

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Center for Pacific War Studies**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Richmond D. Garrett**

**Houston, Texas**

**July 24, 2008**

**Platoon Leader, First Lieutenant**

**Company A, 1252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion**

**To France December 31, 1944**

**Dropped TNT in Tomato Cans Down Flues of Pillboxes**

**Removed Mines, Built Bridges**

**Purple Heart and Bronze Star**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is July 24, 2008. I am interviewing Mr. Richmond D. Garrett by telephone. His telephone number is area code 713-266-7066. His address is 1330 Augusta # 17, Houston, Texas 77057. 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

R. D. , I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Garrett

I'm glad to do this. I should have told you to do it next week because I'm leaving in the morning for a family reunion but I'm already packed, so I'm in good shape.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, good. Now, the first thing I need to do is read you to this agreement with the Nimitz Museum. When I do these in person I give them to the man to read and sign but since this is by phone, let me read it to you to make sure it is okay. "Agreement Read." Is that okay with you?

Mr. Garrett

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact. We have found out that sometimes in two or three years we try to contact a Veteran and he has moved or something has happened. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that you might give us a name and phone number in case we can't reach you?

Mr. Garrett

I've got a niece here in Houston that you could contact. Her name is Mrs. Trina Frier. Her phone number is 713-263-1602. Her husband's name is Jay Frier. They should be fairly easy to locate.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you first, what is your birth dat?

Mr. Garrett

April 20, 1923.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Garrett

Sterling City, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Garrett

I had two brothers and three sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were either of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Garrett

Yes, both of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they come home from the war?

Mr. Garrett

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branches were they in?

Mr. Garrett

My older brother got into the Army early and made a career of it. He started out with the horse drawn cavalry. Then he landed on Kiska in the Aleutians and then he got into the Air Corps. He retired as a six stripe Sergeant in the Air Corps. He told me that he had the best job in the Army. He wouldn't trade his job for being a General.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your other brother?

Mr. Garrett

He was in the Air Corps and he trained at a little place in Louisiana, just across the Texas-Louisiana border. I can't remember the name of the town. He was in the B-25's and they were in combat in North Africa and Italy. He saw action over there. He never did receive any wounds but he sure had a lot of trouble with his hearing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Are they still living, either one of these?

Mr. Garrett

No. I'm the youngest of the family and the only one living.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your sisters? Were they involved in war work in any way?

Mr. Garrett

No, they were not in the services.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they work in the defense industry?

Mr. Garrett

No. Two of my brother in laws were ranchers. So they were raising beef for the Army, you might say. The other one was doing work in Sterling City and helping with some of the work in the county seat there. He was there when they had the Depression and everything was bad. They had cottonseed cake that they would give the ranchers when they didn't have any money to help feed their livestock. He was involved in all of that. Later on he came to Houston, after the war was over, and started constructing houses.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Garrett

If it hadn't been for red beans I think we would have all starved. We didn't have any money. I was so young it didn't bother me. I was as happy as I could be. I would go out and play marbles for keeps and things and I didn't realize, really what the Depression meant until I got a few years older. I guess when I got up to 11 or 12 years old it started dawning on me what we were going through.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Garrett

He had been a rancher. He had gone broke so he and my mother ran a café and restaurant.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did he go broke before the Depression or during the Depression?

Mr. Garrett

He went broke before the Depression. He raised horses and after World War I horses went to zero. They had a drought. He sent his horses off to pay for the grass. He finally had to sell his horses. He couldn't sell them for enough to pay for the grass he bought. He just practically gave them away.

Mr. Misenhimer

They ran this restaurant during the Depression then?

Mr. Garrett

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they able to make a living with it?

Mr. Garrett

Barely. Just barely get by. I still like red beans today but if it hadn't been for red beans we would have starved to death.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Garrett

Sterling City High School.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Garrett

1940.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Mr. Garrett

I worked on ranches during the summer. Then I went to Texas A&M. I would work all summer and save up my money, then I would go back to school and get me a job while I went to school. I went to A&M.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were you studying there?

Mr. Garrett

I started out taking chemical engineering.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you finish A&M?

Mr. Garrett

Yes but not until after the war was over. They had told us when I was a sophomore that they were going to make three semesters a year and that I would have to go all three semesters or they would induct me. I couldn't go to school if I couldn't stay out the summer and work and save a little money. I told my folks I was going to join the Air Corps. They didn't want me to join the Air Corps, they wanted me to go to school. A couple of my brother in laws, the ranchers, they loaned me a couple hundred dollars a piece if I would go on back to school. I said, "Okay, I'll do it." So, I borrowed the money and went back to school. In the meantime, the Army inducted us and then sent us back,

paying for everything, books, tuition and I got to stay for another semester. In 1943, they took us out of school. I lacked one semester to graduate. I was inducted and I didn't go back to school until I got out of the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date were you inducted?

Mr. Garrett

It says here: Date of entry into active service - November 6, 1943. I went to Camp Wolters and it was during a blizzard and they had tents up there with bunks around there, two high and a stove in the middle of it. They might as well not even had a stove. We almost froze to death. If they had anybody that wasn't fit to serve, that had asthma or anything, it would have shown up there and they would have got rid of them in a hurry.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was at Mineral Wells wasn't it?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. Camp Wolters was at Mineral Wells.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were in ROTC when you were at A&M, right?

Mr. Garrett

That is correct. When I went to A&M, ROTC was required for the freshmen and sophomores unless you had some kind of a physical problem. Then after that you had to qualify and ask for the Advanced ROTC.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, I think you had to sign a contract or get a contract after your sophomore year.



Mr. Garrett

Correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you had signed a contract, right?

Mr. Garrett

Well, I didn't sign a contract because I was already in the Army then. They took everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do at Camp Wolters?

Mr. Garrett

All we did was get signed up and then sent back to school.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went back to A&M then?

Mr. Garrett

Yes, I went back to A&M.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you actually go on active duty then?

Mr. Garrett

I finished 3 semesters and on November 6, 1943 I went on active duty. I went to Camp Wolters before then. In the fall of 1942 I went to Camp Wolters. Then they took us out of school on November 6, 1943 and sent us to a camp at San Antonio, I don't remember the name of it. It was a small camp there. They put us out in the hot sun on a rocky mound and would not let us get water all day. They were toughening us up in a hurry.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was in November?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. They first got us in November. It says on here, "Date of entry into active duty - November 6, 1943." No, I guess that 1943 was when they inducted us. I can't quite figure that out. That's what it must be. That must be when we went to Camp Wolters for active service. That's when we went to Camp Wolters, that's correct. From then on, they paid for everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when you went to active duty that would have been after that sometime, when you left college?

Mr. Garrett

Actually I guess I was on active duty when I went back to take those courses.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when did you actually leave A&M and go directly into the Army?

Mr. Garrett

They gave us Army uniforms from then on. We were actually in the Army but they were sending us to school for a time. Then they sent us to this place in San Antonio during the summer. I would have graduated in 1944 if we had our classes regular without any interruptions. It is kind of hard for me to put things together here. I'm trying to look at this November 6, 1943 again. In 1941 I had one semester (year). In 1942 I had the second semester (year). I took the fall semester my sophomore year and that's when the war broke out in December, 1941. I finished the next semester of my sophomore year in

1942. That's when I went back to school and took two semesters and then they took us into the Army. As far as I can see, we were in the Army before the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, 1943. I can't answer that exactly.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think probably November 6, 1943 was when you left A & M and went out of college into the regular Army at that point.

Mr. Garrett

I imagine that's right. That's probably right.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned December 7, 1941. Do you recall hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. I got up one morning and they said that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. That was the day that we got it. It happened on Sunday afternoon and the next morning we got it and that was on December 7<sup>th</sup>. That's when we heard about it. I had already gotten up and guys started talking about it. They got it over the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Garrett

At that time we were going to school, so we just stayed in school. Of course, my older brother was already in the service. He was regular Army. My younger brother went ahead and volunteered. As I said, I was going to volunteer when they said we would have to go straight through without a summer. I would have to make a summer semester out of it. I

didn't have the money to go. I was going to join the Air Corps but my family wanted me to go ahead and finish school. Two of my brother in laws loaned me \$200 apiece and I went back to school. Then the Army took me and they started paying for everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you at that camp in San Antonio?

Mr. Garrett

It wasn't too long. It seems like maybe a couple of months.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there?

Mr. Garrett

They put us on forced marches. They put us on top of the rocky mound and let us suffer under the heat and wouldn't let us get a drink of water. They were toughening us up, getting us ready. (Laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left there, where did you go?

Mr. Garrett

We went to OCS.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was that?

Mr. Garrett

I went up there to one close to Baltimore. I was in the part of the Army that took care of Army supplies.

Mr. Misenhimer

Quartermaster school?

Mr. Garrett

Not supplies. The armament. They've got a name for it but I can't think of the name of it now. We had to know guns and ammunition and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Ordnance?

