

# **THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Center for Pacific War Studies**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Franklin E. Dentz  
Sanibel, Florida  
March 25, 2009**

**C Company, 194<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment  
17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division  
Operation Varsity – Rhine Crossing**

My name is Richard Misenhimer. Today is March 25, 2009. I am interviewing Mr. Franklin E. Dentz by telephone. His address is 702 Donax Street, Sanibel, Florida 33957. The phone number is (239) 472-4666. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information of World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Frank, 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 need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum.

When I do these in person, I let a man read and sign it, but since this is by phone let me read this to you and see if it's okay with you.

*Agreement read.*

Mr. Dentz

This is strictly for the Pacific theater?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, we do everything in the Oral History Program.

Mr. Dentz

Okay. I was strictly in Europe.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I'd like to do now is get an alternative contact. We find out that several years down the road, we try to get back in contact with a veteran and he's moved or something. Do you have a son or daughter or someone who would know where you would be?

**Mr. Dentz**

**My daughter is Connie Osinski. Her address is 37 Jefferson Street, Somerville, New Jersey 08876.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What is her phone number?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**(908) 707-9615**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**What is your birth date?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**October 26, 1924**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Where were you born?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**Plainfield, New Jersey**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Did you have brothers and sisters?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**I have three brothers, one sister. Three brothers survived beyond childhood.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Were any of them in World War II?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**My older brother, Robert, was in the CBs in the Aleutian Islands during World War II.**

**My younger brother served in Europe during the Korean War.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Is you older brother still living?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**No. He died three or four years ago.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

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

**Mr. Dentz**

**We didn't know we were poor. We survived as a happy family. We had problems, but we weren't aware of it. We had hard times but we had chickens and fresh eggs and a garden so it wasn't that severe. Bad, but not that bad.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

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

**Mr. Dentz**

**Printer. He did color printing on different color machines on magazines and so forth.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Was he able to keep employed during the Depression?**

**Mr. Dentz**

**No. He was out of work off and on. My father was in one of Roosevelt's programs in WPA. My mother sold bread. My mother worked in banana factory processing bananas for a powdered banana drink. It was fine.**

**Mr. Misenhimer**

**Where did you go to high school?**

Mr. Dentz

Boundbrook High School, Boundbrook, New Jersey

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Dentz

1943

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Dentz

January, 1944

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do from the time you finished high school to the time you went into the service?

Mr. Dentz

I worked in a department store and, also, helped my uncle on the farm.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went into the service, which branch did you go into?

Mr. Dentz

I went into the Army. I went directly into infantry training at Camp Blanding in Florida, 17 weeks, and immediately shipped overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Dentz

I was drafted after trying to get into the U.S. Navy Air Corps, Air Program and also the Army Air Corps. I passed all the tests except for weight. I was drafted then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any choice of the branch to go into?

Mr. Dentz

No. You just went in line and I did request in the Army to try to take the test for Air Corps after I was in. When you went up in the line they said Navy and then Army, Army, Army, Navy. There was no real choice.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went through basic at Camp Blanding?

Mr. Dentz

Camp Blanding in central Florida, 17 weeks infantry training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that training.

Mr. Dentz

I was in communications. I was doing radio to be prepared for radioman for an infantry company. We got two weeks out of the 17 weeks of bugle training because the General had been a bugler when he started out before he made it to General and wanted to maintain that out of 50,000 troops he had one company that also took bugle training on a plastic bugle. So that was to tie into communications. We were trained in code and operating different types of radios for infantry.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have to learn the Morse Code?

Mr. Dentz

We had to learn the Morse Code and had to learn 32 bugle calls.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was all part of your seventeen (17) weeks?

Mr. Dentz

Yeah. I got actually fifteen (15) weeks of infantry training before I went into combat. I, also, was fortunate in receiving additional training in England. I got put in an Airborne Division.

