

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

**Center for Pacific War Studies**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Adrian Miller  
Army  
England, France, Holland**

**August 3, 2001**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 3, 2001. I am interviewing Mr. Adrian Miller and this interview is taking place at his home which is 4653 South Co. Rd. 275 West, Winamac, Indiana. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific Wars, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Thank you for taking time here to do this interview today. Let me start of by asking, when were you born, what is your birth date?

Mr. Miller

November 16, 1924.

Mr. Misenhimer

And where were you born?

Mr. Miller

Winamac, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you live somewhere close to where we are now?

Mr. Miller

I lived at 320 North Market Street in Winamac.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what were your parents' names?

Mr. Miller

Frank and Cecelia Miller.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mr. Miller

I had four sisters and two brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you said both of those were also in World War II.

Mr. Miller

Yes, my brother Ralph and my brother Harry were both in World War II and both overseas and in the European Theater.

Mr. Misenhimer

And they came home safely.

Mr. Miller

They both came home safely.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they under quite a bit of combat?

Mr. Miller

Yea, my brother was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, which is the division that broke through to us when we were at Bastogne. And my other brother was with the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which one, Harry, or which one . . .

Mr. Miller

Ralph was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored and Harry was with the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Miller

Went to school at Winamac. Went to parochial school until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade then I went to the high school for four years and graduated there.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what year was that?

Mr. Miller

1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Miller

I went to the service in March of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do between high school graduation and then?

Mr. Miller

We have a farm, and I had a deferment to be on the farm and then I decided I wanted to go to the service.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you volunteer?

Mr. Miller

Yea, I volunteered. I knew I was going to have to go pretty soon anyhow so I just went ahead and went.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Miller

The Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how did you choose the Army?

Mr. Miller

I didn't have any choice, I was just drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, you were drafted?

Mr. Miller

Yea, I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your training?

Mr. Miller

I took my training at 17 weeks of basic training at Ft. Blanding, Florida. Then in August of '44 I volunteered this time for the paratroopers and we had two weeks of prephysical and we had four weeks of physical, the last weeks included the jumps. And then we got a furlough and came home and we went back and did some more training and then we shipped out to Ft. Meade, Maryland, and from there we went overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's talk about your time in training. Where you were for those 17 weeks that were the infantry basics?

Mr. Miller

Ft. Blanding, Florida.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how were the conditions there?

Mr. Miller

Hot, and I thought it was really rough. We had 17 weeks of pretty hard training and we learned how to fire the rifle, mostly. We would go out on the range and shoot and we had a lot of marching and stuff like that to get us into condition.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the barracks like? Did you live in barracks?

Mr. Miller

Barracks, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how was the food?

Mr. Miller

The food was so-so. They had Army cooks. I don't think they had too much refrigeration at that time. This was Florida, the worst part of Florida I would say because it was all sand.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was for the first 17 weeks?

Mr. Miller

Yea, at Ft. Blanding. Then I went to Ft. Benning, Georgia, for the parachute training. I thought I was in good shape after 17 weeks until I found out that I really wasn't. The first, what we called prestage, it was rough. I was just lucky I had a bottom bunk to crawl in after supper and I stayed there, never got out of there, until the next morning. Then we went for four weeks. We started training and we jumped out of what we called 38' towers, put a harness on you and they had sawdust piled over there and you would jump out and that was supposed to simulate what it would feel like when you jumped out of a plane. We did that and a lot of physical training and running. We ran five miles every morning and what kept us going more than anything else was the instructors. Anything they thought you should do they could do better, like pushups. They would give you 25 pushups, and they would demonstrate them and they would always fall off a little bit and do four or five one-handed ones. And the same way with running. We ran those five miles, they ran right alongside of us and they would run alongside of you and pretty soon they'd be running backwards right aside of you, come on let's go, let's go. But they were really nice guys. Just like when we just out of that 38' tower, they did it first. They held on with one hand. But we really respected those guys. And when I came home and went back we jumped with full field packs and things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is from the tower now?

Mr. Miller

No, this is from the planes now.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did it feel like, the first jump out of the airplane?

Mr. Miller

It didn't feel like much. We didn't know what was really going on. It's the fifth one, the one when you come back from leave, that really you think about that one, and that's when a lot of them washed out. I had one kid in front of me who had been up and he froze and wouldn't leave the plane so they brought him down. The lieutenant gave him a direct order to jump and then after he wouldn't jump, then they would ship him out to an infantry replacement center. He just happened to be in front of me and the lieutenant told me, if that guy gets up, he said, you make sure he gets out that plane. But he never got out, he failed. Then we went to Ft. Meade and then from there we went over to England.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you at Ft. Meade?