Mr. Garrett

Ordnance, that's what I was trying to think of. It was Ordnance OCS. We graduated there and there were 6,000 officers that graduated. At that time they had an excess of ordnance officers. They didn't need anymore. They desperately needed combat engineers. So they asked for volunteers. They said, "You, you, you and you." (Laugh) And I was 'you'. Then I went to Fort Belvoir, Virginia and took engineer training building bridges, pontoon bridges and one thing and another and booby traps and studying all that stuff. Then I came down here to Camp Swift as a cadre. There were about four combat engineers organized there and I was in the 1252<sup>nd</sup>. We took training there and when we got through with the training we shipped over to England. We were stationed at Torquay, England, which during peacetime is a health resort or a resort center on the southwest coast.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you a few questions here. When you went to Ordnance OCS, how long was that?

Mr. Garrett

I believe that was three months.

Mr. Misenhimer

90 days. They called them '90 Day Wonders.' And you were commissioned a Second Lieutenant?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. I thought they were going to flunk me, but they didn't. I don't know why they didn't flunk me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a day on that, when you were commissioned?

Mr. Garrett

Let's see if I do. I should have something on that, but I don't. At that time, we didn't get too much stuff to keep. I don't have the date on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that OCS? Was it pretty rough?

Mr. Garrett

No, it wasn't so terribly rough. It was good. We had a forced 25 mile march. The group that I was with was all young college guys and we were in good physical shape and on that 25 mile march there was a platoon there of older men. They thought they were real good, so they passed us up. They just went around us. Our Lieutenant just kept us on a fast march. We never did jog. They jogged passed us. It wasn't long before we passed them up. Man they were hanging their heads down and breathing hard. We just passed them up and we beat them back to the sack pretty easy. I took my overalls off, my issued

coveralls, whatever you want to call them and set them in the corner of the room there and they were stiff enough to stand up. They had enough salt in those overalls to stand up there and get stiff. But we were in excellent shape. We were 20 to 21 years old. Here we had these older men there, some of them close to their 40's and there was no way they could keep up with us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of course, A&M kept you in pretty good shape too.

Mr. Garrett

Well A&M not so much, but I worked hard during the summers to try and make some money to go to A&M.

Mr. Misenhimer

Between the two of them, right.

Mr. Garrett

I stayed in pretty good shape working.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went to the combat engineering in Texas as cadre?

Mr. Garrett

Yes to Camp Swift.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your combat engineering training in Virginia, how was that?

Mr. Garrett

The combat engineering training was good training. It was pretty rugged because I wasn't used to that cold weather and I had some trouble with a sore throat. I got so sick I could

hardly stand to be out there in the cold. They gave me some medicine for it that had a drug in it and it didn't do much good. So I just suffered. I couldn't stand the cold there at that time because of my sore throat. So I just suffered while we were building bridges out there in the ice covered river there. It was pretty rough going. If it hadn't been for the cold weather, it wouldn't have been so bad. And of course, we took all kinds of training in booby traps and mines and everything. Good training. They had good training there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the enlisted men with you or was it all officers in that training?

Mr. Garrett

This was all officers but some of the enlisted men were our trainers. They had enlisted men that trained us along with officers.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you were doing the work, whatever?

Mr. Garrett

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall before you went overseas?

Mr. Garrett

We went to Camp Swift and that's where we trained as a unit. I was in Company C to start with and then I ended up with Company A. That's the one I went overseas with. I've got a list of Company A in front of me.

Mr. Misenhimer

The 1252<sup>nd</sup>, was this a battalion or a regiment?



Mr. Garrett

It was a battalion. 1252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Engineers Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer

During that training there, is there anything in particular that you recall from that?

Mr. Garrett

No. It was just regular type training. We had night exercises and all. We had some deals at night where we would sleep on the ground. I was scared to death of rattlesnakes. It looked like good rattlesnake country and I could hardly sleep. Anyway, we managed to get by with it. The training was pretty rugged. It was good.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your job there?

Mr. Garrett

I was platoon commander. Company A, the one that I spent most of my time with, the commanding officer was Joe Swartz. He was a First Lieutenant at the time. They later promoted him to Captain and then John Walker was Executive Officer. Then we had three platoon commanders. All the officers are dead except myself and possible Spears, who was one of the platoon commanders. He was about my age but I've never heard anything from him. The others I kept up with and they've all died. I'm the only one of the officers that is surviving with the exception of maybe Spears and Spears was a Dutchman from Pennsylvania. He is possibly still alive.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left to go overseas, where did you leave from?

Mr. Garrett

We left from a camp close to New York. I can't think of the name of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was Camp Shanks and one in New Jersey.

Mr. Garrett

I can't think of the name of it. Just a minute, I've got a book here that I think has the name of it. Camp Kilmer, New Jersey was our point of embarkation. We embarked on the good ship *Tamaroa*. That was an English meat boat. They hauled meat in it during peacetime. That's what we went in.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you leave?

Mr. Garrett

October, 1944 we shipped from New York on *Tamaroa*. This says 48, 49 and 50, so I guess that's the days, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip over?

Mr. Garrett

To me, I had never been on the ocean before and it was pretty rough. I probably got seasick. They said to not look over the bow of the ship or it would make you sick. I did it anyway and I got sick. I went down to the bunk and got into the bed. Then they said, "Don't do that. That's the worst thing to do. Don't go to bed." I said, "Heck with it, I'm going to bed." I went to bed and went sound to sleep and woke up feeling fine. Anytime I got to feeling sick, I would just lay down and take a nap. (Laugh) That took care of me.

We did pretty good. I think it took us about ten days to get over. We had some activity one day. I guess the submarines were around there close and they were dropping some ammunition on them. I've got a book here titled "History of the 1252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Engineering Battalion, April 1944 - September 1945" by B. J. "Jim" Murray. Jim Murray was in B Company. He gave me a copy of this. That's where I got the time that we left Camp Kilmer.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were on that ship going over, were you in a convoy with other ships?

Mr. Garrett

Yes we were in a big convoy. They had those destroyers and they dropped some depth charges. There weren't too many but they dropped several of them. It got us excited because we had heard about and seen pictures of all that. I had never been on the ocean before. I got a kick out of watching the dolphins that would come by there, playing. I saw a lot of dolphins.

Mr. Misenhimer

That time of the year, the North Atlantic can be pretty rough.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was a little bit rough but we didn't have any big storms. It was just normal seas. They had some pretty big waves there so the boat was up and down. It wasn't the biggest boat in the world.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your accommodations like on that ship?

Mr. Garrett

I can't remember too much about it but I think that we had bunks. A place with two bunks, one above the other. One of us had to sleep on the upper bunk and one on the lower. That's all I can remember. Then we ate at the Officer's Mess. Our meal wasn't too bad but boy, what they fed the enlisted men made me a little upset. They fed them boiled potatoes for breakfast. They weren't used to that kind of grub. Most of them wouldn't even eat. They would just go hungry. They would throw them out the portholes. That's what they had to eat until we got over there. The English, they were suffering. They would eat every kind of food in the world. When they unloaded that boat we saw oranges and eggs and everything else unloaded. Anyway, after we got there, the food got pretty tolerable. It was pretty bad going over there on the boat. The officers, we didn't suffer but I felt sorry for the men. It wasn't too good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your whole battalion on that ship?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. As far as I know, the whole battalion was on there. This man that wrote this up was in one of the other companies. I said he was in Company B but this says "Travel log of 1252<sup>nd</sup> Engineering Combat Battalion, Company C." He was Company C., I thought he was Company B. No it says, B Company but it has travel log of C Company. I guess what happen is that somebody in C Company wrote this and James Murray must have made a copy of it for me. That's what happened. I thought he was in B Company but this is a travel log of C Company.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you landed in England, where did you land?

Mr. Garrett

Let's see if it tells us. At Avonmouth, England in November, 1944. Then arrived via rail Torquay, England. Kids asked, "Any Gum, Chum"? We went to Camp Shipley. We lived in some old insurance deals that they had built outside of London when they had so much bombing in London. They moved the insurance deals back to London and vacated those buildings and that's what we had. They were pretty nice to have. They were just long wooden buildings but they were nicer than what we had at Camp Swift. I believe that was an insurance company called The Rock of Gibraltar. I believe that's what they called them but I'm not sure about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do in England?

Mr. Garrett

We trained. We planted and picked up booby trap mines. Then we built a roadway. It was supposed to be a roadway. It was the biggest mess that you ever saw. We took a bulldozer and scraped the mud and water off. That would get a little lower. It kept raining and more water would get in there. So we would keep scraping the mud and water off and finally we got it pretty deep. How can you build a road in a situation like that? (Laugh) Anyway, we dug a big hole. I think the English people there were getting pretty aggravated with us, tearing up their countryside. We were doing what we were ordered to do. We were building a road there. We took after it. All we would do, is remove that water and mud there and the water would flow in there and we would just have more

water and mud. We kept removing more water and mud, so we had a deep ravine there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there?

Mr. Garrett

We got there in November. In December we disembarked at La Havre, France. Then we celebrated New Year's Eve in a field and pitched tents on the cold, cold ground. I guess that's when we all went over, the whole battalion. I didn't know when it was. I didn't think we landed until after the first of the year, but we must have landed just before the New Year.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you cross the Channel?

