

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Robert S. Medley

West Lafayette, Indiana

August 4, 2008

Headquarters Company, 541st Battalion, 101st Airborne Division

06/09/1944 Jumped Behind Utah Beach

Liberated Part of Dachau

Captured at Bulge December, 1944

Escaped April, 1945

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is August 4, 2008. I am interviewing Mr. Robert S. Medley by telephone. His telephone number is area code 765-423-5566. His address is 4741 Swisher Road, West Lafayette, Indiana 47906. 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

Bob, 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. The first thing I would like to do is read you to this agreement with the Nimitz Museum. When I do these in person I give it 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. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I need 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. Medley

My daughter. Tina Dillon. You can always get her at Atlas Excavating, 4740 Swisher Road, West Lafayette, Indiana 47906.

Mr. Misenhimer

She is next to you then?

Mr. Medley

Yes. I live here on Atlas property.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you happen to have her phone number?

Mr. Medley

765-423-3800.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Mr. Medley

August 11, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Medley

In Goodland, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mr. Medley

I had six brothers and seven sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many of your brothers were in World War II?

Mr. Medley

Just two of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your other brother come home?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was he in?

Mr. Medley

He was in the 27th Field Artillery.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is he still living?

Mr. Medley

No. He died at 65.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your sisters, were they involved in war work at all?

Mr. Medley

I have one sister, her husband was in for four years. They rest of them were too old.

There are just three of us left alive. I've got one sister that is 87 and I've got one sister that is just two years younger than me. That's all that's left out of the whole bunch.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Medley

Buffalo, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Medley

I had 89 more days to go to graduate in 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you would have graduated in 1943?

Mr. Medley

I would have, but I graduated in 1970 at Wainwright.

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Medley

Really, I never thought of it. We always farmed. My dad worked 40 years at the Newton Country Stone Quarry. He started right around 1900 and worked 40 years there. He started at 50 cents an hour and quite at 50 cents an hour.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh gee, after 40 years?

Mr. Medley

40 years. There were four of us boys that worked there at one time.

Mr. Misenhimer

And he farmed also?

Mr. Medley

Yes, we always farmed. There was quite a bunch of kids at our house all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

An you had a garden and that sort of thing?

Mr. Medley

We farmed about 80 acres. We always had milk cows. We had our own pork and our own eggs and a big garden.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that around Buffalo?

Mr. Medley

We moved to Buffalo in 1936. We lived out west. I was born in Goodland and then we moved to Kentland. I went to Kentland schools my first two years. Then in the 5th grade we moved to Sitka which is just south of Buffalo. Then the next year we moved to Sitka and they stayed there until I was in the service. Then they moved down here to Lafayette. When I came home from the service they lived out here at Lafayette.

Mr. Misenhimer

But they were working over there at the Newton County Stone Quarry?

Mr. Medley

Yes. Dad worked there for 40 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Even though he lived in Buffalo, he drove back and forth?

Mr. Medley

Yes, he drove back and forth.

Mr. Misenhimer

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Medley

You had better believe it. My sister and her husband had a radio. We heard about it on a Sunday. They called us and said, "Get down here." It was all over the radio. I was 16 at the time and I made up my mind right then, that I needed to go help the country. It took me a year to talk dad into it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Medley

I went in 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a date or a month?

Mr. Medley

I went in on February 22, 1943 if I remember right.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went into the Army?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We signed up for the Air Force but we didn't get the Air Force. We wound up at Camp Wolters, Texas. The first thing I heard was the Second Lieutenant saying, "You boys will be here for 13 weeks of Infantry basic." I said, "Wait a minute fella, I didn't sign up for the Infantry." He said, "You probably didn't understand me. You will be here for 13 weeks of Infantry basic." I said, "You guys are going to get a fooling." About the fourth week a fella came through and said, "Are you guys happy here?" I wasn't happy at all because I signed up for the Air Force. I said, "No, I'm not happy." He said, "Do you

want out of here?" I said, "You'd better believe it." He said, "Sign this paper." So I signed a paper and he had me out the next week. I went to Fort Benning, Georgia as a paratrooper.

Mr. Misenhimer

Actually you went in 1943, is that right?

Mr. Medley

Yes. My dad always told us boys that a real smart guy could learn from the other guy's mistake. I made up my mind that I wasn't too smart because I had to make all those mistakes myself.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you think it was an advantage to go to the Airborne from the Infantry?

Mr. Medley

I just got out of the Infantry. That was all I cared about. I didn't know that things could get worse. (Laugh) I learned quite a little bit. Until 1955 I had the world record for free fall. I jumped out at 30,000 feet, which is the only time that I ever pulled my own ripcord. In 1955 they called and said that if I wanted to protect my record, if I would go to Fort Benning they would provide all the equipment for me to keep my record. My wife called back and found out that some son of a gun had went out at 102,000 feet out of a hot air balloon. As far as I know, he still has that record.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get that record?

Mr. Medley

It must have been September of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in the service?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Why did you jump out at 30,000?

Mr. Medley

We were through with our jump training and we were just sitting there with nothing to do other than we kept our physical training going. They came in one morning and they had a dummy that they threw out at different altitudes. They called him Charlie. An old boy wanted to know, he said, "We need somebody to make a Charlie jump?" "What kind of a Charlie jump?" He said, "If you are interested, we'll tell you more about it. It pays \$100 and a steak supper." I was making \$21 a month. So I told him immediately that I was his man. Of course the first thing he gave me was oxygen. I went up and there was nothing to it. Once your chute opened you just came right on down. When I hit the ground, they checked me over and nothing was wrong. I got a good steak and a \$100 bill. Three days later he came through and he wanted to know if I wanted another \$100. I said, "Absolutely." We went up to 300 feet and the green light came on. Let me tell you, that jump liked to have killed me. I really bounced on that one but I got another \$100.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was 300 feet?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was pretty low.

Mr. Medley

That was real low. You didn't have enough time for that chute to help you out much at all.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right, it wasn't fully opened.

Mr. Medley

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you jumped from 30,000 feet, what kind of plane were you in to do that?

Mr. Medley

It was a two motor but I never paid any attention to what kind.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did it take you to get up to that altitude? It would take quite a while to get up that high.

Mr. Medley

The figured that I was in the air about 7 minutes.

Mr. Misenhimer

After you jumped out?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

At what altitude did your chute actually open from that one?

Mr. Medley

I never saw anything on it. I went just as long as I could. I was afraid I was going to pass out so I opened my chute. Then once you got over the shock of your chute opening, then it was fun from there on down, you just came right on down. After we got overseas we made a lot of jumps at 600 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think that was the altitude they mostly jumped from, that range.

Mr. Medley

We jumped 1,200 feet on our practice jumps and we were in the air 8 seconds. It got to the point where we were carrying too much extra stuff and they made us quit. We could carry 70% of our natural weight. You had pockets for soap and pockets for wash rags and pockets for towels. You didn't need that stuff. you were better off to put in hand grenades. I jumped one time with six hand grenades stuck in the tops of my boots. When I hit the ground it bent those handles up and you couldn't get them straight. That was useless so I didn't do that anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back then. You went in February of 1943. You wound up down in Fort Benning, Georgia. How long were you at Camp Wolters?