Basically, you could get seventeen (17) weeks training and get into combat in Normandy and be dead within one day, after having fifteen (15) weeks of infantry training, which is what they were doing 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

During you basic training there, did you go to the rifle range?

Mr. Dentz

We did the complete infantry training. We did the rifle range with the M-1 rifle and, then just before we went into the trip overseas, they put us in camp for some training with anti-aircraft gun shooting at targets. One week. That was in Maryland at Fort Meade.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything particular from your basic training that you recall?

Mr. Dentz

No. It was the routine 25-mile march, team marches and various training for the infantry, basic drills.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the Infiltration Course, where you crawled under the live ammunition being shot over you?

Mr. Dentz

Yeah, we crawled under the barbed wire while actual machine gun bullets were flying over us. We had to keep our heads down. It was for real. You had to throw hand-grenades and do gas mask training and so forth. The full training, all totaled 15 weeks of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave go overseas?

Mr. Dentz

I left from Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts on the USS Wakefield and arrived in Europe on August 1, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land over there?

Mr. Dentz

Liverpool, England

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip over?

Mr. Dentz

We went single ship because we were faster than submarines, so we were not in a convoy. Uneventful, except that I laid for five days having an allergy to seasickness. We had two meals a day. We went downstairs and it was sort of a mess from people



that were also seasick. So I never went down again. I just laid on the bed for the rest of the way. Drank some water.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was the ship pretty crowded?

Mr. Dentz

Oh, yeah. There were, I would say, several thousand.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this a former luxury liner or something?

Mr. Dentz

I know we split up in trains, so there were over a thousand men on the ship. A month later the Airborne Division that I was assigned to also came over on that ship. So it was holding over a thousand.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me what happened when you landed there in England.

Mr. Dentz

I landed there in England and by a roll of the dice, we got off the ship and onto trains. Some of my friends went directly to southern southeast England and right over to Normandy behind the lines as replacement troops. Our train, with 600 of us, went to southwest England into a replacement camp and we sat there for a month, waiting to be taken over to Normandy. Before that could happen, I trained back in again and they put us in the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in the Glider Infantry – not as a volunteer. Paratroopers were volunteers in the division, we were non-volunteers that were put in the gliders.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of training did you get on that?

Mr. Dentz

Then we got some additional infantry training. Of course, I was doing radio communications for platoon radiomen, runners and airborne did a lot of conditioning runs up and over the mountains and all over the roads of England. Run, run, run, that's what the airborne did to really condition you.

We did night training and training with tanks running over us in fox holes to actual battle conditions. It was very intensive for several months. Then we all got flown over to the Battle of the Bulge in the middle of December.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your first ride in the glider?

Mr. Dentz

That was the first time I had ever been in the air and I wrote and told my mother, "Look, mom, no motor." The first time I had ever been up, we had to take glider flights in England for training and also to qualify for additional compensation as being in an airborne troop.

We had no parachutes. The only one that had a parachute was the Air Corps pilot. He had a parachute, but he was up in the front and the door was in the back. So he stayed with us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you can recall from that training there?

Mr. Dentz

We had a tragedy in December 12, 1944. We were at an airport, a training place, in the British gliders, Horsa gliders which carried the thirty infantry for a small tank and artillery piece. We were standing and loading on the British Horsa gliders and when one took

off it split in half and killed over 30 of our men. One of our platoons was wiped out just before the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of glider did you normally use?

Mr. Dentz

We were in a Horsa glider or the 4TA which the Ford Motor Company made in Louisville, Kentucky. They were fabric covered pipe structures with a wooden floor and bucket seats and they carried either about 14 men, a pilot and co-pilot, or 5 men and an artillery piece, or 4 or 5 men and a Jeep. I was always in with the 14 men and the pilot and co-pilot. That's what I trained in. We would land and have to disperse on the ground. They trained us going into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a chance to go into the towns while there in England?

