have made almost all of them since we've been married. We didn't make the 1st one because we got married August 1st and the convention was in Florida on August 5th. I didn't make that one and I didn't make one in California. The job I had with the school - when I 1st too it, I worked 5 ½ days a week, 44 hours. Then I went to 40 hours. I started getting Saturdays off. I worked more days than any Superintendent or anyone else in the school. The tax collector was somebody they didn't want out of town and they wanted the office open every day.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got in the service?

Mr. Scott

PFC

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay in the reserves?

Mr. Scott

Yes, but I didn't have to go to Korea. Surprisingly, but I didn't. I think they meant to call me up, but they got fouled up and the fellow that was doing the writing got the wrong name. I didn't have to go. I stayed in the reserves for a while after that. We met on nights that my school work required that I be there 2 nights a month. I

was on the volunteer fire department and that conflicted with one of my school nights. So I only made one night of the fire deal. I quit being a fireman when air conditioning came in and I couldn't hear the siren anymore. We're about 2 miles from the fire station and we couldn't hear it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill to go to college?

Mr. Scott

Oh, yeah. A & I. Bachelor Degree, no more.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did the cooks jump in - parachute in?

Mr. Scott

I think they did.

The war I fought was in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany, and I was discharged before my 21st birthday!

Transcribed by:
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