Mr. Miller

Just for about a week. Then we went over to England, and from there we went over to France. In November I joined the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, and was assigned to the 505 Parachute Infantry H Company there, and that was November. And they had just gotten back from Holland and they had taken most of their equipment and stored it and they were surprised that on December 17 they got a call that the Germans had broke through and that they were needed right away up there so they loaded us up in like grain trucks, and we went up there. Some of us didn't have any equipment because they hadn't replaced the equipment yet; we



were the guys that came to replace the guys who got killed or wounded in Holland so that is why we didn't have rifles or ammo, we were replacements.

Mr. Misenhimer

In Holland they defended Remargan so the Germans couldn't blow it up.

Mr. Miller

Yea, right, they were up there for that and then they came back and they were looking for training and we did get a little training in November. Didn't get much training with them. So then we went up to Bastogne. We stayed up there until about the middle of January until we got relieved.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about how it was there at Bastogne when you first got there and things that were going on there.

Mr. Miller

There was a lot of shelling going on and the Germans were bound and determined that they were going to break through. Well, they did end up breaking through once in a while but we always were able to repel them and finally they had us surrounded. That's when this German general sent a notice that said, if you don't surrender we're going to annihilate you, and our general sent that note back that said, you're nuts, and the German general said, what does that mean? And the guy said that means, go to hell. So then they did shell us pretty heavy there. We didn't have a lot of equipment, it was really cloudy and snowing and they couldn't bring any supplies in to us, but finally we got our supplies.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a rifle and that sort of thing?

Mr. Miller

I had a rifle, I picked up a rifle on the way. They said on the way up, you won't have any problem finding a rifle; well, we just picked them off the dead guys.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just one laying around, huh?

Mr. Miller

Yea, there were a lot of them laying around.

Mr. Misenhimer

What about ammunition?

Mr. Miller

We had the ammunition. When I was up there for a while and then I got separated from my outfit for a little bit and was listed as missing in action, I got back with them and it was kind of a mess up there for a little bit until they got things really organized.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what was your rank at this time?

Mr. Miller

Private.

Mr. Misenhimer

There at Bastogne?

Mr. Miller

Yea, just about the time I got back with my outfit. I was with a rifle company first.

We didn't have guys left.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of rifle did you have, an M-1?

Mr. Miller

Yea, an M-1.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is that what most of the men had?

Mr. Miller

Yea, most of them had M-1's or BAR. I know my buddy had a BAR and a sniper took a shot at him and he creased his scalp right along the side here and we just picked that sniper off with no problem and another buddy who had a fight with a German over a grenade. Well the German threw the grenade and he threw the damn thing back at him and finally it went back and forth a couple of times before it went off and it went off on the German. We had some funny experiences and things like once I remember this farmer came up with us and he had a rabbit.

We really didn't have anything to eat. I lived on potatoes, that's all I could find.

And he had this rabbit. He said, I'll fix this rabbit for you guys. No, we don't want to kill that poor rabbit. We had some good times. They did a lot of shelling up there. We lost a lot of men, I think we had about 12 in my platoon and ended up with about four. So we stayed there until about the middle of January and went down to Lorraine, France.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's back up. What were your clothes, what kind of clothes did you have there at Bastogne?

Mr. Miller

We had thermal underwear which we had on from the time we left camp until we got a shower in February so we the same clothes on all the time. And we had Army fatigue jackets and fatigue pants.

Mr. Misenhimer

Fatigue pants, not the olive drab.

Mr. Miller

Yea, olive drab.

Mr. Misenhimer

Wool.

Mr. Miller

No, cotton, they had pockets on the side and stuff like that and we had combat boots, we didn't have paratrooper boots because they didn't have any right at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any galoshes or anything like that?

Mr. Miller

No. In the evening, at night, they would bring up the bedrolls. Well, it was dark and you didn't know whose bedrolls were whose so you'd, take one, take one.

We were living in a hole so everyone would just grab a bedroll and go back to the

hole. Sometimes you'd get your own, sometimes you'd get somebody else's, it didn't make any difference.

Mr. Misenhimer

How large an area were you all defending, approximately?

Mr. Miller

It must've been about 10 miles or so, all the way around.

Mr. Misenhimer

The perimeter, 10 miles?

Mr. Miller

Yea, we were in the center and the Germans were all around us, completely surrounding us.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, like three or four miles across then.

Mr. Miller

Yea, I know one fellow and I went back to headquarters for something and one of those snipers shot at us but they missed us, so we knew they were pretty close.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, you spent quite a bit of time in combat there then?

Mr. Miller

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall from your time there in Bastogne?

Mr. Miller

There was a small stream where we got water for our canteens. A few yards up the stream laid a dead German, but we used the water anyway. He was frozen stiff so he didn't bother the water.