Mr. Garrett

We went across in a boat. I guess we got to a dock and they just let us off on the deck, as far as I can remember. We were billeted at first in an old gambling casino. I forget the name of it. It was a two or three story brick building. It was a famous gambling casino during peace time. They had bunk beds put in there that we slept on. They were two high, one lower and one upper.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in England about 5 or 6 weeks then, right? You got there towards the first part of November and left near the end of December.

Mr. Garrett

That was December of 1944 and that was January of 1945, probably in the early part of it, arrived at Forges-des-Eaux in apple orchard camp and it says, 'cow manure.' We left

there in January, 1945 via convoy in 40 and 8's (boxcar). They went there in a 40 and 8 and the company I was with got treated a little better. We got our own transportation, trucks and jeeps and we went up in that. Here we arrived at Enghien-les-Bains. That is 8 km from Paris at the Casino. Wait a minute, this is where we were at that casino. Okay, here is where the casino comes in. We arrived at the casino and then January, 1945 departed Enghien-les-Bains for the front in 40 and 8's. We were going to be Patton's spearhead. We arrived at Biwer, Luxembourg. It says Luxembourg-Technic, a building, d a stove from a cream can. I don't know what that means. Then left Biwer and arrived at Niederdoniven, Luxembourg for Infantry outpost duty. 10,000 gallons of wine. Snow ghost. Cats ate the Heines. I guess they got hold of some wine there somewhere. Then in February departed Niederdoniven and arrived at Oberdoniven, Luxembourg. "Patton came, Bowen shaved." If you weren't shaved, it didn't make any difference what the conditions were, he would chew you at. So, one of his buddies shaved. "Then we left there in February, 1945. The night was wet and stormy. The road was dark and dreary and the 1252<sup>nd</sup> was lost again." That happened quite a bit. We got lost quite a bit. "Arrived at Eschweiler, Luxembourg. Then we left there and arrived at Consthum, Luxembourg." This was still in February. "Outpost duty and road work." "February, 1945 left Consthum and arrived at Walhausen, Luxembourg. Outpost duty." In parenthesis it says, "Tank blew all to hell." I guess they saw a tank that had been blown up. "Left Walhausen and returned to Consthum." I faintly remember those names. "February, left Consthum and arrived at Marnach, Luxembourg. Preparation for breaching Siegfried Line." "February, 1945 took part in breaching operations against Siegfried Line. Crossed over the river at Dasburg, Germany. At Dasburg advanced to

Pruscheide, Germany.” I wasn’t involved in that. Let me get my stuff out that I wrote up. My family, 50 years after this, they wanted me to write about some of my experiences. I wrote one deal up, but not anything else.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, read that one to me.

Mr. Garrett

This was about the same time that this was going on. This would have probably been in February, 1945 because that’s when we got through the Siegfried Line.

“After 58 years, the following is as accurate as I can remember. There may be some errors which can be excused due to the lapse of time and my age and memory. In 1945, Company A of the 1542<sup>nd</sup> was stationed at Luxembourg about 2 or 3 miles from the Our River, separating it from Germany. It may have been a small town called Troisvierges. That would be in Luxembourg. I was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Commander in Company A. Three platoon commanders drew matches to see who would lead a combat recon patrol to the Our River and the Siegfried Line. The Siegfried Line was just across the Our River. The town that we were going to was Ubereisenbach, that may be two names or one name, on the Luxembourg side. On the German side it was Untereisenbach. Those might be slightly in error but one is Uber and one is Unter. *(Editor’s note: Untereisenbach is in Luxembourg and Ubereisenbach is in Germany.)* I was the last to draw and I got the short match. You may have heard that story many times. I’m satisfied that the Major told them that he wanted me to lead the patrol. The Company Commander was pretty considerate and probably wanted to make it look like it was a drawing. Of course they had it that I drew last, so I got the short straw. I think he was just doing that



to make me feel good about it, that we all had equal chances. 20 men came with as volunteers. I advised anyone who asked me, not to volunteer. I did tell them that if they were told to go, go and do it, but don't volunteer for anything. I wasn't a volunteer. We left February 18, 1945. That gives you an exact date. The Company Commander, Joe Swartz came with us. I was glad, although he probably should not have come. He had one of those trick backs. I guess a little arthritis or something and he couldn't walk straight up. He had to walk bent over about 30 degrees. He brought up the rear. The dirt road that we followed wandered east through a forested area with a hedgerow on our right side (south). We were walking down all the way, we were billeted at a higher altitude than our destination. When we came close to the town, we were out of the forest. As we neared the town the road turned to the left and made a hairpin curve to our right and the hedge disappeared. The road dropped off towards the river, with the river and the opposite side clearly in view. We stopped and looked around. I poked my head around the bend with one of our Sergeants. He said, "Look at those dark rectangular shapes. They are pillbox openings." There were three rows of pillboxes on the far side of the river, up a sloping hillside or at least a sloping upside from the river. They were in three rows, staggered, so the ones in the back supported the ones in the front. The pillboxes had soil on top with grass growing on it. I later talked to an artillery spotter and he said they could not penetrate the pillboxes with their 120mm Howitzers unless they had direct fire and hit the same spot more than once. The Germans could have fired at me, but did not. If we walked ahead we would have been between the Siegfried Line and the hill behind us and would have been trapped liked sitting ducks. If we would have walked down that road, I doubt if any of us would have come back alive. I walked back to the

hedgerow, which was behind the town, and there were a few scattered buildings and some trees and bushes. I stuck my head above the hedge and was shot at instantly. I ducked down. That bullet came pretty close to my head. It sounded pretty close, anyway. I ducked down and looked at the company commander and said, "I don't want to go down there but if we have to go, this is the way to go. At least we have a little cover." From the road down, we would be sitting ducks. I told everyone to get ready and when I jumped over the hedge, to follow. I told Corporal McGough to follow me and if a German got me, to be sure and shoot the SOB with his Thompson submachine gun. He could shoot that gun better than anybody in the Army. We took off moving towards the river. I was leading and using any cover that I could find. We came to the last house on the edge of the river with just enough room between it and the river for a narrow dirt road. There was about a 40' clearing to the house, which could be seen from across the river. I made it to the house followed by McGough and several others. One of the men behind was about two steps from the doorway when he went down. He was lying on the ground with his arms holding his shoulders up and I said, "Rochell, can you make it to the door?" Surprisingly, in a normal voice he said, "I'm hit in the leg" and he collapsed. I jumped out and grabbed his shirt collar and belt and yanked him through the doorway. We were in the process of giving him a shot of morphine while looking for a wound in his legs. One of the men spotted blood on his coat. He had died instantly. Probably shot through the spinal column. I looked across the open space and saw Joe Swartz and told him not to cross it. It was zeroed in with machine gun and the Germans had killed Rochell. We were in the kitchen and I stepped in front of a door. The door was lined up with two doors across a hallway and then an outside window facing the river. Sergeant

Krueger yelled at me to step back which I did instantly, not a fraction of a second too soon. Machine gun bullets hit the far wall, chest high to me. I looked at Sergeant Krueger and said, "Thanks, Sergeant Krueger. You just saved my life." There were several cups of coffee on a table. Several cups had a little bit of coffee in them at the bottom. Probably ersatz coffee. The Germans had probably left just ahead of us. We got on our hands and knees and crawled through the doorway and went down the hall and went up to the attic. The building was built of native stone and the German machine guns did not penetrate the walls. The machine gunner could not see us if we crawled because the windows were high enough to cover us. Corporal McGough suggested that if someone would fire a bazooka out of the attic to distract the machine gunner he could knock them off. I could not see the machine gunner but some of the men had seen something and knew where it was. I went upstairs with a couple of the men and fired a bazooka out of an opening at about a 45 degree angle towards the window. I saw the bazooka charge hit the wall about half way to the target. I watched as McGough fired the Thompson submachine gun at the window. He traversed it twice, about 1 foot above the sill. I could see it hit on both sides. The Germans used two men per machine gun, one to fire and one to feed the ammunition belt. Before going back downstairs the Germans hit the roof with a small mortar. I got some metal fragments in my shoulder that felt like bee stings but we never heard any more from the machine gun. I told the company commander that I thought it was best to wait until dark to leave so the Germans couldn't see us. He told me to bring Rochell's body with us and I'm glad because I did not know what to do in this situation. I did not want to see anybody else get hurt. However, he left with the rest of the men who did not get to the house. They did okay until they reached a point in the road where a sniper

could see them and shot Goodman in the leg. The shot must have been from several hundred yards. Someone shouted to him to rollover. If he would have, he would have been under the hedge and out of sight. Another man rushed to him and his helmet was shot off. The next shot hit Goodman in the back killing him. While it was still daylight, we surveyed the area and saw where the Germans were planting tank mines and observed the terrain and general features on the other side of the river. The Germans had a small footbridge across the river starting right at the house we were in, with foxholes on the other side by the bridge entrance. We saw a soldier run out and jump in one of them while we were there. The main river bridge had been blown up. We waited until dark. We took a door off and placed Rochell on it and four men at a time carried him. On the road back we met some of the company. They had some jeeps and carried some of us with them. I told them that I preferred to walk with some of the men. I wanted to have time to think about what had happened. Two days later, on February 23, 1945, the whole battalion rode trucks 40 miles to the north. The Army had a breakthrough through the Siegfried Line at that point. We rode 6<sup>th</sup> Division armored tanks and walk and ran 40 miles to the town where we had previous combat with the Germans. We were on top of a high hill with the tanks. The hill was too steep for the tanks to go down. They would start sliding. There was a command pillbox up there. It was not part of the regular line of trees below us. We were ahead of schedule. This town was the Division objective for the next day. We were ahead of schedule and orders were given for the battalion to attack while the tanks stayed on top of the hill. We spread out in line and moved downhill. We had brush about 8 or 9 feet tall covering us. We came to the edge of the brush and there was no cover, just grass. We all stopped and I heard Joe Swartz shout out, "Get the lead out

