

**Admiral Nimitz Historic Site  
National Museum of the Pacific War**

**Center for Pacific War Studies  
Oral History Program**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Mr. Henry J. Kolar  
997<sup>th</sup> Treadway Bridge Co.  
1 Co. 379<sup>th</sup> Inf. Regt. 95<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div.  
Europe**

**July 31, 2003**

**My name is Richard Misenhimer and today July 31, 2003. I am interviewing Mr. Henry J. Kolar in his home at 814 North Agnew Winamac, Indiana 46996. His phone number is are code 574-946-6150. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Henry I thank you for taking time to do this interview today. Let me ask you first, what is your birth date?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**February, 19 1919**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And where were you born?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I was born in Brookfield, Illinois**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Where did you go to school?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I went to school in Brookfield.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you finish high school there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No I didn't. I just went to the eighth grade grammar school.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And what was your last year in school?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**1935**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you have brothers and sisters?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Was your brothers older or younger than you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Two younger than me and two older than me. And a sister older than me.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were any of your brothers in World War II?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**My younger brother was in the Navy in the Pacific.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did he come home from the war?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, Fine and dandy.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What was your father's occupation?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**My father was a printer for awhile and then he was a milk man.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now you grew up during the depression. What effect did the depression have on you and your family?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**We lived very tight. Every penny we could get the kids. My oldest brother had a paper route in Brookfield. He delivered the Herald Examiner. And we worked with him. We had the whole town of Brookfield and we delivered and collected money. We put into the family fund.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Was your father able to keep a job during the entire time?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah he had a job. But how much did you make? I was in the, I went into the CCCs when I was seventeen years old. And was in there approximately two years. Traveled to the west coast, up north, east, and I've been south.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What did you do in the CCC?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Everything you could, like cutting sage brush, building, cleaning the forest trails for the forest rangers, up north in the Petoskey, Michigan we planted evergreens in the snow, and up north I fought forest fires and cleared fire trails.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**CCC stands for Civilian Conservation Corps didn't it?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, I still belong to it.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Is that what they call the tree army also?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, I don't know about that.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Then when did you go into the service?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**In the service was forty...1943 June 19.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**According to your records here it was nineteenth of June forty-three. Where you drafted or did you volunteer?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Drafted.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You went in Cook County Illinois it says, and where did you go from here?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Camp Grant in Illinois.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**That's where you took your basic?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What all did basic consist of?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well, I signed up as a mechanic. They'd put us in warehouses counting type writers and moving things around the warehouse. We had our basic training course that they had. Obstacle course, when I finished the obstacle course, in five weeks. One evening they came to me and said I'm being transferred. And I said "Where to?" They said "Well, you are going overseas with a Treadway bridge outfit that needs a mechanic. So they shoved me over to Boston and I was with the Treadway bridge outfit where I didn't know anybody. They moved me around real fast.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What was the unit number of that Treadway bridge...**

**Mr. Kolar**

**997<sup>th</sup>.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**997<sup>th</sup> Bridge company?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Treadway Bridge**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Before you went overseas, back in your basic training about how long did that last?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Five weeks.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And this was infantry type basic?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, you could call it that. What they call an obstacle course, climbing and running. And then we went through an infantry course where they fired over your head and you got full of mud. Things like that. Infantry, I say not engineering.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Engineering or infantry?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Infantry but you had engineering with it. Like when we were in the warehouses working.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**That was during the same five weeks?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**The same five weeks.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you have any rifle training?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, that's where I got the sharpshooter for the '03.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The '03 at that time?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, the old rifle. And then when I came back, I went to Hattiesburg, Mississippi I qualified with the M1.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you have Bayonet training at basic training?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, I never had that.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Hand grenades?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Hand grenades, yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Machine guns?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Machine guns yes. I had anti aircraft machine guns.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Anti aircraft machine guns when you were in basic?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, when I went overseas, they gave me that in Scotland.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**But in your basic you just yeah..**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Not during the basic, I didn't have that one. I didn't have machine gun fire or anti aircraft. I didn't have time.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you finished basic did you get any leave to go home or anything?**

**Mr. Kolar**



**No. I just ran over here..**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Straight to Boston?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Looking over this it says your date of induction was June nineteenth, 1943 and the date of actual entry into active service was July third, 1943.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**The third yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Here it says you departed on February the twelfth nineteen forty-four.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You finished basics sometime in August, what did you do from August to February?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well that's when you had your training with the warehouses. See your basic lasts that long then we were training in the warehouses. In there in between. But I don't know where they got that it was for the engineering, or mechanical. After we got through with that I was doing mechanical work at the base. I can't tell you how long that lasted.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**It does say that you went overseas on February the fourteenth.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**But I did work on the trucks we had for the Treadway bridge outfit. Does it have it on here, is that the same?**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You left from Boston to go overseas?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes sir.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now how long were you in Boston?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**God....not very long. By the time we got there, our unit loaded up and got on the boat. I know I got sea sick before I even started out.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Do you recall what ship you were on?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**One of these liberty ships. I don't know the name of it. It was one of those fast ships they made up for transportation over there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**How many of you were on the ship?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Boy I couldn't tell you.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**A large number?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Here's a picture.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Was it pretty crowded on the ship when you went over?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah, we had four decks in the bottom of the boat. Four high.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Of bunks?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You say you got sea sick before you left, how about on the way over?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Every time I smelled the galley!**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did many of them get sea sick**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. You couldn't go on guard duty or anything. My buddy Bobby was shoving down chocolate bars, Kenny Kellswack was his name, I'll never forget him.**