Mr. Medley

Six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what all did you do down at Fort Benning?

Mr. Medley

I went through training.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did that consist of?

Mr. Medley

The first week all we did was calisthenics. The second week we did calisthenics in the morning and in the afternoon we looked around and packed chutes. Then the third week all we did was calisthenics and packed chutes. The fourth week we jumped.

Mr. Misenhimer

In your training, I've seen pictures where they had a tower that you hooked on to some kind of cable and came down that. Is that right?

Mr. Medley

They had 35 foot towers to begin with and we jumped from them on the second week. The third week we went up to 250 foot towers and the chute was already inflated. They cut you loose and you came down, free fall, with the chute already inflated. Then the fourth week, part of us jumped in the morning and part of us jumped in the afternoon. I assume the guys that jumped in the afternoon, did the same as those in the morning. They took you out on the beach and you jerked your ripcord and stayed there. If you wanted to smoke or whatever. Then all at once they had a wind tunnel they figured was about 40 mph and you had to jump up and deflate your chute and line it up so that it would quit dragging you. That was interesting in itself.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you jumped out of the plane you actually had your ripcord attached to that cable across the top of the plane, right?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We didn't pull our own ripcord. The only time I ever pulled my own ripcord was when I went out at 30,000 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

They call that what, a 'static line'?

Mr. Medley

Yes. If the old Jump Sergeant would ever hear about you say "jumping" out of a plane, he would throw a fit. We did not "jump" out of a plane. We you stood up. You hooked up. You checked the man ahead of you, his hook. You went to the back of the plane. You made 1/8th of a turn to the right. You stepped out of the plane with your left foot and brought your right foot up to it. Anybody that says we didn't jump is lying to you, because we got just as far away from that thing as we could get. That old Jump Sergeant would say, "No sir. You do not jump. You step out of this plane."

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you say Geronimo when you jumped?

Mr. Medley

Some of them did. I never did. I think the prettiest sight I ever saw in my life was the minute your chute opened, you grabbed your riser strings and look up and you see that canopy over your head. Let me tell you, that was a pretty sight. Being young boys and being onerier than scat, we always carried a real sharp knife, sharp on both sides, on our

belt. If you got one of those shroud lines between your legs it would cut you in two right now. At 1200 psi on those shroud lines, so you cut them. If you were heavier than the other guy, you would go down faster. The apex of those chutes was 18 inches. That air would come out that apex. They were made in 72 sections and each of the sections had four sections and they were silk. We would take our knife and just prick it. if you land on another guy's canopy, you would take this knife and just prick it. That would run and your apex would go from 18 inches to 18 feet. Boy, you would go down like a son of a gun. One of the first things you would think is that you broke your chute and you would feed your reserve out which is on your belly. You didn't blow that chute. You just went to a big apex. So it was still pulling and the one on the belly was taking up the slack and you would hit on your hind end. If you could find out who did it, you would kill him. (Laugh) We always thought that was a bunch of fun.

Mr. Misenhimer

In your training, did you have a lot of Infantry type training also? Squad tactics and all that sort of stuff?

Mr. Medley

Yes. When I got out of the service, I could run a straight 8 hours and it never bothered me. I could do pushups all day and it never bothered me. The fact of the matter, my dad was 6' 6" and weighed 270 pounds and he was stouter than an ox. When I came home from the service, I could pick up 300 pounds and walk with it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How tall were you?

Mr. Medley

5' 9". I have to tell you, I was in the paratroopers probably 30 minutes and we got down there to Georgia and it was pretty hot. We got to our barracks and I took off my shirt. We were laying there on our beds and they said, "You guys all go down to the supply office and get your uniforms." So down there we went. I got down there and they said, "Who told you to take off your shirt?" I said "It's hot. Nobody had to tell me to take off my shirt." "Drop down and give me 25." I had a heck of a time giving him 25 but I did it. I got back up and he said, "Did you cheat?" I said, "No sir." He said, "Drop down and give me 25 for not cheating." I dropped down and gave him 10 and got back up and he looked at me and said, "Did you cheat?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Good, now give me 25 for cheating now." (Laugh) You couldn't win. There was no win to it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, I know it. Did you have a lot of weapons training in your training there?

Mr. Medley

Well, no, nothing but they gave us a lot of training with an M - 1. The first thing they did when we hit combat, they took our M - 1's away from us and gave us Thompson submachine guns. As far as I was concerned, that Thompson was absolutely useless. It threw a lot of lead in the air but that's about all. You couldn't aim it and when you pulled the trigger, we've seen shows of Audie Murphy shooting them with one hand. No. You can't do that or that son of a gun would shoot right square up in the air if you did that. You used your left hand to hold that son of a gun down.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go through the infiltration course where they shot live ammunition over you?

Mr. Medley

Oh yes. Everybody did that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that in Camp Wolters or at Fort Benning?

Mr. Medley

That was at Fort Benning. We even went on maneuvers at Fort Benning while waiting.

They were waiting for us to go overseas. You didn't lay around. You kept in training.

That's what we went through, we went through maneuvers. There again, I was the only

guy that; we went up to Hell's Bottom, I think it was and I was the only guy that took his

footlocker with him. Did you ever try to carry a footlocker three miles?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, I did not.

Mr. Medley

It's a job, let me tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer

I can imagine.

Mr. Medley

That's what got me in a lot of trouble and this that and the other. I was never a guy to

keep my mouth shut. When we fell out for this maneuvers, the old Captain said, "Do you

have everything you need?" Like a darn fool I said, "Everything but my footlocker." So I

got to carry my footlocker along.

Mr. Misenhimer

It doesn't pay to smart off, does it?

Mr. Medley

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time there?

Mr. Medley

I learned a whole lot. I was spoiled just a little bit when I went into the service. I had one brother 20 years older than I was and one 18. They spoiled me just a little bit. I wouldn't admit it back then, but since I've gotten older, I know I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

At Fort Benning, what did you live in there?

Mr. Medley

We lived in double barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Medley

I always had pretty decent food. It wasn't cooked like mom cooked it but I couldn't complain. The only time that I really growled at the food was when we got overseas because we lived mostly on D-Rations. It was a three part candy bar. You had a third of it for breakfast and a third of it for dinner and a third for supper. It didn't fill you up. You were supposed to drink a canteen full of water with it each time and sometimes you didn't get that much water. But when we were not in combat we ate good. It wasn't home cooked but it was nourishing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up and ask you. When you went in, you were 17. Did your parents have to sign for you to go in then?

Mr. Medley

Yes. Dad had signed for my brother just older than me. He went in 1939. I tried to get Dad to sign because I knew they needed me in there. I tried to get Dad to sign a year before he did. He said, "No. I signed one boy's death certificate. I'm not going to sign two." I worked on him and worked on him and it took me a year, but he finally said, "If you aren't going to give up, if you think you have to go that bad, I'll sign for you." He and Mom both signed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time in training. Did you go on maneuvers?