I know one time we had a lot of prisoners. We had a prison in Bastogne itself. Prison camp. Another guy and I were taking them, I think about 30 at that time, back and I happened to step in a shell hole and stumbled and one of them came over and picked me up right away.

Mr. Misenhimer

How old were these people, these prisoners?

Mr. Miller

The first group was probably 25-30 and the last one group we caught who still had their rifles on their backs when we caught them coming across, they didn't even know we were there, they were just young, they were only about 16-18 years old. It's just too bad but we eliminated all them guys.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard that the Germans put on American uniforms and tried to come through. Did you have any experience with that?

Mr. Miller

Yea, there were a few of them, not too many, but also they would use white sheets. There was snow on the ground and some of them would use white sheets. We didn't have too many in our area that tried to come through with American uniforms on. It could've been in one of the other areas but we were in just one section.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall from that time there? Anything funny happen to you there?

Mr. Miller

No . . .

Mr. Misenhimer

Wasn't too much of a funny time, was it?

Mr. Miller

No, we didn't have too much time for fun there; we had fun later on.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then you left Bastogne and went to France.

Mr. Miller

Yea, then we went down to southern France, and there we took up positions along a river. There wasn't very much fighting there, it was mostly just shelling. It got to the point where we could tell which ones were coming in and which ones were going out. The Americans' artillery was behind us and they were firing at them and the Germans were in front. It got to where you could tell which ones were coming in and which ones were going out. So we stayed there, must've stayed there till about April.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a bunch of replacements at that point?

Mr. Miller

We got a few. Talk about something funny, it wasn't very funny, but we had a few replacements and we had the 42<sup>nd</sup> Rainbow Division guys came by and they stopped and we had all this beat-up equipment you know, the war was about over anyhow, they took their rifles and stacked them over against a tree and one of my buddies kneeled over and said, hey, those are really nice looking rifles, aren't they? I said yea. He just picked up that beat-up old rifle and throwed it against the tree and took the others. I don't know whatever happened. But they took off. And from there we went to another camp and then from there we went to the Rhine River. It was just a staging area, more or less. We were getting ready to jump across the Rhine, we had all our equipment and everything but then they changed and the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division is the one that jumped across the Rhine, we didn't jump across the Rhine.

Misenhimer

By jump, you mean use parachutes.

Mr. Miller

We didn't parachute across the Rhine.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up to the time at Bastogne. You said that you all did not parachute into Bastogne.

Mr. Miller

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

But someone did?



Mr. Miller

The Pathfinders were the only ones and they had jumped in to mark the zones for them to bring the supplies in, to parachute the supplies in, by air.

Mr. Misenhimer

OK. This was at the early part of the Bastogne?

Mr. Miller

Yes, I think it was Christmas Day or so.

Mr. Misenhimer

Christmas Day when they parachuted . . .

Mr. Miller

Well, when they brought in, I don't know for sure the exact date, but somewhere in there.

Mr. Misenhimer

OK, that's fine. So now you are at the Rhine River.

Mr. Miller

Yea, we are at the Rhine River and we stayed there until about May. And from there we were just on defense, a little shelling once in a while, but the war was just about over. And from there we went up to Berchtesgaden, which was Hitler's hideout. And we were more or less in a beautiful place, we were right along a nice lake and we were in a rest area is where we were, and we had a hotel, our company had a hotel to ourselves, like you could go swimming and fishing and we were probably about five miles from Hitler's Eagle's Nest so we went to Berchtesgaden. That's where I met my brother Ralph, he came there and we

happened to get to see each other. They had a little Red Cross set up there, a breakfast garden, so we went up there, him and I, and it was a nice visit.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was before the war was over or after?

Mr. Miller

The war was just about over.

Mr. Misenhimer

But not yet.

Mr. Miller

They hadn't surrendered yet but there were so many German prisoners coming back that we couldn't even take care of them so what we did, we would take the German officers and tell them they were in charge of their own prisoners and they were the ones who took the prisoners back to the prison camp. Also up there we started running into these concentration camps. We stayed there and from there we went to Jointey, France and we were there for a while and we started getting a lot of passes and furloughs. I got a pass to Paris in May and I just happened to be in Paris on V-E Day and so we really had a big time then.

Mr. Misenhimer

A big celebration?

Mr. Miller

Yea, a big celebration, all kinds of girls and lots of drinks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now were you under the Third Army with Patton or the First Army with Bradley?

Mr. Miller

No, we were just the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you weren't under either one of those?

Mr. Miller

No. I don't think my brother was under Patton either, I don't know, he might've been.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did say that the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored was the ones that broke through at Bastogne and your brother was with them?