**Although I don't know what happen to him when I got overseas. But I couldn't stand chocolate bars!**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Anything happen on the way over you recall in particular?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, just they said we were on a zig zag course going over there. To avoid submarines.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were you with any other ships ...?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. There was a convoy.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Where did you land over there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**It's got me. You don't get any names or anything when you go over there. They give it to the officers at different towns you go to. But you don't know where you're at.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you land in Scotland or where?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, I landed in England. Definitely in England. Edenburgh I think was the name of the town where we lived. We were in England there. Like I say, about, I don't know how long, we weren't there too long. We crossed the channel. It was thirteen or fourteen days after the invasion and landed on Omaha Beach. We went over there with our equipment, our heavy equipment.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You got there in February and then you went across the channel in June then right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You were about three months in England before you went across?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And what all did you do in England?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Mechanical work, keep up the trucks, and you know, work over and over; work, unnecessary work.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you get a chance to visit in town?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**In town, yes I did. Well I met my wife's brother, he was in the eighth air cops. And I got a jeep and I went over to see him. But as far as going anywhere else we stayed in town mostly. We had certain nights we could go out in town and the colored had certain nights that they could go out in town. They still segregated them then you know.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were you married when you went overseas?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You say the whites and the colored were segregated, were they on the same base with you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**They were in the same town not the base. They were transportation.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**They were on a different base then?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah, like they call the Red Ball outfit, they were with that. But we used to get into too many fights. They had to do something.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were the people friendly there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, they were friendly. When we got over there they were friendly to us.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now when you were in England, were you ever bombed or anything?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No. When we moved up across the channel then they had these V1's coming in. But none hit us. But they had these aerial balloons up for any aircraft. It was pretty well shot up when I was there, what I can remember. You know what I mean. But I never came close to being hit overseas.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you were there in England, what did you live in?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**We lived in buildings.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Barracks?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, houses.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**In town?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Right in town we were. Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What did you eat? Did they have a mess hall?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, we went to a mess hall.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And how was the food there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well, it was alright. We always threw food away. And the English didn't like it.**

**They hated us for that.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Cause they were short on food.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah. Yeah, and I can't blame them. When we got hot dogs you'd throw half of it**

**away and they didn't like that. The American boys were spoiled. Otherwise they treated us well, I mostly ate fish and chips there. That's all we could get. You couldn't get an egg or a steak! But when you went out in the evening to a pub you get a beer and fish and chips. And they wrapped it in newspaper.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Anything comical you remember along so far that happened up to this point?**

**Anything funny or comical?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No, the only thing I thought was crazy was this kid from Tennessee, real hillbilly, he wouldn't salute an officer. He told them he said "I don't salute an officer until I see one." But nothing really..**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What did they do to him for that?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh, they put him in the brig. I don't know what happened after that but I know he wouldn't salute an officer.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What rank did you have when you got over there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Over there I was a corporal. When I got overseas.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now then, you went across the channel about 14 days after the invasion?**

**Mr. Kolar**



**Some where's around there yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And how did you go across?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**We went across on LSTs, with our equipment and that's the way we unloaded them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You're still with the Treadway bridge outfit?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now you talk about equipment, this is trucks and...?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Trucks, cranes, compressors, and I don't know if you know what a Brockway truck is that hauled Treadway bridges. See I was a mechanic so every truck had two men.**

**One drove it and one operated the boom. Well they would put me on there one truck. I had to operate the boom while the driver drove the truck. And if they needed a driver I would jump in and drive. See because I had a driver's license to drive heavy equipment when I was in the service.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You mentioned a Brockway truck, what is a Brockway truck?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**That carries the Treadway's that we loaded onto the pontoons. They're steel and they are about, they must be about fifteen to twenty feet long. And we had a boom**

that lifts them up overhead off the trucks... and you put the chains on it and it picks the Treadway up and slides it right off the back. And then the crane picks it up and puts it in the pontoons that are floating. The bridge is made up river. And then they float the pontoons down. There's a picture of the Treadway bridge. These are the pontoons and these are the Treadway's. That's what we hauled, that I told you about, that we unloaded.

Mr. Misenhimer

And those are steel and about fifteen feet long?

Mr. Kolar

Yes some where's around there. Fifteen to twenty feet. And then they're hooked together after they're put on the pontoons.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then a truck can drive across them?

Mr. Kolar

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Can a tank go across those?

Mr. Kolar

Yeah tanks went across them.

Mr. Misenhimer

So they can carry a lot of weight?

Mr. Kolar

Yeah, that was a fast bridge. See the Bailey bridge was a steel bridge. That took

**quite awhile to put up. This we could put up real quick.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**This is a steel bridge also?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well the Treadways are steel, but the pontoons aren't. They are floating, you know what a pontoon is? Yeah. Well they are bolted together and they, you know, in the water, they're swaying.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Yeah up and down.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**They don't go down. But I only put up one bridge, in combat, and we were getting aerial bursts over head. We got most of the bridge up but could not finish it, we were pulled back and that's when I was transferred to the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry division.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you landed there, where did you land? Do you recall?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**In France? Omaha Beach.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you landed was there still a lot of wrecked equipment and everything there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well there was. We went through the town of St. Lo. That was the first town I saw blown up. There was nothing left of it. You can't see St. Lo but if you had the map, the map it'll show St. Lo on there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The first place you went was St. Lo?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**The first town I saw was St. Lo.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And it was pretty well destroyed you say?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**It was demolished that's where I found a camera. My brother's brother-in-law was killed there in the invasion. At St. Lo the way the officers wrote back and notified the parents how he got killed, and where.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**On Omaha Beach, did you see a lot of wreckage there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah oh Yeah. What do you want to call it,. Fencing or pickets or whatever and a lot of equipment mostly equipment laid out there. They really hit them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**How about wrecked landing craft, many wrecked landing craft?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well I can't tell you. I can't pick out what it was. Because you didn't have time. We were unloading as quick as we could to get the hell off the shore line. They wanted us to get in so we wouldn't be shelled.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were they still shelling and bombing?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, they were still shelling. But not as thick as on the invasion day. I know some of the equipment got hit but I can't tell you what. It moved too fast.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**About how many men in this unit, about how many men were in the 997?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Just a company I don't know.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**A company that's what is was?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah it had to be. It was a big outfit I don't know how many a company consists of.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The 997<sup>th</sup> was a battalion or what is it?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**It was a company they called the 997<sup>th</sup> but I couldn't tell you because I knew nothing about it. I was transferred into it so fast. I went overseas with them and I didn't know anybody. I got overseas and I'm with them a short time and they transfer me to the 95<sup>th</sup>. I got transferred at night and I registered in to the sergeant and he told me "Find yourself a place to sleep." And that was down in the basement! And it was dark as hell and I said "Where do you sleep?" He said "You'll find a spot. Lay down of one of the blankets." And they had bottles of gas with rags stuck in them for candles. When you got up in the morning your nose was black**

**from soot. And that's my experience with the infantry when I first got into it. I didn't know where I was, believe me.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now let's go back to the Treadway bridge company, you went to St. Lo and then..?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**We went through France, I mean Paris. We put up a bridge, I can't tell you what exact river it was but it was a river. That's where we were putting up the bridge.**