Mr. Medley

Yes, we went on maneuvers and had quite a time. I think the funniest thing, when I worked at Newton Country Stone Quarry the summer before I went in, at that time they were doing the crushing on the hill. They would go down with a drill 50 feet and then they would blow that and then they would load that into cars and take that up on the hill and crush it. Anything that was too big to go in these little cars, they would lay off to the side and you would take an air hammer and drilled down about halfway and put half a stick of dynamite in there. After you got 30 or 40 of them, they would back the steam shovel out of the way and everybody would get a shovel of coals and light this. We called that pop shooting. We got pretty good at as far as that was concerned and I learned a lot

about dynamite. So when we were on maneuvers they were giving us instructions on dynamite. All fuse burns a foot a minute, or it did back then and I suppose it still does. I haven't set off any dynamite for years. He was telling us all about this that and the other. He had some fuses there that were measured a foot. He would light that and talk and he kept it up and kept it up and it kind of got under my hide. So I slipped over and got one and looked at my watch and lit the fuse and sat there and said, "What do you think that I ought to do with this?" He was a Staff Sergeant. Let me tell you, he got all undone. At 45 seconds I just threw it off to the side and the fuse burned down to the cap and the cap was about like a 12 gauge shot gun. He looked at me and said, "When did you know how to let go of that?" I said, "You forgot to tell us that all fuse burns at a foot a minute." He said, "How did you know that?" I said, "I worked all last summer handling dynamite." He said, "What do you know about dynamite?" I said, "The first thing I can tell you is that the dynamite that we are using here to day is 40% and I used 60%." Immediately I got to be a demolition expert. (Laugh) That got me into trouble years later. I blew the bridge at Athens, Germany. We studied that and you couldn't jump with enough dynamite to blow that son of a gun. That was the main line, that bridge was the main supply line and we had to blow it. We had to get rid of it to get rid of their supplies. The Colonel at that time that was over me said, "If you can't do it with dynamite, what are you going to do it with?" I said, "There's only thing that I know that is powerful enough and that is nitroglycerin." He said, "How are we going to get nitroglycerin down to you?" I said, "I'll jump with it." He said, "You're crazy." I said, "I may be crazy, but that's the only way we're ever going to do it." So I and another fellow wrapped 5 gallons of nitroglycerin with rubberized tape and I taped it to my right leg and I jumped in the river

and we floated down and I blew that bridge. That was the first Bronze Star that I got. I don't know, I was crazy I guess but I knew some parts that other guys didn't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How had you learned about nitroglycerin?

Mr. Medley

We had quite a schooling there at the Stone Quarry about nitroglycerin and dynamite, which were the only things we had. Now back about 15 years ago, I went to school for C4 and its got anything beat I've ever seen in my life.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had some plastic explosives during World War II I think, but they were not quite as good as C4.

Mr. Medley

The only thing I ever messed with was nitroglycerin and we had what we called GI soap. That's what they used up there in the Bulge, that and primer cord.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about primer cord. Exactly what is primer cord?

Mr. Medley

Primer cord is just about as big as lead pencil. It was red. You could stretch out 40 miles of it and light one end and the other end would go off. The whole thing would burn. They told me, they told all of us, that the guys there in the Bulge that stopped it, they took a pound of soap, which was nitroglycerin, and put it on a tree and would go around it then with primer cord. They did 40 miles of that. The guy lit it and for that 40 miles it blew the trees right over on the road and they started down through there with tanks. That's

what stopped the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the primer cord, it will explode, is that right?

Mr. Medley

Yes, it did explode. You didn't need a fuse on your TNT. It was powerful enough that it would sent the TNT off.

Mr. Misenhimer

Alright, lets go back to your training. Where did you go for your maneuvers?

Mr. Medley

It was there at Fort Benning. It was Hell's Bottom or something is where we went. I can't remember exactly but we were there for three weeks. We did about everything that we ever did in combat as far as that is concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that there were a lot of maneuvers in Tennessee but those were probably the regular Army outfits.

Mr. Medley

Yes. What we got was right there at Fort Benning. Like I say, rather than sit around doing nothing, they sent us on maneuvers to keep us in training, ready to go overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in the 101st at that point?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We come right out of training into the 101st.

Mr. Misenhimer

What company were you in?

Mr. Medley

541st Jump Battalion. I wound up in Headquarters. At that time, he was a chicken (*bird*) Colonel, Van Luten, and he finally got to be the commander of the 101st and I was his personal scout. We got along real good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you said the 541st Battalion?

Mr. Medley

Yes, Jump Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you part of one of the regiments?

Mr. Medley

No. I was in Headquarters.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were assigned to that when you were there at Fort Benning?

Mr. Medley

Yes. Van Luten and I got along real good. I was crazy and he liked it. (Laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Medley

No, that pretty well takes care of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave to go overseas?

Mr. Medley

Oh gosh, it was in the fall of 1943. They sent us to Camp Shanks, New York. We got there, I can't tell you what day anymore but it was the USS *Brooks*. They took us to North Ireland on a ship. They jumped us from North Ireland into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip over?

Mr. Medley

It took us 15 days because we didn't have any escorts. We would change direction all the time. The 101st went over on that one ship. I found out real early in life that you get along better if you have something to do. So me and another kid volunteered and they gave us kind of a sharp hammer and we punched holes in the bottom of the cans and threw them over. That way, they said that they would sink fast enough that the sonar on U-Boats couldn't pick them up. So we did that for 8 hours every day and we didn't have to stay down in the hold like a lot of the other boys did. There were four decks as I remember on the USS *Brooks*. Some of the boys never saw daylight for, I think if I remember right, it took us 10 or 11 days.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much seasickness on the way over?

Mr. Medley

I think every one of us got sick. I did. Being an old farm boy, I never realized what the ocean looked like. Of course we were out on the fantail throwing those cans over and you

would look up and you would be up in the air about 40 or 50 feet and then the next time you looked there would be water up over you. You would be down by the water and the water would be 40 or 50 feet up above you. It was quite an experience for a farm boy, let me tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer

That North Atlantic can be pretty rough that time of year.

Mr. Medley

It was. It was rough. That was the first time that I had ever seen an iceberg. I had heard talk about icebergs and we went to Iceland and went up that way. That was interesting. I got home and Dad said, "Son, did you get homesick?" I said, "Yes, Dad, I got homesick." He said, "When did you get homesick?" I said, " When I saw that woman standing in the water and they sent us overseas." He said, "Did you get scared?" I said, "Yes. Dad, I got scared too." He said, "When did you get scared?" I said, " The same time I got homesick." He said, "When did you get over it?" I said, "When they got me back and I saw that lady standing in the water."

Mr. Misenhimer

You're talking about the Statue of Liberty?

Mr. Medley

Yes. I heard a lot of guys say that they never got scared. I was scared every day.

Mr. Misenhimer

On these cans that you all were throwing over, what size cans were these?