and start moving.” I ran about as fast as I could with the thought in my mind that the first shot I heard, I was going to dig a furrow with my nose. (Laugh) It was just getting dusk. The Germans didn’t fire at us. They probably couldn’t see us too well. With us behind the pillboxes we dropped some tomato cans, TNT grenades down their stovepipes and they came out with their hands in their air. Someone told me that I was the first one to enter the town. I did not notice. There was too much going on. Our battalion got a citation for the action from the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. In talking to some of them, they said that was the prettiest operation they had ever seen. In my mind, and this is some stuff that’s not written, yes, it was a pretty action, but if about half of us would have been shot and killed, it wouldn’t have been so pretty. We hit them at just the right time. At dusk it was hard for them see and aim at us. We hit them at just the right time. We were lucky. I received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for this action. The scratch on my shoulder did not amount to much, but Lieutenant Walker, the company Executive Officer said that we would have to let Dr. Cramer look at it. The doctor looked at it and said it would get a Purple Heart for that. I said, “I don’t deserve it. It’s just a scratch.” He said, “Yes you do because it was in combat.” I told him that digging the fragments out and giving me a tetanus shot hurt worse than the wound. (Laugh) I wonder if some of the men with me deserved a Bronze Star as much or more than I did. Perhaps it belonged to the whole patrol. I was a young shavetail at the time, 21 years old. Even though I was only following my orders, I can’t help but feel some responsibility for the two men that died, but thank God for men like Sergeant Orlich, McGough and Krueger and all the others. I may not have been with the most experienced and best platoon in the Army but it was the best as far as I am concerned.” That’s all I wrote on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else do you recall about that?

Mr. Garrett

I'll tell you some more. Major Linden, I'm satisfied that he is the one that wanted me to lead that patrol, sent two patrols down there before and didn't get much information. They were glad to get the information that we brought back. He wanted me to take a group of 40 men down there and cross the river on that footbridge. Major Linden was an old time Army Corporal and he knew how the Army worked but mentally, he wasn't the smartest man in the world, but he was a good Army man. I said, "Major Linden, I'm not going to cross that footbridge." He said, "Why?" I said, "The Germans will let me get on it, but they're not going to let me get off of it. If we've got to cross, there is a single pillbox right on the edge of the river, upstream. It has been underwater and it's still muddy. I'm satisfied there are no Germans there. If we have to cross, that would be the best place to cross." He said, "How do you cross out there?" "We need to get some rubber boats and just cross on those boats." He wanted us to take 40 men and a bunch of satchel charges and go over there. A Lieutenant from B Company, Lieutenant Condra, he was a Texan, wanted to go. He volunteered. He came to me all hipped up. I said, "Now, Lieutenant Condra, I want to tell you something. This is a dangerous situation. We could all get killed. We could all get captured. It's a dangerous situation. I don't know what the heck we are going to do when we get over there. We might be able to knock some of those pillboxes out but that's about the best that we could do, the best that we can hope to do. That's a dangerous situation. It's not something to be shouting about." Anyway, we were going to do that two days later. I was going to have to get some rubber boats and get

these men down there, volunteers, and cross the river. They canceled it. They got that breakthrough 40 miles to the north of us. I had my helmet on when they announced it. I threw my helmet up in the air as high as I could get and hollered, "Yippee." That cut that situation off. As it was, everything worked out real good. The company officers in my company and myself were walking from the river back up to the town. It was dark. We heard something come down. We were going through a little trail. We heard something on the trail, "bump, bump, bump" and it stopped. We didn't know what it was. We walked a little further and it was a German 88mm shell. It was painted black. It was armor piercing. They were shooting at those tanks on top of the hill and it ricocheted and came down right there in front of us. We walked back up there and we spent the night up there. Then the next day we went back through some of the pillboxes that we passed up and dropped in those tomato cans down the chimneys. The chimney was about a 3 inch piece of pipe and they had a cast iron stove down there which they could heat food on. Being in an enclosed concrete pillbox, I'm sure their ears got a pretty good blasting. They would open that steel door in the back and come out with their hands waving in the air hollering, "Kamerad." The back end of going to the deal, the ground sloped down to it and over that they had a net covering it, a camouflage net so that airplanes couldn't see it. It worked out pretty good on that Siegfried Line. That Siegfried Line was just like the Maginot Line. Once we got behind it, it wasn't any good. It was worthless. It wasn't all that much trouble to get through it. That's about all I've got for that part of it.

From there on I could read from this book to see basically where the battalion went after February. Still in February, they left Donsthom and arrived at Neundorf, Belgium. I remember going to Belgium. "Road work. Knee deep in mud and manure pile

before every door.” That was the truth. They used that for fertilizer to put on their fields. “Left Neundorft arrived in Mutzenich, Germany. There is nothing like a teller mine to reduce the waist line.” While in Belgium we were receiving food. I know that the Army was having trouble getting food to everybody. Ammunition was probably the main thing. We had C-Ration cans. I could not eat a C-Ration can. I would upchuck it. I would eat about a third of it and that was all I could keep down. During the period that we were there we were billeted in the house of some Belgians that said that the Germans had been there before. During that attack they had come in there and got some Americans there. I gave him some of that C-Ration can. I couldn’t eat it anyway, so there was no use letting it go. So I gave it to them. One day my companions, Lieutenant Weiss, Lieutenant Spears and I guess maybe Lieutenant Walker, I don’t know, but anyway, some of them saw me and said, “You’ve got yellow jaundice.” I said, “No, I don’t have yellow jaundice.” They said, “Go look in the mirror.” I went and looked in the mirror and my face was as yellow as it could be. I did have yellow jaundice. I just stayed there, in the cold and all, and didn’t go to the doctor or anything. I guess I should have asked to see the doctor. I guess I was too dumb. I didn’t feel all that sick. It didn’t seem to bother me very much. I just got over it. It took me about four or five days, it seems like. I got over it and I felt fine. Then we started in with some K-Ration. Man, I was hungry. My stomach was meeting my backbone. We got those K-Rations and we were supposed to get two a day or something, maybe two or three a day. I would eat them all at one time. (Laugh) I was so hungry that I would eat them all at one time and then I would do without until I got some more. They sure did taste good. Those C-Ration cans must have been frozen and thawed several times. They were rotten. I know the Army was having trouble supplying



everything. After that it wasn't so bad, things got better. Let's see, where did we go from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

It sounds like you all were acting more like Infantry than Engineers, is that right?

Mr. Garrett

No, we built a lot of bridges. We built a whole bunch of bridges. At one of my reunions they gave me a book and it had some of the bridges that we built. The last one we built was in Passau, Germany. We were building it when the war ended. "Left Kamp arrived in Laubach, Germany. They used us quite a bit as Infantry there at first. They were short of Infantry. Later on we did a lot of bridge building.

Mr. Misenhimer

But there at the Our River and at the Siegfried Line, you were basically acting as Infantry, is that right?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. We worked as Infantry. When we crossed that Siegfried Line and went downstream we were riding the 6<sup>th</sup> Division Armored tanks and they would fire at us and we would jump off like a bunch of birds and then we would run and walk and get back on the tank whenever we could. We spent a little time around Bastogne and St. Vith and Luxembourg. We went through Bastogne and St. Vith and through that country. Mr. Mr.

Misenhimer

Was this after the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne had been relieved at Bastogne, that you all went through there?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne had been there for the whole time. They relieved them just as soon as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army could get in there and relieve them. They were all gone pretty early. They were pretty tired. They needed some rest and recreation. We spent some time in there and then we did road work and looked for antitank mines and one thing and another. Corporal McGough was digging. We were clearing a road and it was frozen. It was so hard that our shovels wouldn't penetrate it. You would hit it with your shovel and it would just clink. So he had a pickaxe. He located the mine with the mine finder and he was chopping away at it, trying to stay away from it and going around the edge. He directly hit something metal. He heard it hit metal. He didn't want to be hitting that thing so man, he took it easier. He finally got the thing dug up and what had happened was the mine was booby trapped and the booby trap was screwed into the side of the mine and the firing pin was tied to a piece of wire. He hit that firing pin and crimped the firing pin so it couldn't go forward. If it had gone forward, it would have blown him sky high and if it scattered out it might have killed some of the rest of us too. I told Corporal McGough, I said, "McGough, that was your luck of the Irish." We got that thing out and put it over to the side so that we could detonate it. That was just one of the things that happened. I guess, as a whole, we were pretty lucky.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you locate mines?