**But then before we I got the bridge up we were pulled back because the shelling was so bad. That's when they transferred me. That was at Verdun, the Saar River. I don't know what happened to the company, the 997<sup>th</sup>. I tried to find out what happened. Nobody seems to know anything about them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Tell me about putting the bridge up. Tell me about how you did it and everything.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**What they do is float the pontoons down the river to where the men are waiting to tie them together. The Brockway trucks drive to that area and back up to the riverbank and start lowering the Treadways onto a pontoon with the help of a crane. When one is finished another truck backs onto the Treadway and unloads.**

**When he's finished, he'll pull away and another Brockway backs onto the Treadway and continues until the Treadway bridge is to the other shore. Now they had trucks that carried the pontoons. We had the big Brockway trucks with the Treadway bridge where they were going to put the bridge up. And we had a crane there and we had a crew of men that assembled that. They pump up the pontoon boat and**

float them down river over to us and they would hook them up together. Then when they got them hooked our crew with the crane, see we couldn't put it on the pontoons we couldn't reach out with our trucks that far. So we would get them off our truck then the crane would pick it up and reach out and put it on the pontoons. And that's the way they built the bridges.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

And what was the pontoons made of?

**Mr. Kolar**

Pontoon, they are heavy rubber and the way I understood they are partitioned so if punctured it wouldn't effect the whole pontoon. They never go flat.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

And they use an air compressor and pump those up?

**Mr. Kolar**

Yes

**Mr. Misenhimer**

And each pontoon right next to each other, so it took a lot of pontoons then?

**Mr. Kolar**

Oh yeah. See they are all deflated when they bring them up to the river. Then they fill them air and floated down the river. And they try to find a neutral spot so they can do this work. But they're getting shelled. We got shelled. We got a lot of aerial bursts on us. When I was unloading the Treadway.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

Does the crane follow across on the Treadway?

**Mr. Kolar**

**No**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And the truck has to come out there too?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well yeah, when we get farther down yeah. Naturally you have to drive the truck off and another truck backs onto the bridge. And the men are on the bridge working.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now they bolt these pieces together, is that right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, they are bolted.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**So there's a crew down there doing that?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When they lay a piece of Treadway they bolt it together.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**That's exactly right. And the one crew floats it down there I don't know how many men are on a pontoon , but he floats it down there and they work together. It's a wonderful bridge that they put up. I tell you, quick. That's what we used to practice, how fast they could put up a bridge but that's the only one I put up.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**



**When you were doing this you were getting air bursts from their artillery?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did any of the people you were with get hit with the air bursts?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well yes that I can't see. You have a crew up there working and a crew here working. But you wonder if you know any of these guys that got killed. I saw so many of them. You wonder why you didn't get hit. I got shelled close to me. I got one time plaster all over me in a house but, was it a mortar or was it and eighty-eight? I can't tell you what fired at me.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you got this bridge built then what did you do?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Like I said I wasn't there after the bridge was built. That's when I was moved from there to the 95<sup>th</sup> Division. When they transferred me they put me in a six by six truck with my bag and when I got there, to the 95<sup>th</sup> division, they took my bag and all my belongings except for what I needed. They furnished me with an M1, bandoleers, and hand grenades. Then when I got over there they asked me if I fired an M1 that morning and I said "No I never fired an M1." They said "How about a hand grenade?" I said "A hand grenade, yeah. I threw a hand grenade." So they told me that I didn't have to learn that but, "We'll get you out there firing the M1 to get used to the gun and how to load it." And that I did. From then on I was in the**

**infantry. And then they tried to take my stripes on me. Because they don't have technicians in the infantry. I was a rifle man. And I said "No. General Patton says anybody transferred with a rating will keep their rating. They can't break them." And that's what I stood for. They made me squad leader. Squad leader was the first one. Always to lead the squad.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Out in the front?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, but you give no commands unless you got a command. I got well, in combat everyone is for himself believe me. We jumped through buildings, we jumped over fence. It wasn't two or three guys, it was all individual. When you fired you fired. When you felt like you should fire. They always called it a field of fire. We approach a town and see their apartment buildings. We'd fire at all the windows we could. You don't know who all is behind the windows or if you hit anybody. One guy that I know that I did hit was on a bicycle. And he came with the white flag. Waving it, he surrendered. But that was before we just got into town. And we were being hit by Phosphorous shells and we had the tanks with us, our armored, and he went underneath a bridge, and I don't know why he did it but he turned around and came back and he didn't have the flag. So I hit him. After that I don't know how many. You don't count and you don't want to.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now you were the only one transferred to the infantry from your outfit right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**At that time yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Do you know why they chose you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**They said they needed a man there. And they did need me as a mechanic. I don't know where they'd work on the trucks anyway. Being with the Treadway bridge outfit there was no mechanical work that they had, they would tow the trucks to the rear and let the truck park. And they towed the truck in. So why did they have me, I don't know.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you were transferred to the 95<sup>th</sup> division what regiment or battalion or what company?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I company.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**I company.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Three seventy ninth. I'm getting goofed up here.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**379<sup>th</sup> Regiment?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes. Battalion. How many men? All I know is how many men at the time that I was squad leader. When I was squad leader I never trained with them. I never knew the**

men from Adam and there was suppose to be twelve men in a squad. I know that we didn't have them all. But who they were....how do you know them? You don't sleep with them. All you're doing is being in action. Like down in the basement, I didn't know the guy next to me. It was just a horrible way to go through it. Because these guys here, when I go to the reunion, there's guys there that I didn't even know that was in my company. And they don't know me! The only one that I got pictures of is when I was with the engineer outfit. Because I had that camera at that time. But that doesn't mean anything. But I could show you pictures of guys that were with me. When we came back we lived in Barracks not barracks tents. Pocerney was taken prisoner for about five minutes! He was our BAR man. And we were out on patrol and we ran into a bunch of Germans and they were dug in and covered! We were in combat taking a farm house. Pecorney was our BAR man-he was in front. He saw the 88 pointed at him. He dropped BAR and surrendered. Then when they took him they surrendered to us.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Germans did?

Mr. Kolar

Oh Yeah. They had an eighty-eight pointed at him. Out of the brush they had an eighty-eight pointed at him. He said "What the hell could I do with the BAR?" He said "I dropped it" And of course they surrendered to us. Their whole squad.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is this your squad here?

Mr. Kolar

No not all of them. That's why I say certain ones I was close to that I remember. You know, like our Sergeant we were in a building on the second floor and the Germans had an armored car. And they would ride around the building in the area and say "You Yankees die tonight!" And we had no heavy guns with us, just our rifles. So we were waiting for our tanks to come up and finally our tanks came up. And that stopped....but our sergeant, he got his arm blown off. But like I say I can tell you incidents but I can't give you names. It's hard.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back, When you joined the 95<sup>th</sup> they immediately made you a squad leader is the right?