Mr. Medley

They were just soup cans and bean cans. We ate a lot of beans on the ship. They were

bean cans and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

A couple of gallons or one gallons, something like that?

Mr. Medley

Yes, about gallon cans.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said the whole 101st was on that ship?

Mr. Medley

As I remember, there were 12,000 of us. There were four decks and it was all 101st.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went to Northern Ireland?

Mr. Medley

Yes we went to North Ireland. I've been trying to think of the name and I can't tell you. I do remember that we stayed there two or three weeks. Of course, my mother taught all of us kids to dance before we went to school. I can schottische and the whole lot. I've danced all my life. We got over there and those Irish girls got to dancing with us but they danced a whole lot different that we did but we had a lot of fun anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there in Ireland?

Mr. Medley

It was about two or three weeks that we stayed there and then they flew us into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go into combat?

Mr. Medley

In North Africa in the desert at night.

Mr. Misenhimer

It wasn't Normandy?

Mr. Medley

No. We went to Normandy. I jumped into Normandy the 9th of June.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you went into North Africa before that?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We had been over there quite a while before we jumped into Normandy. I jumped there the 9th of June in 1944. My wife, she is an old farm girl and she had been out of Indiana one time when we got married in 1947. In the 60 years we had been married we have gone to every state in the Union. She always wanted to go to Europe and go up like I went and we just didn't do it. She got bit by a cat in December of 2006 and lived 48 hours. We were leaving the cemetery and my daughter said, "You didn't get to take Mother to Europe, did you?" I said, "No. I should have." She said, "Will you take me?" So last summer, she and I went. We went up through there. I stood within 10 feet of where I hit the ground at Utah Beach at Normandy. That's the only time that it pretty near got to me. The rest of the trip was really good. We went to Berchtesgaden and we went to two or three castles. We just had a real good time, that's all there was to it. I would advocate for every guy that went through what I went through, to do the same thing. I don't know. When I came home, a lot of the impressions that I had as a kid, I didn't have anymore. A lot of the hate that I had was gone. The German people, the

ordinary German people today are just as nice of people as you can get. The only ones that were really mean were the German SS Troops. It made quite an impression on a kid.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to England, where did you go to in England?

Mr. Medley

We went to London and went to Piccadilly Circus. I went to the Abbey. I didn't find it, but when my wife, she went to England with another lady on just a trip, she said that she knew that I was a blue blood because there in the Abbey she found a bust of a Sir Robert Medley. (Laugh) So she knew that I was a blue blood. I said, "I've know that all my life that I was a lot better than the ordinary guy." (Laugh) Immediately she said that I was full of bull.

Mr. Misenhimer

(Laugh) These wives have a way of cutting us down to size, don't they?

Mr. Medley

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in England, where were you stationed?

Mr. Medley

I can't tell you the name of it. It would be straight west of London. That's where we jumped out of. Then the next place we jumped out of was in southern France. We jumped quite a while out of Nancy, France. Our last jump we made, at the end of the war, we jumped into Badhall, Austria. That was when the war was over. We knew the war had been over 3 or 4 days at that time. The Germans had quit fighting. They went to running.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many total jumps did you make?

Mr. Medley

27.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean into combat.

Mr. Medley

All but 6.

Mr. Misenhimer

21 combat jumps?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Wow.

Mr. Medley

I got six Purple Hearts. *(Tape side ended)*

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's back up a little bit. You made 21 combat jumps and you got six Purple Hearts?

Mr. Medley

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were saying that the last one made you sick. How was that?

Mr. Medley

They threw shrapnel at us. I got the backs of my legs torn clear off. They were going to cut my legs off and I threw a fit. Finally a Major came in and they spliced muscles and it was German muscles that I've got on the backs of my legs. They wouldn't let me walk. They thought it was a failure and they were going to give me a medical discharge and I threw a fit over that. I got a white discharge but as I was laying there at the 98th General Hospital in Paris, France. They came through one morning and we were all in just like a barracks and the clerk at the west end of the room, there were four fellows in there with gonorrhea and they just handed out Purple Hearts. When they did that, it just made me sick to my stomach. I lost all respect for Purple Hearts after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

My goodness yes. That's not right.

Mr. Medley

No. But after it was all said and done, we had two boys of our own and both of them went into the service. Both of those boys said it is still the same way. They just come through the hospitals and hand out the Purple Hearts. Our youngest boy didn't go overseas. Our oldest one spent four years in Cambodia. He was on an atomic bomb, he put in the firing mechanisms, the firing device. I said, "How many mistakes did you make son?" He said, "I didn't make mistakes Dad, I'm still here." He put in four years in the Air Force. The youngest boy put in two years. He went to college for computers so they sent him off to Kansas and they spent two years out there just as a computer operator.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back to the time you were in England. Was it before Christmas or after Christmas? Do you remember where you spent Christmas of 1943?

Mr. Medley

We spent that in England I think, if I remember right. Holidays didn't mean much to us. You didn't do any celebrating, we didn't. It was just another day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Some people remember that to give them an idea of where they were and when.

Mr. Medley

I don't know. I've noticed the last year to year and a half, my old brain doesn't work like it used to. I just don't remember like I used to remember. My wife and I talked about it and she said that is part of God's way letting you get along. Which is right. My granddad was a Baptist preacher down in Tennessee. That's where my dad grew up. I tried my hand at that. I'm a Methodist Lay Minister and I have been since 1954. I preached in a Church at Clark's Hill for 2 ½ years. I will never forget, there is always a man bigger than me, sitting up there and watching me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Medley

I don't know. People today have changed. I don't know, maybe for the better, I don't know. Our preacher preached five Sundays in a row and it was all about money. I finally told him, "If you can't find something in that book to preach about, other than money, I won't be back." He said, "Oh, you'll be back." So for a couple of Sundays I didn't come

back and he finally came to see me. I went back and now the last two Sunday's, you know there is a lot in that Bible that doesn't even mention money.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right.

Mr. Medley

My wife and I have tithed all our lives. My dad and mom did. That was one of the first things we learned. I can't tell you chapter and verse right now, but there is a chapter and a verse that tells you about tithing. I have never missed what I give the church. I've heard them argue, is that gross or is that after taxes? Well it don't say nothing in the Bible, so when I get my check, it says there what the gross is and the church gets 10%.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right. Okay, now to go back to the other. What was your first combat jump?

Mr. Medley

Our first jump was into southern France.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date was that?

Mr. Medley

It was in the fall but I don't know the date. We jumped just outside of a little town. I can't tell you the name of that town. It started with a V if I remember right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this before you jumped into Normandy?

Mr. Medley

Yes. I made four jumps before I jumped into Normandy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were the other three?

Mr. Medley

One jump, we jumped into Luxembourg and walked clear across Luxembourg in one day. We never ran into any soldiers of any kind. Then we bivouacked and they came and got us in a 2 ½ ton trucks and took us back somewhere around La Havre, France is where they took us back. Then they took us back to England on a boat. Then the next jump was into Normandy, the 9th day of June.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you jumped behind Utah Beach?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

I thought most of the 101st jumped on the night of June 5th.