Mr. Dentz

Yeah. We were allowed to go in mostly weekends if we weren't training and we were able to make contact with English families and go to church and whatever you wanted to do. One day or a weekend. So that was very pleasant, meeting English people.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the people friendly?

Mr. Dentz

Yeah, very friendly and also if you went to church, they would invite you into their homes – not just yourself, maybe half a dozen American soldiers, British soldiers, they were very friendly. Also, we got to London on a weekend and got to go all around England on a tour with the British Army and a gentleman, who was a Professor of

Architecture, in the English isles. I got to know landmarks in London: Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Hyde Park, National Museum. It was very interesting, in that respect.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much damage in London?

Mr. Dentz

Yeah, London was still getting hit by some V2 rockets from France that the Germans were shooting over. We heard some go over but I was never hit. I had never seen anything like that, but a lot of London was really damaged. It was very bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these the V1s or V2s?

Mr. Dentz

I guess we were getting hit by both. They were doing that all over England and also by air. When I was in London, nothing was hit that weekend I was there in '44.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where you were stationed, were you ever bombed by the Germans or attacked by the Germans?

Mr. Dentz

No, not in England. As I said, we only heard one of those V2s going over. We were 30 miles west of London. We didn't see any bombing. All we saw were hundreds of our planes coming from different fields getting in formation to go over into Germany to bomb them. We never saw any bombing during the last part of 1944. It was pretty well over in Europe with the Germans out there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the weather there in England?

Mr. Dentz

Miserable. It was cold and raw and just a lot of rain. I don't think we saw the sun too much. That was in the Fall. It might have been nicer in April, May, June.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did anything else happen before you went to Belgium?

Mr. Dentz

No

Well, we were fortunate that we were given the opportunity one weekend to go hear the London Philharmonic Orchestra in town 8 miles from us and about 3 of us signed up out of several thousand. That was an interesting opportunity, to get to hear them since I like classical music.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about when you left to go over to Europe.

Mr. Dentz

We were training and then, all of a sudden, the Germans broke through on December 16<sup>th</sup> so we were put on full alert. Prior to that, we were on standby for the Market Garden in Holland in September. We were at an airfield waiting to be transported over to Holland. Then Montgomery, General Montgomery, didn't move forward fast enough and that's where the story came up, "The Bridge Too Far". It was a fiasco. So they didn't require us to come in to be a larger glider troop amount. We were then alerted on December 16<sup>th</sup> to fly over to France, which we did. That was the same time that the

weather was very bad and Captain Glenn Miller of the orchestra band was flying over and disappeared. That was the time of the bad weather.

We finally got over to France. Then we got on open trucks with about 50 men on an open truck and drove for 16 hours up to France just before the Belgium border. Then we were on duty a day or so in France before we got on another truck and went 16 more hours all the way up to near Bastogne, Belgium. Then we got off a couple of miles from there and marched up.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you go over to France? Did you go in your glider?

Mr. Dentz

We flew. It was the first time I was up in an airplane. It was an old DC-3 commercial airliner which was the work horse of the Air Corps, C-47 it was designated. That's what carried the troops over. So we had multiple of those planes that were flying all the time getting us over to France. We landed in France near Paris and then taken on trucks up to the Belgium border. The next day we were up on a truck to get up to the front. They used everybody available. They used 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in Europe. In France, they were rushed up by truck and so we all ended up near Bastogne.

It was snowing and cold. It was a very cold experience just to get up there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You don't hear a lot about the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne. You hear about the 101<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Dentz

No. That's why we're the forgotten airborne. What happened is that was the first combat we were in, we were green, but in the Battle of the Bulge. That was January and February in Belgium and Luxembourg.

Then we went into Europe, the largest airborne operation of the whole war and the most costly in killed and so forth on March 24<sup>th</sup> (yesterday was the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary). Most of the correspondents filed and had already left to go to the Pacific war, so we didn't get that much coverage. We suffered more battle casualties per day than the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne or the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in the European theater or the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne in the Pacific. We didn't get the publicity. We did have the famous photographer that made the pictures on the D-Day invasion, Capra. He jumped in by parachute into Germany. He had quite a few pictures. It was in the April Life magazine. A good spread of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne in there.