Mr. Kolar

No not immediately. Not immediately no.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do immediately?

Mr. Kolar

Just fell in with the rank. You just fell in. You're with this group. And that was it. You'd take orders from sergeants also. And that's all it was. But the technician grade, after we were in combat awhile they called me up on that. And they were going to take it away from me. And I said "As far as I know I was told you couldn't take my stripes away." So that's when they made me squad leader. But does it mean anything? All it meant was that I was up there in front. If I stepped on a mine I would be the first one to get hit. You're going through fields and you don't know what you're going to run into. But that's all I know. Like I said I got the stripes to

**prove it. That's all I can tell you.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You say you did not sleep with your squad?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I slept with men I don't know who they were.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**They weren't your squad?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I don't know. I can't tell you that. There was more than twelve men in the basement. Plus the officer and I don't know him.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**But you know who your squad was right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. When we went in. You get to know the guys but you lost them too. When they would get a replacement all you got told is who it was and if he had a rank or something. Like we got guys from the air corps replacements. And they never fired a rifle. And they'd come in and they'd be crying. They were transferred. They would put the gun on their foot and shoot their foot to get back. Well then they were court martialed for that. Like I say, we had guys come in there and you don't know who they are, from the air corps but their names, you got your names. There's only certain ones like Joe Barford I can remember. The kid in the boat that was trying to feed me candy bars. And you know, guys like that I remember. And there's a picture here we got a happy barrel of beer. Now this was occupational.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**This was after the war?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah after the war. And a gallon of whiskey for twelve men. Now here is the guy I remember because he played the harmonica. And when we wanted food we went around to the Germans and the women would make us put it on the table for them to make us food. And I'll never forget Joe Barford. But now to give you all the names I can't give them to you. I don't remember their names. I wished I did but I try to get in touch with Joe Barford. And I got a kid in Florida, my wife did through the computer. And he said his uncle was in the Merchant Marines and then he went to Korea he thinks. But he thinks he was dead. So I couldn't find anymore. The only thing I didn't ask him was did your uncle play the harmonica? He had a little one and the women went nuts over it. And I'll never forget him but that was after the war. We'd get loaded!**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now when you joined the 95<sup>th</sup> what was your first combat operation?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Our first real combat mission was in Metz. And that was rough. You know what I mean? I don't know you weren't in the service were you?**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Yeah, I was in the service but not in any combat.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Not in combat, I know that's why you want to know..... And I can't...because**

you don't keep track of everybody. Some body over here hollering for a medic you don't know if he's from your squad or another squad. All you know is you're looking out for yourself unless you got a load of guys then you decide what to do. Like when we used to go from building to building. That was a group. Twelve men or ten men what ever you had left. The squad leader would get up to go. We had a TD what we called it, he'd punch a hole in the building. Then we'd jump from building to building. Roust them out of there, the Germans you see. And down in the basement we'd throw hand grenades and ask them to surrender. After we threw the hand grenade. I was sitting in what you might call the living room of this house, taking a five. A rest. I was sitting by an opening were the wall was blown out, and I was just sitting there, I don't know what I was sitting on but a shell came and it hit the roof of the building. It knocked all the plaster down. They were all laughing I was white. Plaster all over me! But what it was I can't tell you. An eighty-eight, mortar or a bazooka I don't know what it was but I got out of there. And we went to the next building. Well one of our boys, he was first, I can't think of his name, but he got the silver star out of it. See we reported back whatever happened. If you did something heroic. He went through the hole to another building and he landed on a plank. He went in the building and stopped us. There was a mine underneath the plank. But it was an antitank mine but still he was turned in for notifying. A lot of guys got medals for the least little things. But that's besides the point. Anyway he reported it and we didn't jump then. Until we had the mine removed. Then we found out it was a tank mine.

Mr. Misenhimer



**Took more weight to set it off?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah, we wouldn't have set it off if by jumping on it. But they had bouncing betty's that they used. You had to be careful of them because they hand fingers and all you had to do was trip them walking through the fields. And that's what always scared the hell out of me.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And they would bounce up in the air and then go off?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Waist high. They'd cut you. The shrapnel. There's a lot of incidents I could go back and tell you. Making hand grenades, booby trap, like along the river... The Saar River, we had to string up wires and rang tin cans and bottles at night. And if anybody hit that wire you could hear it. It would rattle the cans. But I remember that I was so scared there. You could hear the river flowing and how can you hear anyone coming across? At night standing guard, you get scared, I don't care what anyone said. That's one of the incidents.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now you mentioned you had something to punch holes in walls what was it called?**

**A TD?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**A TD tank destroyer. It just blew a hole in the wall for us and we fought house to house. That was house to house fighting.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**This tank destroyer would shell it, knock a hole in there, and you all could crawl through the hole is that right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**That's right to the next building.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The destroyer just went with you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah. When we went into a town and we needed to flush out the Germans, that's the way we flushed them out. We didn't run in there and holler to surrender, you know what I mean? You only wanted down in the basement or on the second floor. That's when you had trouble. As long as you had hand grenades with you which you always carry about four hand grenades, and two bandoliers that we had for our rifles. You always had plenty, well towards the end we kind of ran out of ammunition they said. They were low. I never ran out of it I had enough. Like rations, we got K rations I don't know what they are....Cracker Jack boxes. They'd throw three of them at you. The jeep would come by and throw three of them at you. You didn't know you if had breakfast, lunch, or supper. But he tried to mix them up too fast, he had to keep on moving.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**They had like candy bars and things like that?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah there were cigarettes in there. Small candy bar, can of Spam or eggs, some had cigars in it.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Chewing gum I think?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Chewing gum I don't remember having that. Chocolate bars because that's what the kids always wanted. The town we went through they wanted chocolate chocolate. They wanted that. But I used to feed, 2 children and give cigars to their grandfather. A boy Hanus and a girl Idalie. The girl is still alive but the boy is dead. The girl married and she has a son. He goes to Boston and to New York, he's a doctor.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Are they German?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**They're Belgian. She sent pictures of the house. They got it all remodeled, it's changed they say. She is 71 now. She sent me chocolates from Belgium. My wife sent her a hand crocheted tablecloth and afghan. And we correspond.**

**Misenhimer**

**Does she write English?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No she has an interpreter. Now, I thought, when I was there, I thought they said that they had to learn English. But she didn't. She's got an interpreter.**