Mr. Miller

Yea, but I couldn't find him. I asked two or three guys and they didn't know where he was for sure; of course they didn't know where everybody was. The rumor was that we were going to pack up and go to Japan, but the atomic bomb changed that. That was probably in . . . I don't know when they dropped the bomb, I can't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

August of '45.

Mr. Miller

We stayed there and we just trained and had a lot of guard duty in a company that they made an honor guard company out of and you had to be 6' tall to be in the honor guard. Well, I and three or four others weren't 6' tall so we pulled the detail but we also got all the passes and furloughs. I know we went to Brussels

one time and was there for three days and came back and had another seven-day pass to Nottingham in England and this buddy had been to England before and he knew a private home at Nottingham that would take in paratroopers and all they asked them to do was give them their food stamps so we went over there for seven days and really had it made again.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had food stamps.

Mr. Miller

When we went on furlough like that they gave us food stamps. We didn't have any money, so we played blackjack and we made enough money to go there. I wrote home for \$25, so did he. He got his \$25 but my folks were a little bit different and they thought I had some girl in trouble so they didn't send the money but we got by fine.

Mr. Misenhimer

How often did you get paid over there? Did you get paid every month?

Mr. Miller

No, we didn't get paid, we were on the line, but they kept track of it then and we had six months' pay coming. We had a lot of money to spend at one time but we sent a lot of it home.

Mr. Misenhimer

How much were you making a month then?

Mr. Miller

I was making \$100, I got \$50 bonus a month for being a paratrooper, and then overseas was another pay raise with a combat infantry badge, so about \$120 a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what rank were you now?

Mr. Miller

Private First Class, PFC, that's the best I ever got.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you make that, do you recall?

Mr. Miller

I made that when I was at Bastogne when my position was on the motor squad.

Mr. Misenhimer

On VJ Day, did you all have a big celebration?

Mr. Miller

Oh, that wasn't too big a celebration for us. We were just in training then, I think, and I thought oh well, they surrendered and we won't have to go and that was a big relief for us. But then in December the 101<sup>st</sup> was deactivated over there and so I went with the 82<sup>nd</sup> and I was with the 82<sup>nd</sup> for a little bit and about Christmas of '45 I was there and then I came home on the Queen Mary. I know on January 1, New Year's Day, we were on the boat coming home, I remember that. And I think it was about the 5<sup>th</sup> of January we had a big parade in New York and we marched down Fifth Avenue and then after that I got on a train and went to Indianapolis and got a discharge and came home.

Mr. Misenhimer

You told me earlier some stories about some officers, how they were and things.

Mr. Miller

Well, we had good officers and we had some officers that we didn't have much use for and I'm sure that a lot of the lieutenants had to dodge the bullets in both places. But we had one who had been a West Point officer and he came to inspect our rifles . . .

Mr. Misenhimer

This is after Bastogne?

Mr. Miller

Yes, this was after Bastogne. We were just in a rest area, and he was a replacement. He graduated West Point so he was pretty important, he thought, until he got over with us. He was inspecting the rifles and the rifles were alright so he started opening the butt plates which were steel plates on the bottom of the rifle which was where you kept your cleaning equipment and stuff. We didn't clean that out, we just kept the stuff in there and he dug everybody about that and dismissed the company and told them to clean up them rifles. Well, we had a sergeant who was an old timer and he says, do what you want to fellas, he didn't have any use for that lieutenant either. So the lieutenant came back and we fell out again and he started to inspect the rifles and the first rifle he came to he dropped it and the kid made sure he dropped it and then he picked it up and he tried to hand it back to the kid but he wouldn't take it because he didn't hand it back the way he took it; he didn't have to take it back so the sergeant had to tell

him, that hey, you hand it back the way it's supposed to be so he decided he'd better not inspect too many more rifles so he dismissed us but the Captain heard about it and gave him a bit of a going over. But we had real good officers, especially that Captain earlier, he was all the way up there at Bastogne, Captain Anderson was his name. He was really a good joe, he respected his men, and I think everybody liked him, he was real nice, ordinary guy, didn't try to pull his rank on you.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was your company commander?

Mr. Miller

Yes. I don't regret any of my experiences. I came home and I went to school, went over to Ft. Wayne Business College and I came back and worked at the store.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your family owned the dry goods store here in Winamac.

Mr. Miller

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about any ribbons, awards, did you get any of those?

Mr. Miller

Oh yea, we got citation from Bastogne. I didn't get any Purple Stars or anything like that, or Bronze Stars, we got combat infantry badge for being up on the front

line. Yea, I think you have to be up on the line for so many days in order to get that. Just my overseas ribbon, that's about all. Good conduct medal, got that.

Transcribed By:

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November 7, 2002

adrianmiller.doc.caj