You're right. Not too many people heard of us. We had more casualties going into Germany on March 24, 1945 than they did on D-Day. We had 17,000 of us dropped in and landed by glider or parachute at the same time in daylight, 6th British Airborne who were in D-Day and the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. We had 17,000 jump in and fly in. 1,070 were killed that first day. We, also, received more Congressional Medals of Honor than any other airborne division. Four, which is unique. So although we weren't in combat as long like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne that was in Africa, Sicily, Normandy, and the Battle of the Bulge, we had more casualties per day than any other airborne division. We thought we were unique, but the press didn't cover us. It was in March and the war was over in May.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land on March 24<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Dentz

We landed at Wespl. Wespl, Germany was right near the Dutch, Holland border, just across the Rhine. In broad daylight and it was the first time that they ever had the

gliders land at the same time as the paratroopers were landing in their own area. Previous to that, the gliders would come in the next day after they had secured the landing field, which was a unique airborne operation. Double-Tow Gliders first time, C-46, where they parachuted out both sides of the plane. It was a unique operation. The gliders, almost a thousand (1,000) gliders were in the air over 200 miles long from near Paris into Germany. That was quite a sight in the daytime for the people on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, did this operation have a name?

Mr. Dentz

Yes. It was called Varsity.

In fact, they were having a party yesterday in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in commemoration of the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was called Operation Varsity. It was similar to Operation Garden, Market Garden in Holland.

Mr. Misenhimer

How far were you behind the front lines?

Mr. Dentz

We were in with the Germans when we landed. There were 80,000 Germans where we landed and no one knew where anybody was. You just landed right where they were. You landed and you were completely surrounded. They were surrounded, we were all over the place. In the airborne operation, you're not behind the lines, you in the lines. You're in with them.

On D-Day when they landed, they were right with the Germans. There were no front lines. There's no line when you land in an airborne operation. It's very, very confusing,



because you don't know who is shooting at who and where. Some of the gliders landed way out beyond where they were supposed to land. It was a very disorganized thing at first and then you try to get together with your company. It's pre-planned exactly where you're supposed to land and where you're supposed to join together, what bridges you're supposed to secure, and so forth, but it doesn't always happen that way. They don't land exactly where you are supposed to. It was completely covered with smoke across the Rhine and the glider pilots were briefed on where to cut off and where to land, but it doesn't always happen that way.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this the crossing of the Rhine?

Mr. Dentz

The crossing of the Rhine was on March 24<sup>th</sup>, Operation Varsity.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to the Battle of the Bulge. What all did you do in the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Dentz

We were rushed up there and fell right in with rifles and bazookas against tiger tanks and, eventually, there were 600,000 Americans fighting against 400,000 Germans. Of course, they had the surprise in crashing through what was supposed to be a stationary front for the winter. We didn't have winter clothing. What we did have, we quickly got rid of the first day after we got into combat. In order to survive, we had to get rid of our overcoat, our blankets, our gas masks, in two feet of snow. We had to be as light as possible to fight and get through the snow. It was the coldest winter in 40 years there. It was between 10° and 0° and snowing . We were in there 24 hours a day, seven days a week for five weeks. Some people deserted, some people lost toes and half their

feet. I had frozen feet, but I elected not to go back to the hospital. I stayed up there but my feet were so bad I could hardly walk. I'm on compensation now for 60% disability because of frozen feet. Some years later now. It was cold.

One night, about midnight, they came around to our foxhole near the end of the Bulge. It was quiet that night and they said each man in the foxhole could take turns to walk back about a quarter-mile into a little village and get warm inside of a house for one hour and come back and let the other guy in your foxhole take his turn. That was an interesting experience because you went down and knocked on the door of the third house and an old couple let you in at midnight without a word spoken took you up to the fireplace, took your boots off and sat you down there. An hour later, after no words were spoken, you put your boots on and went back to your foxhole. It was a unique and comforting experience, the Belgium people were so thrilled that the Americans were there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How close were you to Bastogne?