**MR. Misenhimer**

**How did you meet her over there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

Well we were sent up to the bulge up at Bastogne. They didn't send us right to Bastogne. So six by sixes, trucks we were hauled out and they billeted us in straw for awhile. Then the next day we had the building taken over. They gave us blankets and we laid on the floors there. We laid on the second floor of this family's home. They had a back porch and they had a big map hanging on the wall. They would show us how the war was going on. What was what and stuff like that. And I got sick there. I got the GI's, they put me in another room. In a feather thick and a potty along side of me. And they used to clean that every morning for me. And bring me eggs. they were real good. Well we pulled out of there. They held them out at Bastogne. And then they moved us to clean out the Ruhr pocket. We didn't go to the bulge , we didn't get in on that. They moved us then to clean up the Ruhr pocket on the Rhine river. So I left Belgium then and my wife, my first wife used to correspond and send clothing and stuff like that. To Idalie and Ilanus' mother and family.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were there two or three days with them?

Mr. Kolar

Oh possibly longer than that. I'd say about a week. When I got well then I used to go over and get extra food. See we had C rations then. They had a kitchen set up and you go in there to get it. And I would bring it over to the two kids. And I would always give the old man the cigars. And you know what he called me...Churchill. They were quite a family. I enjoyed it there. The mother and father are dead and the brother is dead. And Idalie's husband just died recently.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now you were saying about this letter.**

**Mrs. Kolar**

**They wrote to him, I found that last letter they wrote to him. It was in 1945, that they last heard from them. And then in September 2001 he was wondering if they were still there. So we wrote a letter to them at the same address and they were still the same address.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**They had the house remodeled. And she had a list of guys that stayed there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**So from '45 to '01 you didn't hear from them at then?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**That's right, no. And I don't know these guys on the list and they all stayed in the same building. That's what I say it's hard for anybody to understand. Like my wife's sister says "Why don't you know this guy?" or "Why don't you remember this?" Hey you moved. You were always looking out for yourself. Not that I didn't look out for the men in my squad. You had to be on the defensive side. You know what I mean? Watch out for yourself. You slept with your gun, I was taught that. That's your buddy you sleep with it. And we always had our rifle with us. You never know who you'd meet over in occupational, we were only there for a week, you start out placing a family here and there. And I scouted out this one family and there was a kid in there. Hitler youth and I didn't know it. He pulled a knife on me so I took the knife away from him. I sent it to my brother and he was in the navy. And he**

said he never got the knife. It had bloutonniere on the blade. I wish I had it. But he never got it. That's the only one that I got close to combat with. I imagine a lot of guys fought some Germans or stuck them with a bayonette or something. But I never did with this kid. I had to take the knife, he was going to stick me.

Mr. Misenhimer

How old was he?

Mr. Kolar

He was about twelve, fifteen years old.

Mr. Misenhimer

That young?

Mr. Kolar

Oh yeah. They believed in that. He was a Hitler youth.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now after Metz what was your next combat then?

Mr. Kolar

Well when we went to Metz it was terrible. We lost a lot of men. And then we billeted it in Metz. Did you ever see Patton the Movie?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes

Mr. Kolar

Did you see him on that horse. That was the arena in Metz. And we were billeted there in Metz before we shoved off for Saarlautern. They put us up on the third floor. In this here area is what I'm talking about. And we all got the GI's. Boy, I'm

good for that. They gave us spoiled turkey for Christmas. Whatever it was, it was rotten. They didn't do it intentionally. But when you went down the stairs to get to the foot trench, that's where the latrine was, down there. There's crap and all down the stairs leading to the latrine . You're fighting your way to get down there so you don't do it in your drawers because you had nothing to change into. The only clothes we had was on our back and a pair of socks. We always carried an extra pair of socks. That was for our feet. They worried about our feet. And when you get them wet like some say to me "Well what did you do with the ones you took off?" You let them dry then you put them back on. I had one shower the whole time I was there. One shower you walked right on through you know in the shower. There was a tent put up and at the end they had clean clothes for you. They picked out your clothes for you. I was at a three day rest camp they give you everything you wanted. Food and drinks, an MP said "Just don't fight. Get as drunk as you want. But don't fight with anybody." And then you had to go back to the front. Lot of experiences you remember but names.

**Mrs. Kolar**

I was just going to remind you of when you were going over the fence.

**Mr. Kolar**

We took a small town, well like here you got farms. There, they brought up the kitchen to give us C rations. We were having C rations and we met some women with little kids in buggies. So we were giving the milk that we got or whatever food to the kids. And we weren't supposed to. That was fraternizing. You couldn't do that. Well anyway, that night, this Joe Barford, that's where I got to meet him, they

put us in what they call a fox hole with a bazooka. Now, I never had fired a bazooka in my life. But one loaded the bazooka and the other fired it. And we were in there and I said "Joe what the hell are we going to do?" He said "Hey we'll just do the best we can. When a tank gets by you then fire at the back end because that's the most vulnerable part of the motor." So I said "Ok." We stayed there that night and nothing happened. We shoved off in the morning. And boy they laid a barrage of eighty-eight, or machine gun fire. It was just terrible. So we fell back, then finally moved up. And we got a hold. They moved out. We were pushing them back. I jumped over a fence I didn't even know it. It might have been a two foot or three foot fence. But when I went back I saw that fence. And that's what my wife is reminding me of. We took it over then, we pushed them back. That's one experience I guess that's goofy. Whenever they could they'd give us hot meals. But very very seldom. You got mostly K rations.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you on the front lines?

Mr. Kolar

We were under fire for 3 or 4 days. We'd fall back for 3 days on and off until I got a three day pass and then when we were up in Belgium. We moved up to Bastogne and we were there probably a week. Then we moved out again to the Ruhr pocket. So I'd say maybe, when I was with the 95<sup>th</sup> maybe three or four, three weeks anyway I was off the front line. Where you're moving and you don't get hit. And where you don't have to be afraid. Like when they were giving us the showers, they'd pull us back, certain ones they'd pull back. Like when the division moved up



and they wanted to move them, they left a few guys there to hold the position.

Then they moved the division to fool the Germans. And they'd put them in nice positions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about the Ruhr pocket.