Mr. Medley

We didn't. There was a bunch that jumped ahead of us, I do remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer

June 6th was the actual D Day.

Mr. Medley

Yes. I do remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer

But most of the Airborne jumped in the night before.

Mr. Medley

Yes, there were a bunch of them. We didn't jump until the 9th, from Headquarters. We had a place to land, they thought. But, you could see Germans on one side and water on the other side. We did have a dry place at that. It was rough.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened when you landed there?

Mr. Medley

We got into heavy firing. The fact of the matter is, they estimated that 96% of the boys didn't hit the ground alive. I do remember it was one heck of a surprise, but the surprise was on us. I never saw so many Germans in my life. I remember when Dad asked me if I got scared. You had better believe that I was scared. It finally dawned on me that I was way too young to get killed.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you jumped in there, where did you go from there?

Mr. Medley

Where I jumped into, we jumped into northern France 3 or 4 times. As paratroopers we weren't there to fight any long distance. They jumped us into hold a hill. They jumped us in one time to blow that bridge. A lot of times they would pull you right back out and you would go back. We jumped out of Nancy, France for close to a year. We did mostly just aggravation. By then, as Van Luten's personal scout, I had a little extra stuff to do here and yonder. He did quite well. He gave me a Second Lieutenant field commission. When the war was over we were in Badhall, Austria and they gave you all of your medals and this that and the other. I kind of looked like a General. I did ride General Patton's tank

for 6 weeks. I rode his personal tank. He came in and asked Van Luten if he had some boys that would ride those tanks. Those tanks were just metal coffins is all they were. We need somebody to ride those tanks and not jump off when it gets hot. Van Luten said, "What do you think Bob?" I said, "We can do it." Of course, riding a tank was a lot better than walking. When you hit the ground, what they needed, that's what you were. 9 times out of 10, it was Infantry. Those were the boys that did the fighting. Riding a tank was a lot better than walking. I took my crew and we went up there and the next morning we fell out. He said, "Boys, that direction there is the way we are going. Those tanks run 27 miles an hour and that's the speed we are going to go. When you hear me holler, 'turn them over', you had better be on a tank. I don't want you getting off when it gets hot." There again, I never was a fellow to keep my mouth shut and I said, "General, we will not get off until you button up. You button up and we're getting off." He said, "I want that man on my tank." That old man never buttoned up. I saw those 31 calibers. He would stand from his waist up out of that tank. He would kick that driver on the shoulder to go right or left. I saw those 31 caliber bullets hit that hatch behind him and zing off they would go. He ducked but he never buttoned up. That old man, he was tough, but he lived it. He was one heck of a soldier, let me tell you. He was quite a man. I adored him from the time I saw him until I quit working with him. There was no tomfoolery about him, he was serious all the time. As far as I was concerned, he was the greatest man over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think he was a very good General.

Mr. Medley

He reminded me of my dad. When you worked with Dad, us boys always figured there were three ways of doing everything. The right way, the wrong way and Dad's way. When you worked for Dad you did it his way. George Patton was the same way. There was a right way and a wrong way and George Patton's way. When you associated with him, you did it his way. He didn't leave anything to chance. This was understood. I admired him.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned earlier about liberating some of the camps the Germans had, which one was that?

Mr. Medley

We turned the north side of Dachau loose. The Jews. Then we saw, I don't know how many bodies. They had trenches a quarter of a mile long full of bodies with lime spread over them. Some of those fellows were still alive. How they were alive, I don't know. They were just skin stretched over bones. Growing up like I grew up, I couldn't understand any human being treating another human being that way. It was unbelievable.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said that you could have put your arm around 50 of them, something like that?

Mr. Medley

Yes. As far as weight was concerned you could have picked up 50 of them if you could have got your arms around them. It was a terrible thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the German guards still there when you go there?

Mr. Medley

No, they were gone. The only thing we had to shoot at were the half-starved St. Bernard dogs. We killed a bunch of them. There again, I thought St. Bernard dogs were friendly dogs, but I guess when they get hungry enough, they get mean too.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you still have your Thompson submachine gun at that point?

Mr. Medley

Yes you get them every once in a while, especially when you got back to your mess tent. But most of us, if we could find an M - 1 and M - 1 shells, I liked that M - 1. The Thompson would throw a lot of lead but you couldn't aim it, all you could do was throw lead in the air. The M - 1, I got pretty decent with the M - 1. I could drive nails with it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you jumped, what weapon did you jump with? The M - 1?

Mr. Medley

No, we jumped with the Thompson. They were buckled to your right leg.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened?

Mr. Medley

I've got a big scar on the back of my leg where I hit the ground and lost everything in a foxhole. There was a German Major in a foxhole and I still had my jump knife and he didn't see it. We had a little argument. Finally when we got done arguing, he gave me his Luger and his SS and his swastika. I brought it home. In 1969 I traded trucks with a fellow here in Lafayette. I bought a new 1969 Dodge pickup. I traded a 1965 off and

there was \$950 difference. He came out on a Saturday so we could do the paperwork. He was a young fellow. He laid his .32 on the table and said, "Now, we're going to do this right." I said, "Okay, just a minute." I went in and got my Luger. I had had bird's-eye maple handgrips made and put the swastika and the SS in the handgrips. It was quite a good looking gun and I said, "Now fellow, if you want to talk about doing this right, we're going to do it right." He looked at that and wanted to know where I got it, and I told him where I got it. He said, "What will you take for it?" I said, "No. I just want to keep it." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you this paperwork with 'paid' marked on it." I said, "No, I don't think so." About that time one of the boys came through and said, "Dad, are we going to go to town to get that rototiller." I said, "Well, probably." He said, "You're going to buy a rototiller?" I said, "Yes." I don't remember what it was that I told him and he said, "We'll throw that in too." When we got done, he finally gave me \$2,000 for that Luger. Back then, trying to raise those kids and farm and this, that and the other, the Luger went down the road. I've still got a scar on the back of one leg and it knocked me down. That 9mm was quite a weapon.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that Major shot you with it?

Mr. Medley

Yes but he didn't know that I had that jump knife.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you got six Purple Hearts. What were the other five?

Mr. Medley

The first one, I and another kid was in a Tavern. That French beer was pretty good. We

were kind of helping ourselves. We walked out and a sniper got me in the arm. I didn't even know it. We had our jump jackets on. The kid that was with me said, "What did you do to your hand?" I looked and there that bullet was still stuck in there. It was that near spent. You talk about scared. A kid like me, when you get shot, you die. I just knew I was going to die. The kid with me said, "Let's get that out of there." He pulled it out and wrapped it up and tied it real tight and we went back to the CQ and he sent us to the hospital. It broke one bone and I've still got a crooked hand over it but I never even stayed in the hospital. That was another instance that you didn't even know what was going to happen.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was another one then?