Mr. Garrett

We had a deal that you put on the ground. It had a handle to it and you put it down to the ground and it had a round face and anything metal it would pick up. When they started

using glass mines we couldn't pick it up with that. These big antitank mines, the metal tapered ones, they were over a foot in diameter, about 14 inches in diameter and they tapered from the side up to the middle and they were about 3 inches thick in the middle. They were full of TNT or very high explosive. They would blow the heck out a tank or anything that goes over it. That's the way we would find them, with these mine detectors. It would detect any kind of metal.

We spent time there and then we were working as Infantry at one time. We had a pillbox deal that somebody had built on the edge of a forest, overlooking a field. The Germans were on the other side. I had a group that would go up there and watch them during the night. We had a big pillbox shaped in a U fashion. In the middle, we had it down a little bit where we had a 50 caliber machine gun looking out the front. Then we had some single pillboxes around where one or two men could get together in a pillbox. There would be about three or four of us in the machine gun pillbox and there would be about four more, about eight of us. This was a section where the Germans just got a bunch of Americans. The Americans were up there and it was time for their relief to come and they heard something. "Halt, who goes there?" It was Germans. Those Germans just walked in and wiped them out. I don't know if they killed everybody but one of the men in the pillbox, they trod on him but he wasn't dead. One of them lived to tell it. We were in that pillbox situation and we walked through a forest to get there. We walked through when we couldn't see anything. The first time I walked through there I stepped on something. I looked down there and got down real close and it was a dead German with his big winter field coat on. Every time I would walk by there I would try to remember where he was and I would think, "I've already passed him." And sure enough,

I hadn't. I would step on him nearly every time. We kept doing that deal and we had a telephone line and one day we were sitting there and a whole bunch of soldiers started coming by in front of us, just close in front of us. They had their snow uniforms on. We didn't know if they were Germans or Americans. I told the men, "Don't anybody fire unless I give the order." I just held my breath as they walked by. They just kept walking by. I reported that and I don't know if I had telephone communication but I reported it and told them what happened. "A big patrol came by in front of our position, right in front of our 50 caliber machine gun." I said, "I don't know if they were Germans or Americans but I couldn't fire." They said, "They were Americans. They should have alerted you that they were coming by." I said, "Well, they didn't alert us. They just came out of the snow, real close to us. We didn't know so we weren't about to fire unless they fired at us." Those are some of the things that happened.

Another time I was with the Ghost Army and we were walking along the stream. And I shot a man at another little stream across the field from us walking the opposite direction. We were walking towards the front and they were walking towards our front. We had a Frenchman there with us and he was real nervous. I just kept walking on the side. That little Frenchman would jump over where the bank of the stream went down. He would jump over there. He was as nervous as he could be. And of course, that would make us nervous. He kept jumping in there and then getting back up. Finally we got on our way there and to this day, I assume they were Americans, but I don't know. There was no way that we could distinguish. Some of our men fought with what they called the "Ghost Army" which had a whole bunch of French and different nationalities that were in there that they picked up.

Mr. Misenhimer

You call that 'ghost'?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. They called it Patton's Ghost Army. I don't know what it consisted of. He got some help there. He was short of troops so he got him a ghost army there I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of clothing did you have? Did you have some nice warm clothing at this point?

Mr. Garrett

We didn't have the kind of clothing that you have now. We had the Eisenhower field jacket and an officer's coat, a long coat, which I would wear during cold weather. Our feet, it was awful hard to keep your feet from freezing. My toes got frostbitten. I didn't know what it was. It hurt so much I could cry. As long I kept them warm it was okay. That bothered me for 7 years after I left the Army. I was working out in some blizzards, around drilling rigs, and my feet would hurt so much I couldn't stand it. I would have to go up there where the stove was and warm them up and then go back out. I thought, "I'm going to have to quit this job, my feet are just hurting me too much." I put up with this and this was the seventh year. I walked down along the mud pits, away from the fire and my feet started getting cold and I kept waiting for them to start hurting and lo and behold, they didn't hurt anymore. The hurt went away but it took about seven years for them to quit hurting when they got cold. That was just a peculiarity of things that can happen.

Mr. Misenhimer

The reason I asked is that I have heard that a lot of people that were in the Battle of the

Bulge did not have warm clothing.

Mr. Garrett

Some of them lost their toes and lost their feet. They didn't have warm enough clothing, that is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you all weren't too bad off then?

Mr. Garrett

We weren't too bad off but we got cold. We may have had some frostbite that I didn't know about. I know my toes got frostbitten and I didn't think anything about it. I should have gone to the doctor I guess but I didn't think anything about it. I just kept going. But then we went through all of that and gradually we started building some bridges. I have a book, I don't have it with me, that was made for our battalion reunion in fort Worth two years ago. It has pictures of those bridges that we built. I don't have my book with me. They had two books left over and I told them that if they didn't want them, I wanted them. They told me how much they cost and I said, "That's fine, I'll take them." I gave one to my girlfriend and one to my niece. I had another one here and I think my great-niece wanted to get it and make a copy of it. I was going to get that out so that I would have it here, when you called, but I don't have it.

The men were going to take a picture so they got all dressed up, clean shaven and put their Eisenhower jackets on and one of the men hollered, "Go get Lieutenant Garrett." So they came and got me and I needed to shave. I had that old Army coat on and it was muddy. We lived in the mud, you couldn't keep clean. But they had put clean clothes on and looked neat and here I looked like a bum. I was sitting down there in front

next to the Platoon Sergeant and I looked like a bum there. Everybody in the battalion outfit that has made any reunions has seen that picture. Everybody has a copy of that picture, nearly. I'll get that and send it to you.

Later on we got to the Rhine River. Engineers transferred to a division across. The first ones that went across, the Engineers, got shot up and they didn't come back. They finally got across. One of our companies helped put them across after that. They weren't in the bunch that got shot up so bad. After the crossing was made, my platoon went up there with the truck to clean up some of the boats. The boats were shot up. The Germans had some of those antiaircraft guns that fired those bullets that explode. They shot those men up with that. An airplane finally spotted it and he dove down at it. They shot him down and when they did the artillery saw where he was and they started shooting at it and they took off then. They finally got rid of it. They just told me about this, I wasn't watching it. Anyway, we went down there to pick up those boats and some of them had holes in them and some of them had pieces of human flesh on them. We had to wash them off and put them on trucks and trailers to be hauled off. I had my whole platoon in the truck. We were just doing fine. We got into the truck to go back and drove a little ways and a shot was fired. I told the driver to stop. I ran around there and said, "Who fired that shot?" We had an old man with us that didn't have to go into the Army, he volunteered. He was over age. He was a former barber. His name was Lybarger. So he was our company barber. He was a good soldier. He stood up and said, "I did, sir." I just shook my head. I wasn't about to chew him out. He was old enough to be my father. I said, "For pete's sake Lybarger, unload that gun before you shoot somebody and kill them." I got back into the truck and we took off. What it was, while we were working

down there, I didn't know it, but they got into a bunch of German wine and they were all wine'd out, all but the driver. The driver seemed to pretty sober but the rest of them, I think, were pretty well polluted and I didn't know it. (Laugh) They kept it from me. Then after that, once we got across the river at Remagen, I think that's where that was. In this book it says we were trying to build a floating bailey bridge across the Rhine River. That didn't work out. They kept tearing up the equipment. The Germans said that we couldn't cross the river there because of the reverse current that crossed there.

From there we went on across Germany and went by Munich and wound up at Passau. When we got to Passau we built our last bridge. This bridge was a little bridge across what I think was the Ilz River. I looked at a map of Germany and can't find it. There is a convergence there where three rivers comes together, the Inn river and the Danube River, the big river, and a little river, the Ilz River. They had blown their bridge. There was a holdback on one side and they had a cut through there where traffic could come through on the road. The road went straight through that part of the town there and it was blown up. We had to build a bridge down away from there. We had to come across and get on the other side. They had room to get on the other side. They came up to the side where I was going to work and there was a three story building there and a two story building and the street was real narrow. The bridge would come up there. Well, to start with there was no room if you build a normal bridge there, a narrow bridge, a truck couldn't turn and get on it. A jeep would be about the only thing that could get on it. I told the company commander, "We've got to put a wing on there and widen it." He said, "How much?" I said, "It's not a question of how much but how much we can, as much as the equipment will allow us to spread wings. To make a wing there. Then we were going



to drive pilings. Well, on our end we couldn't drive pilings because there was a big rock down there. We had never built a crib. We knew what they were but we had never built them. We built a crib that had never been built before as far as I know. The only material we had was like 2 x 12"s or maybe a little smaller. We had to go in there and measure down to that rock, to get the shape of it and we had to build the bottom of that to fit. So man we had the doggondest looking crib that you have ever seen. We had, I believe, three sections to it. When we got through, I looked at it and I was talking to Sergeant England, he was from up in the panhandle of Texas and I said, "Sergeant, if we put a beam on this thing, on this 2 x 4, or whatever it was, and put weight on it, just one 2 x 4, it's going to go through that like knife through butter. We've got to do something here. Let's cut pieces of wood to fit in each one of these spaces and drive them in there with a sledgehammer." So they did and it worked real good. They cut them in to fit just exactly right and drive them in. We get it down to where we had it down about, I would say, 18 to 20 inches. I said, "That'll hold up a freight train." I just wonder if the Company Commander and the Executive Officer looking at that thought that thing would ever work. (Laugh) Anyway, we put it in position and put just enough rock and stuff to hold it in place. We got the beams on it and everything worked out. But before that happened, we cut into the pavement there to make an abutment. There was a piece of plastic tubing that must have been about 2 1/2" in diameter and it was right in our way. We just chopped it in two. It wasn't long before the Germans came down there and cut the whole telephone communications off. Of course, the war was still going and we didn't care. We had orders to build that bridge as fast as we could get it. We were broken up into groups and that included the Mess Sergeants and everybody. I had a group that worked this side