Mr. Kolar

Well they had three divisions moving in from three different ways and when we all met, we had cleared it. And it was just regular cleaning up. Firing at anything you saw without a white flag, anything that moved, hey, you shot it. They surrendered, that's a lot of bull. If they had a white flag yeah, but if they didn't have a white flag, shoot them. Well not kids and women but if you saw....well for instance there was a pile of dirt on the side of this apartment we took. I was on guard there. And one of the Germans dressed in an American uniform and there were tracks in front of us, rail road tracks. He came across the railroad tracks in an American uniform so I didn't shot him. And he came around the apartment. They didn't kill him but they stopped him. He had the password. He didn't come by me but I saw him and I could of shot him if he'd a been German. But he was German but he had a n American uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't know he was German at that time?

Mr. Kolar

No. That's what I mean. I was standing guard in the doorway. This one soldier, I don't know his name, he was shot in the head peeking out up above the wall and a

suiper got him. He fell by this doorway. I was put on guard for this hallway. The Germans were across the street. So I was on guard and it was night time, it was dark. I was standing guard. I sat on his head and I didn't know it.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

After the ruhr pocket, where did you go then?

**Mr. Kolar**

Then the war ended. The Japs, we were worried about them sending us over to the Pacific. But we had a rest for a week then we put in box cars, and sent us back by ships. The French came by the box cars wanted blankets and that. They gave us Cognac. But they watered down the Cognac. But that was the experience coming back. And we got on a ship and landed in Boston. Then sent to Hattiesburg, Mississippi. To keep us occupied, the officer says "We're going on a firing range and anybody that shoots a good score gets a five day pass." And that's when I shot sharp shooter. I got a five day pass and I said to him "I want to get back to Chicago," I said, "Cause my wife is in Cicero see." And he said "You can't go that far on a five day pass." I said "God can't you extend it?" He said "I'll tell what you do, take a chance. Anybody stops you, to check your pass that'll be too bad, they'll send you back. But they can't do you any harm." So I got on the train and went to Chicago. Five day pass. My wife's uncle filled up my duffle bag with whiskey. And I met a guy on the train going back there and he was an elderly guy like me, well back then I was young, and he had a little whiskey. And he got me feeling good going back to camp. So the guys knew I was suppose to be back so they met me at the train depot in town, I got on the truck there and they hauled me back to the

barracks. I had all the guys and all the whiskey. And they all drank it and killed it all. And we had these square tents with the wood sides and wooden floors. And the guys, when they got through with the whiskey they set the empty bottles on the shelf above my bunk. The Lieutenant came through on inspection. And I got the blame because I brought whiskey in. So he said "You scrub every floor in this tent row. I was like, God oh mighty, I had a big head, I didn't know how I could scrub floors. And these guys said "Don't worry about it we'll take care of it." And they did it. That was my experience there before I was discharged. Everybody was worried that we were going to the Pacific. The 95<sup>th</sup> they needed us over there. But then, my friend, Joe Brown was transferred to the 86<sup>th</sup> division with other men who did not have enough points to get out. So they were sent to the Pacific and they did not send the rest of us. Then they dropped the bomb. We were discharged by the amount of points we had.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to after the Ruhr pocket. During that winter, of course that was real cold. One of the coldest winters. Did you have any trouble with frost bitten feet or anything like that?

Mr. Kolar

No. Like I told you, you had to change your socks. And we laid in straw and then we billeted there for awhile in the building. You had blankets. You never carried a bedroll, a blanket if you could. Clothing you never changed clothes. The only time I changed my clothes was when I went for a shower that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

**How about a shelter half, did you have a shelter half?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well shelter half? Yeah in those pictures of the Treadway bridge outfit. I never had one when I was in the infantry. You never had time to put one up. You lived in a building if you could. Or a barn where you could get out of the cold or rain. That's what you lived in. but you never put up a tent like the engineers. You never put up a pup tent. I never carried a shovel. Never had to dig holes. There were always plenty of holes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now in April of forty-five President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah slightly. There wasn't much said about it. No big deal. Even when the war was over. I mean in Germany it was no big deal. All we did was be occupational and they brought us this beer and whiskey. That was a big celebration I'd say.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What did you think of the M1 rifle?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Very good I loved it. Better than that 03 or carbine . It was heavy but it did it's job. I qualified with the 03 but I wouldn't want it. And of course the way they make you qualify you're not use to firing a rifle like that. In fact I never did any hunting. So I wasn't really used to my rifle. But you had to use the sling. And we did mostly hip firing. Unless you were shooting at an object. Then you had to aim it. But otherwise**

we were what they called a field of fire. When you moved up on a position whatever it was a house, farm house, you give them a field of fire. Once in awhile we would get a tank outfit to move in with us. And then we would ride the tank up as far as we could. Then we'd get off the tank. And you didn't want a tank around. They made so much noise. They attracted so much attention that's when we'd get our artillery on us.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm looking here to see when you came back from overseas. Twenty-three June forty-five. June twenty-third of forty-five you came back. To the US. And you arrived on one July forty-five.

Mr. Kolar

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were actually occupational for awhile over there is that right?

Mr. Kolar

About a week. I'd say about a week. I'm not positive. Like I said time mean nothing to you over there. Just that you want to get out of there and get home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were under Patton the third army for awhile?

Mr. Kolar

For awhile. I got a faint picture of him. With that camera when I was with the engineers. It's hard to tell.

Mr. Misenhimer

**Did you ever get close to him?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No never. The closest I got was we were in a ditch and he was at a crossroad giving our officers hell that they didn't know what direction to go. They're suppose to know they got maps. Crossroads you were always zeroed in. You expect artillery to come in every time. And there they were stalled. You could see him at the crossroad but you can't tell it's him.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**In that movie "Patton" it shows him one time were he got out and directed traffic.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. He was that type of guy. That's what we heard. Well our blood and his guts. See here. He's in this white outfit. He's at a crossroad and we' were in a ditch here. I happened to get this camera and this is the way it turned out. Shame I didn't get a good picture.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You were too far.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I can say that's him. No body can believe me though.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**As far as talking to him...**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No. I wished I could of.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now when you got back to Mississippi. You did rifle training and firing and stuff there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well we didn't do training, we had it. But that's what the officer did to occupy our time. Until we were going to be discharged or sent over to the Pacific. But you know you never carried your rifle with you. They always took it away from you. In the states or when you got on the boat. You didn't have a rifle on the ship. You got it when you went over into England.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**I see these pictures now the people coming back from Iraq they got there rifle on them in the plane and when they go meet there family they're carrying their rifle with them.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah I can't understand that. Sure changed. We couldn't carry one. Unless they were afraid we were going to commit suicide. But I wished I had better stories for you.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Oh these are very good.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**The only thing I can tell you is that I was fortunate, and I can't believe that I came out of that without a scratch, with all the time I served. And taking, Metz, that's a hell of a city to take. Today that's the French City of Metz. That's why I asked about this here certificate the French are suppose to give out. The wife saves all the**

stuff. And that's one reason why I want it. Whether I do, or I don't hate them. They never did me any harm. You know what I mean. But you have problems with the government you see. They stopped it I guess. They weren't going to be giving out that citation or whatever it was. I don't know why but I never hated any of the foreigners. Even Germans I didn't hate. When I met the people.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you were surprised how you got back without being hurt.