Mr. Dentz

We were right next to Bastogne.

I was back there in 1975 and the town right next to it, a little village just down the road, Flamierge. Our 513th parachute regiment was really mauled there against tiger tanks. Some of our units actually took over part of Bastogne after the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne broke into the circle of the Germans by Patton's troops. We were right next to it, right in that area: Flamierge, Bastogne, Humount. On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the people of the Belgium village of Flamierge and two other villages spent money to put up a monument. This last December, the day that the Bulge started, in commemoration of our 513<sup>th</sup>

Parachute Infantry. That's how much the people are still involved with the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. They remember us.

I have pictures of it and the people over there are organized to put flowers on our graves that some of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne have in Holland and Belgium and Luxembourg each year. They do that and they have parades in commemoration of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne liberation of Belgium and Holland. They reenact the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne with uniforms to this day. They do the same thing in England, the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne are known by the people of England, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg. They will take you on tours if you go over there right now. The people have associations just for that purpose, remembering the Battle of the Bulge. There are people of the United States who have never even heard of the Battle of the Bulge, but the people over there are very thankful for the United States and for their liberation. Some of these people weren't even born then, but they had it told to them by their grandparents and parents. It was very unique to know what they think of the United States people.

Mr. Misenhimer

There at the Bulge, were you all surrounded by the Germans also?

Mr. Dentz

We were not surrounded. We had a lot of men that were captured. They were around us and captured us, but we were not surrounded. We went back and forth into this little town of Flamierge. We took the town and then we were beat back and then we took it again. It was a back and forth battle. So we pushed them back.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division was not surrounded like the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in Bastogne.

General Patton's tanks broke through and freed them from encirclement.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you operating as an infantryman at that point?

Mr. Dentz

I was a radioman for a platoon Lieutenant, a company of airborne infantry. I was the runner for the platoon Lieutenant who I just met again in Virginia at a reunion.

I was in foxholes with him and we had a message on the radio and he had me run over and contact the Captain wherever he was. So, I was runner radioman, I had a small walkie-talkie. We were infantry. There was nobody between us and the Germans.

Mr. Misenhimer

What company were you in?

Mr. Dentz

I was in the Company C, 194<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment. We also had a second Glider Infantry Regiment, 193<sup>rd</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge and they were almost completely destroyed in wounded and dead. So they were dissolved right after the Battle of the Bulge. What was left was taken into the 194<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry as replacements, to try to replace our dead and wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer

The 513<sup>th</sup> was a PIR, right?

Mr. Dentz

The 513<sup>th</sup> was a Parachute Infantry Regiment. We also had the 507<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment which had jumped into Normandy. The 513<sup>th</sup> was green in the Battle of the Bulge. The 507<sup>th</sup> was attached to us after D-Day in England and they jumped in the Bulge with us. Also, the airborne operation, they jumped into Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall about the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Dentz

We had glider field artillery companies, signal companies and we had affiliated units that were also in the Bulge with us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall about the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Dentz

We saw a lot. Lots of destroyed German equipment. Because of the severe weather, we couldn't get much air cover. When we did, when a little opening came, my cousin, a Captain in the Air Corps, who flew P-47s said he strafed the Germans in front of us with a P-47 that he was flying and others of his group. That was very fortunate that we could have some air cover and rip up the German columns in front of us.

That didn't happen too often. Other than that, in 5 weeks we got two, what I'd call "hot meals". One, the cooks finally got up to us at 9:00 o'clock at night, one night in the Bulge and by the time we got back to the foxhole the food was frozen anyway. We had little crackerjack boxes called K-Rations every day. The supply Sergeant would try to get them up to a couple hundred members of our company. That is what we had. A little can of cheese, a can (smaller than a can of tuna fish) of eggs, two cigarettes and a little piece of candy or something and that was our meal for the day. Three of those boxes if you got a hold of three.