Mr. Medley

A lot of them, we just got shrapnel. Finally when I came home, I was still having problems. My wife knew an old doctor here in Lafayette and she said, "Bob, he's an old farm doctor. He's more of a veterinarian than he is a doctor, but let's see if he can do something." So I was working for Co-op Elevators scooping corn and we went to him and told him what I needed. I said, "I've got pieces of shrapnel working out." They were just like a boil but there was no head to them. They would just break open and run. He said, "You had better take two weeks off your job because you aren't going to work if I give you these pills." I said, "What kind of pills are they?" He said, "They are pills that will dissolve that metal." So I took them. If I remember right, I had to take six of them. One a day for six days and then wait. Then in about two weeks I had 19 places on the backs of my legs that had those sores on them. I didn't go to work for about two weeks

but after that I didn't have anymore shrapnel working out. Like Jean said, he was a pretty good veterinarian but he took care of it anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you involved in the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Medley

That's where they caught me and sent me to Mons, Belgium for 92 days.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that.

Mr. Medley

They jumped us in to hold Hill 103. That's what we were supposed to do. There was one planeload of 24 of us that jumped. The 6th SS Nord, the Mountain Troops, was there. I mean they were there in force. They walked right over the top of us. They got all of us but five. They killed them all. None of us had any ammunition left or anything to fight with. I was the ranking non-com, so I asked the boys, "What do we do, take a chance? Or should we give up and go to prison?" We knew what was going to happen if we didn't so we gave up. They marched us, as near as we could figure, about 80 miles to Mons, Belgium. We got up there and we got to cutting wood. I put my wristwatch in one boot and my cigarette lighter in the other boot. What you jumped with, that's what you had. If you had a poncho, good, but if you didn't you went anyway. They never found my watch or my lighter. They would take us out at 6:00 in the morning and bring us back at 4:00 at night. They would take 20 of us out with 4 guards. We stayed in what we called 'sheep sheds'. They were just little sheds that four guys could lay in. We never heard anymore of the other guy. We were separated there. That's where you stayed. If somebody fouled

up they would kill the next four guys and just go right down the line that way. I told them, "Boys, when it comes our time to get shot, it's going to be for something we did, not for something somebody else did." The next ones that got killed were going to be us. We were cutting wood right along the Inns River and this was in April. The Inns River came right out of the mountains and it was really flowing but there were big chunks of ice, probably 10' square or bigger. You didn't think how cold it was. We got all ready and we knew they were going to holler at us because I could tell by my watch what time. We pulled just as close to the river as we could and we were cutting down two trees and they hollered. I got to where I could talk pretty good German. I told them we were cutting down two trees and we would be there just as soon as we knocked them down. When we did that, the three boys jumped in the river. The second time they hollered I said, "I'm coming." I jumped in the river too. The first time wasn't bad because you didn't know how cold it was. That second time you got to where your arms and legs wouldn't work and you would get out and run to warm up, but you could make twice the time in that river. The second time you had to grit your teeth to get in there. But we did that all night and we got away. It took us about four days and we knew about where the Americans were. You could hear them sleeping. I and another kid, the Germans had generating flashlights. He had a flashlight and I had a bayonet. I said, "The next guy we find sleeping, we'll look. If he's a German we'll get him and if it's an American, we'll be alright." We heard an old boy snoring and we slipped up there. Louie punched the flashlight and I tell you, that kid came right up out of there. We didn't have any idea what we looked like but we looked like Germans. He was just scared to death. We finally got him quieted down. We told him to get hold of CQ or the Sergeant of the Guard or

Officer of the Day or anybody. He finally got hold of a Lieutenant and that Lieutenant was a stupid as we were. He thought we were Germans and he was going to put us a German prison camp. I finally told him, "Get hold of Van Luten. I am his personal scout." It took us the rest of the night to try and talk him into it. Finally, to get us to shut up, he finally called Van Luten. Van Luten wanted to talk to me and he said, "Where have you been?" I told him and he said, "You son of a gun. Put that Lieutenant on, I want him to get you guys back here." And that's how we got back.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day were you captured?

Mr. Medley

It was in December. There again, I was trying to think, but I don't know if it was before Christmas or after Christmas. It was right around Christmas time. Then we got back to our own quarters about the first week in April.

Mr. Misenhimer

So about three months.

Mr. Medley

They pulled 100 pounds off of me in that length of time. When I jumped in there I weighed 200 pounds and when I got back to our boys, I weighed 102 pounds. But the Germans up there weren't eating a whole lot better than we were as far as that was concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened?

Mr. Medley

I guess, about the next thing that happened was the end of the war. I had enough points to come home. Van Luten told me, "Bob, do you want to go home?" I had over 100 points. He said, "A 19 year old Second Lieutenant with the experience that you've got, they're still fighting in the islands. They'll let you go home for 30 days and then you'll be in the islands. They will kill you in the islands." He said, "If you will sign up for a year of Occupation, I'll have you out of here in 9 months." Well, he had never lied to me before and he didn't lie to me that time. In 9 months, I got discharged the 1st day of May, 1946. I had a lot of fun being in Occupation. There weren't too many jobs for a Second Lieutenant in Occupation. We did have one experience that kind of tickled me. We were messing around there day and he said, "Bob, I've got a job for you. You don't have to take it if you don't want to." He said, "But I think you will enjoy it." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Well, there is a little town up there on the Danube by the name of Manchin, Germany. The Hitler Youth have taken it over. They need it cleaned out. Do you want it?" I said, "You had better believe it." He said, "Are you going to take the whole squad?" I said, "Yes." So we did and we were up there a month. We got it cleaned out. I had a lot of fun and this that and the other. So when Tina and I went back last year, Germany and France have changed just about as much as Indiana has. There at Badhall, Austria we bivouacked in an apple orchard and I couldn't even find the apple orchard that we were in. We were in Augsburg, we were at Ingolstadt and I couldn't find anything. We went up the autobahn and there was a sign that said Manchin. She said, "Dad, do you want to stop at Manchin?" I said, "We're this close, let's stop." She said, "Have you got any idea of where to go?" I said, "If I remember right, we came off the

autobahn, they took us up there on a 2 ½ ton truck. We went down a slight grade and went across the Danube and went up a hill and where we bivouacked was a cement building off to the right.” We went across the Danube and up there and there sat that building. Tina got a lot of pictures of it. That’s where we bivouacked. Now they have a restaurant and a filling station built out next to the road. So we stopped there and there was a little girl in there, 18 or 19 years old, she couldn’t remember anything about the war at all other than what people had told her. But she said, “See that old man out there drinking coffee?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Go talk to him. He grew up around here.” So I went out and introduced myself and told him what we were looking for.” He looked at me and looked at me and said, “Turn around real slow.” And I did. He said, “I remember you.” I said, “No, I don’t think so.” He said, “Yes sir. You were the officer. You were mean.” I said, “No. We did what we had to do.” He said, “I’ll go along with that now, but I was 11 years old when you guys were in there. My mom made us go to bed every night when it started getting dark. She said that you Americans would kill us.” He said, “After I got some age on me, I knew you wouldn’t have but you sure scared the life out of us while you were doing it.” That really tickled me to think that you could walk in and find somebody that you had seen 65 years ago. I introduced him to my daughter. He was just tickled to death that we would come back.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your commission as a Second Lieutenant?