Mr. Kolar

Yeah I don't know why.

Mr. Misenhimer

And a number of people around you were wounded or killed.

Mr. Kolar

Oh yes. Like I told you the sergeant got his arm shot off. Rocky got it in his hip, the bullet went down to his ankle and it's still in his leg. There's guys that I know but I don't know their names. I can't describe them to you. You move. If someone got hit you better get the hell out of there. That's all I could see. You didn't stop unless you were a medic or he wanted help and you could help him. You got out of there. You were on your own all the time. Well you had your group with you but you're looking out for yourself. You're not looking out for anyone else. You're looking out for yourself. It's a shame to say but that's the way it is. They talk about this buddy system, well when you're in combat and shells are coming in. And you don't know where the hell they're coming from. You can't knock them out. You're gonna move. And the Saar River, I didn't tell you that story. We walked up stream and they put



us on boats. He went up stream to get to the other side of the river to come back on the other side of the bridge to keep the Germans from blowing it up. They took us across the Saar River. That's when we took the bridge. We took this bridge going into Saarlautern. I company got on these boats up stream. And then they floated us across. And got on the other side of the bank and we walked along the bank and got to the one end of the bridge. I wish I had a guy that could draw you a picture. And we held the Germans from blowing up the bridge. They had it all dynamited.

When I was with the squad. We went up there and we held the Germans back. We lost a hell of a lot of men up there. But then our tanks came in and they're tanks came in. That's when I dug a hole in the embankment and put my head in there.

Then when our tanks moved up, we took the bridge intact. And they got across the bridge, then Germans got on our tanks and were trying to beat their way into the tanks. You get so excited. But I tell you when they came with them eighty-eights, man, you move, to cover. Like I say it's a shame but I stuck my head in the dirt.

My ass was sticking out! But they didn't get the bridge. We saved the bridge. And then we went on to Saarlautern and took the town. But that's the two worst experiences that I had was that. But we had the Germans I don't know where it was at but Ed, our BAR man was with us. He was in a squad with me. And we went around from house to house. These woman said they would cook us a meal if we got the food. So we went around, and there's a letter in there I'm not lying she read it. And he says "Hank, you remember when you kicked a farmer in the ass down the stairs for the potatoes?" He said he didn't have any potatoes and I said "You got potatoes down there." And he wouldn't let us by so I kicked him in the ass and went

down the stairs and we got the potatoes for the dinner. And Joe Barford was there and he played his harmonica and the women cooked for us. It wasn't that we were flirting with them, we weren't suppose to. But that's the incidents that we run into and we were getting a hot meal. We had an outpost on the Rhine river. I think it was on the third floor. It was an elderly couple and they baked us cherry pies. And we were watching the Germans on the other side of the Rhine river waiting to get across. That was another close one. Taking a bridge and they blew half of a bridge up on us when we were on the bridge. And we had to fall back then because we couldn't get across. I never took that bridge. We crossed the Rhine but our outfit never took the bridge. Talking about Frat, your officers did the same thing. We know they did. What the hell you're there, you take what you can. We walked in a house they had a big fireplace. Big chimneys, and up in the chimney, you know what they had hanging up there? Smoked hams . We cut them down and we gave them hell.

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Was this the Germans?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah German house yeah. They had hams hanging up. Well any canned food you got. We were warned on that. I never saw a guy get poisoned. We opened up jars and ate the fruit. Like I said the Germans treated us good. The ones that were left behind.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The civilians?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes not the SS men. The SS guys were the bad guys. These two women I'm telling you about with the kids, we'd give them food. Well their men were SS troopers. And boy they cussed them out. Whatever they could say in English. As far as a German prisoner or soldier, I never got that close to them. When we took them we took them in groups. But you never took one at a time. It was always a group. And then you had a rough time when you got too many to send back. There was no way to send them back. And you had to have somebody guarding over them. Which we took the rifles off them. And they did surrender. And it was not like this in Iraq. When they surrendered they surrendered. I never saw any German violate the law. When you surrendered you surrendered. And that was it. I think they were glad that the war was over. You know to surrender. Because they brought a lot of them back here to the United States. I think they were kind of, well every guy we had taken they were beat, they were beat. I don't know how the hell Hitler took all the countries that he did. They were beat though.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You mention the SS, did you have any experience with the SS/**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No just want I'm telling you. They were hard soldiers. I never really got in contact with them. I'm glad I didn't. I'd hate to see somebody that I shot. To walk up to them and have to shoot them or something. I'm not that kind of guy. You had to go there. It was your job. At a distance yeah. I don't have to talk to them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you get home with any souvenirs?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah I brought a pistol home. And I promised it, we were renting a flat, and the guy lived up stairs, we had the lower floor. His mother owned a building. I promised him this pistol. And I got it in a house and they have to surrender. This woman had this gun and it was still wrapped in wax. Brand new. So she gave me the gun. And this friend upstairs here said, he raised cocker spaniels, he said he would give me a dog if I brought him a souvenir. And I got the cocker spaniel. And my two kids were just nuts about that dog. But that would have been a nice souvenir to keep. But I got a German watch I took. I don't know if it's worth anything. It's a Lapel watch. I still have that. But anything else....well when we went in England before we went to France they gave us French money. Invasion money they called it. But never got to use it. And I don't know what ever happen to it. It was just square coupons. Two by two or something like that. That's all it was. Any German money I never got but English money I got. Because we bought things there. Like I told you fish and chips. Like I say anything we wanted we had to buy in England. Red Cross and all.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**When you were over seas did you get paid pretty regular?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well what were you going to do with the money?**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**I just wondered?**

**Mr. Kolar**

I had mine sent home. Like they would give us French money. Where were you going to spend it? When you got into Paris sure but they would give you the shirt off their back. We were the heroes! I went through there and I found what they call a weasel. They have double tracks on them but they're open. They're not armored or anything but I found one and I repaired the track on it. And I went through Paris with the 997th with this weasel. The Lieutenant took it away from me. He said "You can't do that." I found a motorcycle. I rode that and they took that away on me. Then we found a compressor washer for washing vehicles. When we were in this mud and, here in the woods, I fixed up the distributor cap. I patched it up. Got it going and they were washing their trucks with it. That's some of the incidents though. And when we went through Paris there were a lot of bald headed girls. They cut their hair if they had anything to do with the Germans. And they'd put them on a pedestal out in the street. But they were good to us coming through. Coming back I was mad because they were giving us cognac with three quarters water and little cognac in there. But no real souvenirs. I saw my brother-in-law, he was in the eighth air corps, he sent outfits back. The whole uniform of the Germans. My family wrote to me and ask why I didn't send souvenirs? I didn't have a post office. When I'd write they'd send it through the mail saw. Cut this out, cut that out. So what could I do? You can't carry it on your back. There's one guy, he believed in saving vests. The vests that you wear. He must have had a half a dozen of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get mail when you were overseas?