at night for 12 hours. We worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off. We got ours started finally and we built the wing and got it as far as we could get it. We got that first span in. From then on we could use the pile driver. On the other side they could use pile drivers from the start and they started it. The war ended. At which point the Major came by and looked over there and they had three pilings over there on that first span and they were starting on the next span. That Major said that he wanted five pilings there. Three wasn't enough, he wanted five. I looked at that and I shook my head and I thought, "My lord, they'll be forever tearing that up. They put that thing together with 6 inch spikes. It's going to take them a lot longer to tear it up than it did to build it." I just shook my head and thought, "My lord." Lieutenant Spears was a Pennsylvania Dutchman and I guess there are four ways to do things. The wrong way. The right way. The Army way and the Spears way. He was pretty clever. The next night I got there, they not only had a second span completed, they were starting on a third one. I thought, "What in the world is going on here? How did they get that other span torn up?" I looked over there I could see what looked like five pilings. Anyway, we got it finished it in time and right as we got it finished they had a German Army come across. Of course, they were shoulder to shoulder and they went across it and the bridge held up real good. The next thing was a bunch of big mortars, tractor drawn. Those big mortars are heavy. The first one came in there and he turned around and went pretty slow and turned onto the bridge, easy. Then they had, I guess, a West Texas cowboy. He had his going wide open. He hit that bridge, turning and I just gritted my teeth. I thought, "My lord, that centrifugal force is going to turn that bridge over there." But it didn't, it held up. I thought, "Well, it'll hold anything up now." So I was happy with it. I had talked to my brother in law, who had done

construction work, and told him about the bridge. I said, "I wonder how long that bridge will last." He said, "Were the pilings creosote?" I said, "No, they weren't" He said, "Then about two years is all that it will last." Well, I happened to be in Bahrain with an oil company and coming back, I took my vacation and came back through there. I told my wife that I wanted to go to Passau and go to where that bridge was. I knew it wouldn't be there but I wanted to go by there and see where it was. I went by there and they had the new bridge there where it should have been to start with. I walked down there. I knew exactly where the place was. I walked right down to it and looked and of course, couldn't see any sign of anything there. Directly, a middle-aged German came by and I hollered at him. I said, "I helped build a bridge over there during the war and I was just curious about it. I didn't figure it would last over about two years because the pilings weren't creosoted." "Oh no, that bridge lasted us seven years." I laughed and said, "Lord, I didn't think it would last that long." So I guess we did a pretty good job with the crib and everything. The picture of that bridge is in there. You have to look pretty close to see. It shows one end where the things are spread out. You can see it but it doesn't show it too clearly. It shows a bunch of bridges that we built. I removed one bridge across a river, it was pretty long. It was a double-double Bailey Bridge. It was a pretty big bridge. We took a bulldozer and pulled that thing across. We had the landing nose on the other side. The bridge got lower and lower until that thing dropped off completely. I held my breath but we had enough weight to hold it. I think I had extra weight there. I was being pretty careful. We took that bridge down just after the war was over. We built bridges and we tore bridges down that needed to be removed, some of those Bailey bridges. I'll get that thing and send to you.

Passau was the last place we were in. Here's a funny thing. We stayed there a little while after we built the bridge and the snow had been melting and it was pretty well melted. The river started going down. One day I went by in a jeep with a driver and looked over there and lo and behold, there were three complete pilings there, but there were two snags between those that were about a foot above the water. The water had gone down. They had nailed on some pieces of a piling to the other two. (Laugh) There were three complete pilings on that first span. In between the middle and outside piling was a scab, just a piece of a piling. When the river went down, then those pilings started showing. He didn't put two pilings in there. That's the reason why he made that bridge so fast over there. I thought, "How in the world could he tear that thing up and get it back together like that?" I just shook my head. I thought, "That's impossible." And sure enough it was. (Laugh) But he got around it anyway. He was a Dutchman. He said that those three pilings, no longer than they were, would hold up a freight train, which they would. They would hold up a freight train. He wasn't about to tear that bridge down and put in two more pilings. (Laugh) In the dark he got by with it.

After coming back we were going to go to the Pacific. We were scheduled to go to the Pacific. We got to Dijon, France and I had an acute appendicitis attack. So I stopped and got into a hospital and a doctor examined me and said, 'You've got appendicitis and we've got to operate on you.' I begged him not to operate but he insisted and they operated anyway. After he got through he showed me the appendix and said, "Another hour or two and that could have ruptured and you would have been in bad shape." So, I lost my unit. They went on and they were in port and in the Stars and Stripes it showed one of the Sergeants sitting there on a rock or something with his chin on his

hand, like, "Now what" The war in Japan ended so they weren't going to go to the Pacific. So they waited there and got on a ship to go back. I tried to catch up with them. They sent me to Paris to a Reple Depot. They sent messages and everything but everything was slow. When I got there, the ship had already left. A wise old Sergeant said, "Why don't you just come back every week or two. You can go down to the Riviera and enjoy yourself and we'll put you on sometime." I was wanting to get home. My mother was in ill health. I guess I should have gone ahead and take a couple of weeks holiday there. I could have really had a lot of fun to make up for being over there. But, he put me the 332<sup>nd</sup> General Service Regiment. That's one of the regiments that built the ALCAN Highway. They build some bridges over there of wood that I wish I had pictures of. We couldn't build them like they did. They built some big bridges with arches across the big rivers, up high. They were beautiful wooden bridges. Of course, they weren't built to last 100 years like a good bridge. I came over with them on the *Miss America*. Boy it was a fine boat compared to what we went over there with. When I got back, I didn't have enough points for a discharge so they sent me to Fort Belvoir as an instructor. I instructed in basic training and then I got into teaching booby traps and explosives and building tank traps. Then I got my discharge. I can give you the date of that if you want it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, what was that?

Mr. Garrett

Date of separation: April 15, 1946. It says: Commanded a unit of engineer personnel in a combat area and the construction of bridges and roads, demolition, clearing of mine

fields and as regular ground Infantry in assault. Later instructed at a demolition specialist school ASFTC Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Here is a citation for a Bronze Star that I got. I don't know who turned me in for that, whether it was a man or the company commander or what. It says: Citation for Bronze Star Medal. Second Lieutenant Richmond D. Garrett, 0531948 Corps of Engineers, 1252<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. United States Army for meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy from February 18 to February 21, 1945 in Luxembourg and Germany. Lieutenant Garrett showed a remarkable degree of skill and capacity for observation and leading patrols into enemy occupied territory. His accurate and detailed reports furnished urgently needed information for planning the assault on the Siegfried Line. The courage, initiative and brilliant leadership displayed by Lieutenant Garrett are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces and reflect great credit upon himself. Entered military service from Texas." (Laugh) That sounds like it is a little exaggerated but I appreciate that somebody thinks that maybe I did some good. I guess that's about all I've got to give you for right now unless you've got some questions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, I've got some questions for you here. When you were over there, were you ever attacked by enemy airplanes? Strafed or any bombings?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. I forgot about that. We were building a bridge and we were working 24 hours a day on it. This bridge was going to cross a pretty good sized river. It was a pile driven wooden bridge. We worked crews. We were working on it from both sides, if I remember right. There was a lone plane that would come over there. He would cut his engines. We

had captured a German generating plant. It was a diesel plant and man it was good. We would power that up and we strung some lights so that we could see to build that bridge. We had lights on that bridge all the time that we were working. But that plane would come over and he would cut his engines as he got pretty close to us. Then he would turn and dive on us. We cut that doggone engine off but those lights wouldn't go out right away. They would just gradually fade. And we had foxholes that we would run and jump into. Man those tracers from his airplane were going all around there and to my knowledge he never hit anybody. So I guess we had to be lucky. Now this is something that you may not want to put in the deal but I'm going to give it to you anyway. One night, he came over and I had diarrhea. I had just gotten out there doing my thing when he came over. I said, "I'm not going to run for that foxhole. I will be in a mess. I'm just going to sit here and pray." I sat there with tracer bullets going on both sides of it and thank God that he didn't hit me. Every other time I got to the foxhole but I didn't make it that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did anybody shoot antiaircraft at him? Or did any of your planes try to shoot him down?

Mr. Garrett

No there wasn't any. We had no planes there. We could put machine guns up but rather than that we would just jump in the foxhole and duck down in them real low. It would be pretty hard for him to hit us. That was about the safest way. If we had been out firing a gun, he might have gotten us. We didn't have a gun there to fire at him. We could put a machine gun mount up there and fired at him. We might not have been able to see him. He could see us. But it was dark and we might not have been able to see him too well.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any dogfights between our planes and theirs?