Mr. Medley

I did that, it was pretty near the last of the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

After you escaped from the Germans, right?

Mr. Medley

Yes. He learned something about me. All he had to do was talk money and both of my ears would prick up and my eyes would come open. So anytime they wanted something special he would say, if I was a Corporal he would say, "How would you like to be a Buck Sergeant?" or "How would you like to be a Staff Sergeant?" That was always more money so he hit my G string.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was that river that you jumped in when you were so cold there?

Mr. Medley

The Inns River. It came right off the mountain.

Mr. Misenhimer

These Hitler Youth that you cleaned out. What do you mean by cleaning out? What did you have to do?

Mr. Medley

There was only one thing to do. We took our Thompsons with us. The old man wanted to know if I wanted to go to the cemetery. I told him that I didn't need to go to the cemetery. Hitler had this deal, he would take the boys and we would see a lot of the graveyards. The girls would be 4 or 5 days old and the boys, when they got to be 3 or 4 years old, he would put them in these camps and by the time they got to be teenagers, they were killers. You couldn't talk to them, you couldn't do anything. There was only one way to eliminate them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this before or after the war was over?

Mr. Medley

This was after the war was over. I had some pretty interesting things. Like I say, there weren't too many jobs for a Second Lieutenant. The fact of the matter is, before I came home, the last three months I went around and gave speeches on venereal disease. That wasn't too interesting. I got to where I could talk pretty good German and they had a lot of SS'ers all over Germany in prison camps. There were four of us boys that we could translate English to German. They would give you these guys records. Their name would be at the top and we would go to them and say, "Boys we've got to ask you these questions. Did you do this? Did you do that?" Of course it was all written in English and we would have to ask them in German. If they said 'yes' to everything, they signed the back of the receipt and the next morning there would be a firing squad. But if they said 'no' to one thing they got held for a trail. Anything that was on that piece of paper was enough to kill those son of a guns over there. So the first two camps that we did, we did it like we were supposed to. Then us boys got smart and we would take them all in a room and told them that we were going to be their lawyers. "We were going to start a Third Reich and you boys sign these papers and that gives us authority to be your lawyers. We're going to show these Americans a thing or two." Once in a great while you get a son of a gun that was a smart aleck and he could read English. I would take him in another room and interrogate him. That way we could go through one of those camps in 5 or 6 days and then we could spend the rest of the month down in Switzerland. We did such a great job that the old boy that was the head of it, came to us and asked us if we

would like to go to the Nuremberg trials. That was really something. They said that they would give us a week up there. So we went up to Nuremberg to the trials. It was in a big theater, sloping down. About the third day we were there, I was sitting next to the aisle along the north side and here came this old German. He was in full uniform. It was Hitler's second in command is who it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Göering. The head of the Luftwaffe?

Mr. Medley

Yes. When he got there to the side of me he stopped and looked at me like I was dirt. He reached into his pocket and got a cigarette case and a lighter. He got a cigarette out and lit it. When I saw that, he had an SS ring on his hand that took up the whole first joint. You've seen those SS rings haven't you?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Medley

This one here took up the whole first joint. I thought, "That son of a gun." And I got to looking at the cigarette case and he had put enough cyanide in that cigarette case to kill half the Americans there. I grabbed the cigarette case and while I did that I grabbed the ring off of his finger. I told him to shut up or I would just stab him. He was still arguing about it. I brought those home. The mouth of the skull was a diamond and the eyes were rubies. The diamond was 5/8ths of a carat. My wife wore that on her engagement ring for 60 years and my daughter has it now. The cigarette case, I've still got it. With 17 great grandkids, I don't know who to give it to.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do with the cyanide that was in it?

Mr. Medley

There wasn't any cyanide in it.

Mr. Misenhimer

I thought you said there was cyanide in it.

Mr. Medley

No, I said, "If the cigarette case would have held enough" but there wasn't any in it.

When I got home, I had a jeweler that I knew real well and he took the diamond out and put it in the engagement ring. My oldest sister had a ruby and my mom had a ruby ring.

So my daughter still has the diamond in the ring. I said, "Sister, you ought to wear that."

She said, "No Dad. That's put up. That's a keepsake from Mother."

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We were overseas when he died.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had probably just gotten away from the Germans.

Mr. Medley

Yes. We wondered what would happen. There again, my dad was a staunch Republican.

The only Democrat that he ever voted for was Roosevelt. He didn't vote for him the first time, but after that, he said, "He is a poor man's President" so he voted for him.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction that people had when they found out that Roosevelt died?

Mr. Medley

All of the boys in our outfit felt the same way. We had lost a great man. I can't say anything against Truman as far as that is concerned. I think Truman did what had to be done. I'm glad that I didn't have to fight the Japanese. I've talked to a lot of boys that were over there and it was a different deal altogether.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May 8th, when Germany surrendered, did you all have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We were over there, just outside of Badhall, Austria in the apple orchard. There was a chicken laying place next to us. We estimated that he had about 8,000 to 9,000 laying hens. We were three weeks and he didn't have any hens left. We ate every one of them and we celebrated. *(Tape side ended)*

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened while you were over there?

Mr. Medley

I don't know. We had a lot of fun, especially after the war was over. The German girls all liked us boys. Like I say, I always liked to dance and we went to a lot of dances in the 9 months I was there after the war was over. I had a cousin that married one of the French girls and brought her home and mom wanted to know why I didn't. I said, "Mom, I didn't see anybody that I wanted to marry." When I got home, all my brothers and sisters were married. Mom was just a little bit disappointed with her boy. When I got home, I could

drink a fifth of whiskey a day and not get drunk. We didn't do that. If you are Baptist, you know we don't do that.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's right.

Mr. Medley

My mom was pretty downhearted about it. I never will forget. I told her that when I was ready to get married that I would get married. She said, "You've got to quit that drinking Bob." I said, "I'll quit that drinking when I get married." I met this little gal, a little farm gal, and I went with her a month and 21 days and I knew that she was the gal that I wanted to live with. We got married. We got married on a Friday night and Dad always poured out a good double shot for breakfast. That was all he ever drank. So I poured Dad's out and I poured mine out. Mom said, "I thought you were going to quit when you got married." I said, "I'm not married yet Mom." She said, "Bob, you can't quit drinking." I said, "Mom, I can do anything I want to do." "No, you can't quit drinking." I said, "Dad, do you want this whiskey?" He said, "No, I drank mine." I poured it back into the bottle and I never drank anything for about 2 ½ to 3 years. I was about half way afraid to for fear that I would go back to drinking like I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you were the special scout for this Colonel. What did you do as his scout?

Mr. Medley

Anything that he needed, I would do, to the point that one time they needed. Well, we were going up through France and they needed a German prisoner for some information.