Mr. Kolar

**Yeah, I got the letter quite a while after it was mailed. Yeah I got mail there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Even when you were with the 95<sup>th</sup> in combat?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah 95<sup>th</sup> yeah. Well when you change like that your mail is going to be delayed.**

**You wait and wait and wait. When am I gonna get a letter? Far as boxes and that I told them not to send it to me because I couldn't handle it.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you ever have any experience with the USO shows? Did you see any USO shows or anything?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No I never got to. The Red Cross I saw. They'd come up and bring their wagon with and give you one donut and a cup of coffee. That was the limit.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did they charge you for it or was that free?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No that was free. I don't want to say it but I would never give them a dime. When we were in England they'd charge us for everything there ever was. Cigarettes and all. The only time I got free was ;when I was on the front line. And they moved up and then we had.. I think I have a picture. Not me but I took a picture when I was with the 997th. That's what it was.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What medals and ribbons did you get?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well I didn't get them all because I would see a listing on them. But I did get good conduct, combat infantry badge, bronze star, sharp shooter, mechanics medal, ETO medal, EAMETO medal, good conduct medal, WWII victory medal.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You were discharged on twenty-one November in nineteen forty-five. Now in August of forty-five is when Japan surrendered. Did you all have any celebration or hear anything about it?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh we hee hawed about it. You know what I mean. There was no big party or anything.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And you were in Mississippi at that time right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah Mississippi. They were undecided what to do with us. But they took the 86<sup>th</sup>. That was Joe Brown.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And it says here that you were a technician fifth grade.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And you were in Company I the 379 Regiment.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Anything else you recall?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**You know, I'll remember things after you leave. How can you explain when you're shooting at people and they're shooting at you. And guys are getting hit. How can I make you realize that?**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**That's difficult.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**When we moved here, The guy that was emptying a van, a young lad, he come up to me and said "I want to shake your hand for freeing us." And that's the only guy that ever said anything to me since I came back.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And that's when you moved here in ninety-nine right?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah, I'll never forget that. People just think it was another war. They don't know what went on. My brother to this day, my oldest brother, he's eighty-eight. He sees some of my stuff and he can't believe it now. He's beginning to realize. But when I came back I didn't go through all this. I was out of there. I got out of there. I forgot it. I wanted to forget it. Well I had my dreams. But I never, talked to anyone but my wife. Because they couldn't realize what you go through.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**



**Did you have any adjusting, any trouble to adjusting to civilian life when you got back?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Have you had any reunions?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah the 95<sup>th</sup>.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And you've gone to several of those have you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah. I'm going to one in August. We got reservations there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Where's it going to be?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**At Kentucky, northern Kentucky. August twenty-fourth I think.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You've been to quite a few of them have you?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes. Well I want to go. We go there for two or three days we go. They have a very nice ceremony there for the veterans.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What did you think of the officers you had?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Well the officers I tell you were human beings. When you're overseas. I remember the one he got some powder for his feet to bathe them in. He had his feet in his helmet and he called me over and ask me if I wanted to bathe my feet. They were good, very good. They were one of the men.**

**MR. Misenhimer**

**Were they pretty capable?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. Except what I told you about the crossroad. They had maps and Patton told them "What the hell have you got the maps for? You can't read them?" But then get officers that get excited too. And they're picked on first. Like they show stripes and that. All we wore was patches to deceive the Germans. From different divisions. But as far as their stripes they didn't mean a thing. You never wore them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did they wear their bars?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No. On their helmet they would. But the rest of their clothing no. Like I say you didn't have much to do with them. It was always passed down the line, any orders. Your first sergeant to your staff sergeant and then on to your buck sergeant. Which he was in charge of the platoon that was four squads and he would relay the message to the squad leaders what we were going to do. What they can't tell you to do in combat you do. You're there to fire and move ahead. You're firing that's all you're doing. Trying to get ahead.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you cross the Seigfreid line?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**The Seigfreid line yeah. When the Seine river runs along there. We got pictures of it there somewhere.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Now here's a picture of General Patton at the 379<sup>th</sup> command post.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**He would be there!**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you ever see any of the German concentration camps?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yeah. We went by them we didn't free them. They were freed before our unit got there.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**But you did see some?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I did see some.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were any of the prisoners still in there when you got there?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Oh yeah. Like the Russians. We freed a lot of the Russians. They were the roughest ones to free. They were hard to get along with. They wanted to win the war.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**It says here at the ruhr pocket, you all took twenty thousand prisoners?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I believe it, yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**You mentioned something earlier about anti aircraft. Were you trained on anti aircraft you say?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes up in Scotland they took us, when I was in England, they took us up there to target practice. They flew a plane with the sock behind it. Fifty caliber machine gun. I fired it yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**A single fifty?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**A single fifty oh yeah.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**In the concentration camp you met the Russian?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes, when we were freeing them.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**But you didn't meet the Russian soldiers anywhere?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**No I never saw them fight. All I know is that they used to take these pipes from a**

**fence and shot it with black powder and it exploded. And they were going to get even with the Germans in the houses. We had to stop them from that. They were out of control.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**The prisoners that you had released?**

**Mr. Kolar**

**Yes.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**And it says here that you maintained contact with an enemy for 133 days without a break.**

**Mr. Kolar**

**I believe it. I never counted the days but it's possible.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Here are some of the statistics it says that the division inflicted upwards of forty-seven thousand casualties including fifteen thousand killed of the German army.**

**They conquered 728 miles in France and Germany in 145 days of combat.**

**Transcribed by**

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**July 7, 2004**