Mr. Garrett

No. At the end of the war, after the war was over, Lieutenant Weiss, well, we were all in a little town there in Germany and a group of biplanes came over. I guess they were training planes, a whole flock of them. Well, a plane had been coming over that town and dropping small bombs every now and then. They weren't doing any damage, but tearing it up. These planes flew over and we opened up with the machine guns and everything and we shot one of them down. It landed there and the German was wounded but he got up and ran into a German house. If we had know what it was, we wouldn't have fired at them. They were flying the planes over to land in the American territory to get away from the Russians. They weren't going to drop any bombs. If we had know what it was, we wouldn't have fired at them. They were just coming over to give up and get rid of their planes. We didn't hurt the German very bad. He lived over it. I think it hit him in the leg. He survived. So that was good that we didn't kill him, anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever shelled by German artillery?

Mr. Garrett

Oh yes. Sure. Yes. I was in a town there and they started shelling at the place where I was staying. I was in about the second floor of a building. I moved out of that and moved into underground quarters so they couldn't hit us. They fired a gun up there trying to hit me. They never did but if I had stayed there, they might have.



Mr. Misenhimer

Was this a German 88 or what kind of gun was it.

Mr. Garrett

Most of them that they fired were 88's. They relied on that 88 for a whole lot. That was supposed to be one of the best artillery pieces during the war, the German 88.

Mr. Misenhimer

Multi-use, antiaircraft, flat fire, or trajectory.

Mr. Garrett

Yes, they could use it for everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Garrett

I don't think I ever got caught in friendly fire. I can't say that I did. Thank goodness I never got caught in friendly fire.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Garrett

I think morale in my outfit was real good. My platoon was called Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves. Whenever we came to a place to build a bridge, we would get up there and I would shake my head and say, "Good lord, where are we going to get materials to build this bridge." My platoon had better intelligence than anybody. Sergeant Orlich would come up and say, "Lieutenant Garrett, Little Joe knows where there is some lumber and beams. If you'll let us have a truck, we'll go get it." I said, "Okay, go get it." I didn't ask

any questions where they got them. They would bring that stuff up there and we would start building a bridge. They would go get the equipment, load it up and we would get started on it. We had that nickname because I guess we had the thievingest bunch of the battalion so they gave us that nickname, Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves. I told everybody that Sergeant Orlich was Ali Baba.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many people in your platoon were either killed or wounded during this time?

Mr. Garrett

I guess there were 39 per squad plus the Sergeant makes 40 and myself would be 41. There was only one man killed in my platoon. That was Rochell. He was a nice little fellow. He shouldn't have volunteered but he did. Somebody told me that he had a family and two children. He was a real young man and a heck of a good soldier. I got a letter from his family. They wanted me to write and tell them what happened. Of course, I talked to our Executive Officer and Commander and they said, "No, you can't do that. You can't write them and tell them anything." I would have liked to, after the war as over, I would have like to have gone and visited with them and then tell them. But I didn't have any money to spend and I had to get back to school and graduate and start making a living. I would have liked to have gone up there and told his folks about him. He was a heck of a good soldier. Our whole platoon, as far as I was concerned, they were all good. They were a good bunch. They worked good together. They would get into a wine cellar if they could. (Laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

On that recon patrol, two of them were killed there, but they were not from your platoon,

is that right?

Mr. Garrett

Goodman was from another platoon and Rochell was from my platoon.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about wounded? Were any of your people wounded?

Mr. Garrett

No I guess I was the only one when I got that scratch. Nobody else got hurt. We had a man that we didn't know about that was up here with a 50 caliber machine gun, way back up there. He was firing at the Germans in the buildings that were trying to fire at us, he said. It tells about that in this book here. I didn't know anything about it until he told me one day at a reunion. I said, "I didn't know that." He said, "Yes, I was firing at those Germans up there. I could see them and I would keep them back." He said, "I got chewed out because I fired a bunch of ammunition in one day." He said, "I would do the same thing all over again." He might have saved some of us from getting killed. I didn't know he was doing that. He said that the ground in front of his machine gun was just burned because he fired so much ammunition there. He was shooting the heck out of that town over there in those buildings where the Germans would try to shoot at us.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Garrett

It's a funny thing. When you are in combat, with me, you don't have time to get frightened. You get frightened after its over with or before but not during the action. I never was scared when I went down there on that combat patrol or reconnaissance patrol.

I wasn't a bit scared. I figured I might get killed but I wasn't scared. I was doing what I thought I had to do. I was concentrating on staying alive but it didn't scare me. I wasn't a bit scared. Maybe I should have been scared, I don't know. I think that goes with most of the men that have been trained. Once they get into combat and they're busy, they're so damn busy they don't have time to get scared. They get scared after it is over with or maybe just before they do it. Lynbarger, I don't know I guess he was close to 50 years old and I don't think he ever got scared but he was an unusual man. He was something else. If I had been in his shoes, at his age, I don't believe I would have been in the service. I would have gone ahead and done something else. Got into making armament or something. But he volunteered. He was the biggest kid of the bunch, really. He acted more like the young one than the old one.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of your CO and the other officers you had over you?

Mr. Garrett

Oh man alive, I'll tell you what, the ones that I had I wouldn't trade for anybody. Johnny Walker or Joe Swartz, they were tops. I liked them. I was with one company and the commander was kind of wishy-washy. I just couldn't stand it. So when I got with A Company, I really enjoyed working with Johnny Walker and Joe Swartz.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you attached to any Divisions at different times?

Mr. Garrett

We were attached to different outfits. I don't have it in front of me. If I think of it, when I send that deal to you I will write a note. We were attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division

when we went back there and rode those tanks. We were attached to that division but just for that short period of time. It seems to me like we had something called the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps, I'm not sure. I had a piece of literature that we had and it mentioned in one of them what we were attached to.

Mr. Misenhimer

What Army were you in? 3<sup>rd</sup> Army or which one?

Mr. Garrett

Yes, we were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army the whole time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever meet Patton, or see Patton?

Mr. Garrett

I dodged him because he would usually come around when it was muddy and I didn't have a fresh, clean shave. He came by several times. I was also, I told somebody that I was afraid if Patton got up and left a jeep, I was afraid that my platoon would steal it. (Laugh) If they saw a jeep they would steal it, if he wasn't careful.

On that one deal where they were trying to build a bridge across the Rhine river, the Germans said that we couldn't build a bridge there. There was some kind of current they called it to where you couldn't build that kind of bridge. They had sent me down to look at it and see if we had enough equipment to build another bridge. Everybody said we had enough. I went down there and counted and said, "We don't have enough. They've already broken enough to get half way across and we still haven't got started good." I believe it was a two-star General that came down there, very stern like. I'm sure he was a West Point graduate and he stopped me and started asking me questions and I

was, "Yes sir." "No sir." "Yes sir." "No sir." He wanted to know if we had enough bridge equipment to finish that bridge. I said, "No sir. It will take more." Of course, I think what was wrong with trying to build it, if we could have built it, first of all, they should have put somebody in charge of that bridge building deal, night and day, and let him call the shots. They kept changing them. Also, they should have had those Navy boats in place of pulling those things into position, they should have pushed them into position and not have any ropes trailing back there where the propellers were. The propellers get tangled up and then the stream would push them down and they would tear all that equipment up. But they would try to get up there and pull them into place and connect onto the bridge and then if they lost power, they would take that one and another unit down. They were just tearing the equipment up. So anyway, when that General got through, they decided that they didn't need that bridge. That bridge was never completed. We didn't have enough equipment back there to finish it. The way they was going, they weren't going to get it finished anyway, if they didn't change their methods. I think if they would have changed their methods, they could have done a lot better. They should have got somebody that knew his business to be in charge of it and to get it organized. Of course, I'm being a little critical but I feel like I could see the mistakes they were making and they just kept on making them. They didn't do it any different. They just kept on doing it. They spent I don't know how many days there just trying to get started on that bridge.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Garrett

No, I never did hear her. What ever happened to Axis Sally? Did they imprison her?

Mr. Misenhimer

I think the British got her, but I'm not sure.

Mr. Garrett

I guess the British got her.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank that you got to?

Mr. Garrett

First Lieutenant. I couldn't go any higher unless somebody got killed in front of me. There were three First Lieutenants. One for each platoon. The only way that you could get promoted was to move up to Captain. The Executive Officer was even a First Lieutenant. You had to get to be Captain of the Company to be a Captain and if you wanted to get higher than that, you had to get down to headquarters. In other words, some of those people had to get killed off or go somewhere else. We didn't want any of that. We didn't want any of that kind of promotion. I was talking to an old man one time, telling him about some treatments that I thought he needed and would do him some good, but he had his mind set. He got into the Army. He had taken some electrical engineering and he started teaching that Norden bombsight. He was teaching Generals and everybody and they would brag on his work and all and he would get a promotion. He finally got to be a Lieutenant Colonel. I was talking to him and he asked me what I was when I retired. I said, "First Lieutenant." He was real proud, he said, "I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel." Of course I knew what he was doing. I knew how he was getting his retirement. I should have told him, "If you had been a First Lieutenant in a combat battalion overseas in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, you wouldn't have got promoted unless the people ahead of you got displaced,

or killed or wounded. That's as high as you can get because that's all it calls for." In other words, those Generals would recommend him and he would get a big promotion. He wound up being a Lieutenant Colonel. You could tell he was proud of that. I never said anything to him but I should have said, "If you had been in a combat unit, like a combat battalion and you were the platoon commander, you never get to be anything else unless people ahead of you got killed."