So I went out that night and I was gone about two hours and I got them a Captain and he and I went back. Any time they needed something like that, I would do it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What other medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Medley

I got the French Croix de Guerre. The Belgium, what did they call it? It was the ribbon that went around your shoulders. I got six Purple Hearts. I got a Good Conduct ribbon. The first Good Conduct ribbon that I got, they had me under armed guard because I had fraternized with the Germans. There was a girl standing there and we were marching along and she wanted to know if I wanted a drink of milk. I grew up on milk so I said, "Yes." She gave me a bottle of milk and I had one Sergeant that didn't think too much of me and he reported me. So they put me under guard for fraternizing with the Germans. And I had the European Theater of Operations Medal. A Silver Star with a cluster and a Bronze Star with a cluster. I guess that's about it. I kind of looked like George Patton when I had it all decked out.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you were scared. Was there any particular time that you felt more frightened than another?

Mr. Medley

Yes, when they took me prisoner, I figured I was dead. The first think we did was to take all of our insignias off and all our stripes and everything like that. They knew that as paratroopers we didn't take prisoners. We couldn't take prisoners. If you took a prisoner what were you going to do with them? You were 500 miles away from your CP

(command post). Being an old farm kid, I was scared most of the time, but I wasn't scared to the point where I couldn't function.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Medley

I think most of the boys, they were all about my age or a year or so older, we all felt about the same way. It was something that we knew we had to do. As far as the morale was concerned, if you had fun doing something, you did it. It was just something that had to be done, that's all there was to it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Medley

No, not that I remember?

Mr. Misenhimer

How about German artillery?

Mr. Medley

Yes sir. I've seen those Germans hit a man with one of those 88's going across a 40 acre field. Those boys were good. There again, they tried to tell you how much better you were than the Germans and that was just nothing but lying to you because most of the Germans were in their late 20's or early 30's and they had been taught to fight from the time they were 5 or 6 years old. You can't take a 16 or 17 or 18 year old boy and put him up against a grown man and come out ahead. The only thing we did, we had better equipment than they had until they came out with those damn buzz bombs. Let me tell

you, those buzz bombs, screaming meemies. That was just nothing but nerve racking. They would start about midnight and those son of a guns, I've seen them come within three feet of the ground and then turn around and go right straight up in the air again. Pretty soon they would explode and there was nothing but tin. That's all there was to it but they would scream just as loud and nobody was going to be able to sleep through that. That's what they were. They were to get your nerves.

Mr. Misenhimer

When Japan surrendered on August 15th, where were you then and how did you hear about that?

Mr. Medley

I guess at reveille. We had pulled back. We were in France after they pulled us out of Austria. I don't remember what the name of the town was but it came at reveille. The CQ came out and reported that Japan had surrendered. I don't know how the other boys felt, but it just felt like somebody had just taken a big load off of my shoulders.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Medley

No. I had more trouble changing my ways back to how Mom and Dad wanted me.

(Laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

You were an officer, did you stay in the Reserves?

Mr. Medley

I was in the Reserves for ten years.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was where, there at Lafayette?

Mr. Medley

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of outfit were you in the Reserves?

Mr. Medley

I never went to a meeting. They put me in Reserves. They didn't ask me. They just put me in for ten years. I never went to any of the meetings. I went to Purdue for four years, I took animal husbandry and farm accounting. Of course we farmed at the same time. I had both hands full. I got married in February, 1947. In December of 1947 we had our first boy. Since then, I've done about everything you can talk about.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you graduate from Purdue?

Mr. Medley

I got a certificate. If I went under the GI Bill, and they tried to get me to, I could have taken, out of 3, I could have taken English, History or Social Studies. I had to take 19 hours of two of them. I had plenty of time to do it if I would have done it. But, there again, the government paid me \$97.50 and furnished all my equipment to go to Purdue. That's the reason I went to Purdue. If they hadn't paid me, I wouldn't have went, I reckon. I've always had that deal and I've got a boy like me. He said, "Dad, I don't want a million dollars. I would just like to have a wallet that every time I take a dollar out of it, there would be another one I there." That's kind of the way we grew up. I had a lot of fun

growing up. I have worked as many as three jobs at one time. We farmed for 20 years. There again, I never bought one combine, I never bought one tractor, I always bought her one the same time as mine. In the morning when I fired mine up, she fired hers up. In 1969 we were farming 1,000 acres and milking 100 head of cows every morning. Neither one of the boys wanted to farm so we sold out. Mother and I bought a restaurant and we had a restaurant and a Pizza King for 10 years. I went to work at Eli Lilly's and worked there for 18 years. I was in politics for 20 years. I was Township Trustee Assessor and President of the Indiana Township Association. In 1954 I went to school to be a minister. I drove a school bus for 8 years. I sprayed crops with an airplane for 10 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

You're a pilot are you?

Mr. Medley

Not anymore. I can't see.

Mr. Misenhimer

But you were at that time?

Mr. Medley

Yes I was at that time. I had a lot of fun doing that. I put a plane into the Mississippi. I keep telling them that I've done everything but one thing and they want to know what that is and I say, "I've never been the mother of a large family." (Laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Medley

Oh yes. We have a reunion every year. I have one in Tennessee with my dad's folks.

Then we have the Medley reunion in Logansport every year, just our family reunion.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your Army outfit, the 541st?

Mr. Medley

There just weren't enough of the old bunch to talk about. I don't know. There are memories there that are best left as memories.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how many of the people that were in your outfit, didn't come back?

Mr. Medley

As far as I know, in our outfit, there were 7 of us that came back. I got acquainted, got connected with one. We spent a year in Albuquerque. Our oldest boy had asthma. One of my old buddies that came back lived in Albuquerque. So we got together in 1949 and we kept up with him for 4 or 5 years. Then he moved to Seattle and I haven't heard anything from him since. He was the only guy. He was my old buddy. We slept in the same foxhole for many a night.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about Battle Stars, how many Battle Stars did you get?

Mr. Medley

I don't know. I think I got one on the Silver Star and one on the Bronze Star. I don't remember anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you get the Silver Star for?

Mr. Medley

That was the time that I went and got the live German for a prisoner.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Medley

No, not really. I wouldn't take a million dollars for it but I wouldn't give two cents to do it again.

Mr. Misenhimer

So your outfit went through an awful lot of combat, right?

Mr. Medley

Yes. We did a lot of fighting and a lot of the cleaning up. I don't know. Like I say, there were a bunch of us boys that I was with, that we even thought alike. Whether that was just teenage boys or background lives, I don't know. A lot of the boys in my outfit were from North Carolina and South Carolina, Georgia and down through there. We just weren't too smart but we had a lot of fun.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well Bob, I want to thank you for taking time to do this today.

Mr. Medley

I've thought about it and thought about it and I suppose, in later years, it will make a lot more sense than it does now. I would like to leave something to this world. Really it wasn't the German people who did this. This was Hitler's bunch. I really realized this after my daughter and I went back over there. The regular German people are as nice of people as you can find anyplace. They are very nice. They will go out of their way to

help you. They are just good, ordinary people. I had a kind of empty feeling when I was over there that I shouldn't have had. I was viewing all of them like Hitler's bunch and that was wrong.

(End of Interview)

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