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out did you stay in the Reserves?

Mr. Garrett

I stayed in the Reserves for a while and then I got out. I wasn't taking part in the meetings and all so I just got out of the Reserves.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were not recalled for Korea or anything like that?

Mr. Garrett

No. I was married and raising a family, thank goodness, so I didn't have to go back.

Mr. Misenhimer

April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. We were overseas when that happened. The war was still going on. I remember when it happened. We knew the war was about over. Most of the Germans knew the war was over but Hitler and that bunch knew they were going to be prosecuted so they would do anything they could to keep from giving up.



Mr. Misenhimer

When you heard about Roosevelt dying, was there any reaction to it?

Mr. Garrett

As far as I know, in the American services there wasn't. Hitler was jubilant. He thought that when Roosevelt died that things would change for the better for him, I think. As far as the American troops over there, it didn't change anything as far as what we were doing. We still had a job to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Hitler thought that the people would quite fighting when Roosevelt died, but that wasn't true.

Mr. Garrett

If he would have made peace right then he would have saved a lot of Germans and a lot of lives.

Mr. Misenhimer

He thought the same thing would happen with the Americans and of course it didn't.

Mr. Garrett

That was a different situation. If they had got Hitler over there, that would have been a different situation. They almost got him.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on VE Day, on May 8, 1945, when German surrendered, where were you then?

Mr. Garrett

I was in Passau and we were building that last bridge. It's Passau, Germany on one side and it's Passau, Austria on the other side on the Danube River.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Garrett

We might have had a few drinks but we just kept on working. They wanted that bridge as soon as they could get it, even after the war ended. We had that bridge to build so we just kept on working. We were working there on 12 hour shifts. We got that thing finished and then after that we kind of took it easy. It was the first time that we really didn't have much to do. We were just waiting on orders, you might say.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you come home from over there?

Mr. Garrett

I can get it pretty close. I can get when they came back on that ship and I was about two weeks after that. I can get that from that book. "We got the news that the Japanese had surrendered. Boarded the ship on August 23 at 16:30. Left the dock on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Passed the Rock of Gibraltar on the 25<sup>th</sup>." I left about 5 or 6 days after that. They left on the 25<sup>th</sup> and I probably left on August 30<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup> of 1945 to come home.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned when Japan surrendered on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Did you all have a celebration then?

Mr. Garrett

I was in Reple Depot in Paris. I had been celebrating. (Laugh) I had been celebrating. Yes, we celebrated but I don't know what we did other than drink. Sure, we celebrated. We were glad that we were not having to go to the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Garrett

I got so many doggone medals and ribbons that I don't know what some of them are. The main two are my Bronze Star and my Purple Heart. But then I got all kinds of other medals, Carbine Sharpshooter, Garand Rifle. I've got a whole bunch of medals in the drawer in there. I guess I ought to get them mounted. Some of the women want me to get them mounted. I guess I'll tell them that if they want them mounted, they can mount them.

If you talk to Roy, so many people talk to him about this that he's kind of blah about this, so don't be surprised when you talk to him but he's got some pretty good stories he can tell you, if he'll tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all dig up a lot of mines?

Mr. Garrett

We dug up quite a few.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were most of them antitank mines, or different kinds?

Mr. Garrett

Most of them were antitank mines. Those mines that we saw planted when we were down there with that reconnaissance patrol, they picked those up but the Germans, I think, had planted one plastic or glass mine right there by the house. I understand that later on a Jeep came by there with their driver and a Lieutenant in it and it blew up and killed them

both. But they got most of the mines out apparently.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Bouncing Betties, did you have any experience with those?

Mr. Garrett

I didn't see any of those. I heard about them, but I didn't see any. We saw a bunch of those schumines that time when we rode those tanks through the town. One of the Sergeants stopped and looked down there and saw a bunch of those little boxes sticking up. The rain had just washed the top of the soil off of them. He was right in the middle of a bunch of schumines. Boy, talk about walking out of there gingerly, he sure did. We were lucky. There wasn't anybody injured except Sergeant England got something in his hand but he just went to the doctor and came right back. There was a Lieutenant from some outfit, it wasn't ours, there was a Lieutenant that had his foot shot off by a German 88. He lost his foot. That was the only casualty that I heard of on that deal when we went 40 miles behind the Siegfried Line. I guess you might say that it was a pretty successful deal to not lose anybody with all that going on. But now, those men that were in those pillboxes, they weren't first line troops. They certainly weren't the SS. Most of them were young boys and they knew the war was over and they just wanted to live. They weren't too anxious to fight very much, I'll guarantee you or we might have had more trouble than we did. Of course, I think we were still lucky by hitting that thing at dusk because it would have been hard for them to shoot at us at dusk. For them to aim and be accurate. Of course with a machine gun, they could just turn it open and throw lead everywhere. We were very fortunate.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Garrett

No, I don't think so. But of course, I know I was a different person than what I had been before I went. I might have been a little bit more contrary. (Laugh) My family always thought I was a holy terror while I was growing up anyway. I guess maybe I might have been a little more contrary for a while after I got out. I went back to school and started to work hard on my studies, getting my degree and then going to work to make a living. It kept me pretty busy so I guess I wasn't too contrary.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you graduate from A&M then?

Mr. Garrett

1947. I got back and went to summer school one semester in 1946 and then I took a semester of work that fall of 1946 and then graduated in January of 1947.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your major?

Mr. Garrett

My major was chemical engineering but I never really used it too much. I got into the oil field and I went to night school and got a master's in petroleum engineering.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill to go back to school?

Mr. Garrett

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use it for anything else?

Mr. Garrett

No. I guess I used the VA on my first home.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many reunions have you had?

Mr. Garrett

They started having them way back and I never did make a lot of them while my wife was still living. We made one in Delaware and one in Midland and maybe somewhere else. Johnny Walker's family gave one in Midland back in the 1960's and they gave one in Fort Worth. The one in Fort Worth was one of the best that I have ever been to. Johnny Walker's family did that. They were hosts twice. They've been having them every year. I've thought every year would be the last one but now then they are having one in Ohio. This last one was in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We had our business night on Saturday night and one man jumped up and said that he wanted to be the host for the next reunion in Pennsylvania. Right after that another man jumped up and said he wanted to host it the next year. So they've already got it lined up for this year and next year. So the thing is, there are not many of us left living, but the thing gets bigger now. What is happening is the families, the children and grandchildren are going and the people now are kind of making a vacation out of it. So even though there's not a lot of us left living, the thing gets bigger in size. I've never seen anything like it. I don't know how much longer it will last like that, but I thought they would have already quite having them. The last reunion, I think there were about three or four in my company there and one company, I think, only

had three. There are not many of us left. Some of them that were there, I noticed that some of them that were there got mail, that one of them that helped host the last one, he died this year. He lived in Colorado. He seemed like he was in pretty good health. I was kind of surprised that I got notice that he had died. We're all dying. It looks like I'm going to be the last one. I guess, with my health, I'll probably live to be 100. I'm 85 now and I'm doing everything I can to keep my health in good shape.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Garrett

Not really. I've got an old American Carbine, that's about the only thing. I wish I had one of those Lugers but I didn't try too hard to collect souvenirs while I was over there. I came back with an American Carbine and also that .45 pistol, the sidearm. I gave that sidearm to my brother in law. So that's all I came back with.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Garrett

I don't know about USO shows but I made some dances in Luxembourg. Then I went to Paris on a couple of trips. Lieutenant Weiss was supposed to go one time. I had already been once and they couldn't find him, so then they said, "You might as well go." So I went twice. (Laugh) Lieutenant Weiss was upset. He said, "Heck, you made two of them and I haven't even got to make one." We had a dance in Luxembourg. There was a little Luxembourg girl that I was sitting at a table with and she started speaking English. She spoke perfect English, better than I do. I would use a slang word and she would stop me

and want to know what it was. I would explain it to her and I said, "This is not a good English word but this is how we use it. It's slang." I told her, "You speak better English than I do." I don't know who taught her but she spoke perfect English but she didn't know the slang lingo and all of that. She spoke as clearly and as fluently as could be. I was really surprised.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Garrett

Yes. Every now and then we would get some donuts and things and the best thing when you were muddy and dirty and tired, they would put those shower deals up there and you could go in there and get a good shower. They would give you clean socks. They would really take care of you. Man, I enjoyed that. We didn't get to see them as much as we would like to though. But yes, I was happy to run into them every now and then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you've thought of from your time in World War II?

Mr. Garrett

No. I can't think of too much. I will get that book and I might put a few notes in that when I look at it. No Richard, I can't think of anything else right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to this country during World War II.

Mr. Garrett

When I give you that book you might be able to pick some stuff out of it.



*(End of Interview)*

Transcribed by:

Lesle W. Dial

Beeville, Texas

September 23, 2008

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848