One time, they did come up for breakfast early in the morning and when the shells came in, all the cooks jumped into the snow. We knew where the shells were going and stood

there laughing. They thought they were coming towards them and they were way down the slope.

There were very few funny incidents. We did see where we came around a road in the hills and we came around the corner and there was a German tank just burned out.

The driver had jumped into a snow bank and was charred completely black from the head to his waist. When he jumped into the snow, you could see he had clothing on from the waist down and that was a horrifying sight to see a fellow man, even though he was German, completely destroyed like that. You saw hands in the road and brains and so forth. For a young kid my age, I hadn't even shaved until I got home after the war. I was sort of young and it was sort of things that would become indelible in your mind, that you'll never forget. It gives you a few nightmares.

Another fellow and I were sent out on a corner in blizzard conditions, and we were supposed to be relieved in two hours. We were up there from 10 to midnight and nobody showed up. We couldn't even see each other, it was so windy, blowing snow, a couple feet of snow. That's cold standing up, waiting all night for someone to relieve you and they never came until early in the morning. Somethings like that never go away.

One night the supply truck brought up socks, dry socks, and I got 3 pairs. I was the platoon runner. There were guys that were worse off than me. I was taking them around 11:00 or 12:00 o'clock at night to try to find these guys in their foxholes. A shell came in and hit nearby and put snow and dirt all over me. The next morning, where it hit, one of our fellows was dead in the foxhole where I had gotten hit with snow and dirt all over me.

He was a twin and his twin brother was in another company, in our battalion. After the war was over, we were in the theater in France and his brother came walking in. I didn't know he was a twin and nearly fell off my chair in the movie. His brother had been killed in our company. That was the things that happened. I saw guys hit and blood all over the place. It sort of shakes you up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you actually trade rifle fire with the Germans?

Mr. Dentz

We went across fields and sometimes you didn't see them. It was just machine gun fire. There was nobody between us, so if you saw somebody it was a German. Somebody from another company might be seen pushed back and they might come into your area. You had to be very careful you weren't shooting your own troops. That was always a danger in combat. In Germany, we had one platoon. At night, they shot up one of our sergeants. He was trying to crawl over to make contact. That was a very critical danger. You shot and killed your own people.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rifle did you have? What weapon did you carry?

Mr. Dentz

I as carrying an M1 Garand Rifle and they were very, very powerful and big hit. If they shot a man in the chest it would put a hole in the back of his body, 6 inches in diameter. It was 30 caliber.

Then, when I switched to carry the 38-pound SCR 300 radio for the Captain in Germany, I switched to a carbine because I had a 38-pound radio on my back so I

picked up a lighter rifle, a carbine. Somebody there had been hit, so I got one instead of my heavier rifle.

Mr. Misenhimer

There at the Bulge, how many did you lose in your platoon?

Mr. Dentz

I don't know the exact number. We had wounded, we had people go back with frozen feet and killed. I don't know the exact number, but we eventually lost in the Battle of the Bulge and into Germany, we lost something like the whole division lost over 1400 killed, and so many wounded and captured. Mostly the captured were in Germany because of landing in the wrong place, way out beyond the landing zone. We ended up with around 1400 killed. That was only for like 69 days of combat. We got in. We were green in the Bulge and into the airborne operation in Germany. On March 24, we stayed like for the last day of fighting, May 8, 1945.

Although, we had less days of airborne operation and combat than the other divisions, we covered more per day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else on the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Dentz

One town where a church was really in bad shape in Belgium. The roof was off and there were windows blasted. Over the years, I got into an association that sent money to rebuild the church over there. One of the stained-glass windows has a tribute to the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in the church in Belgium, which is also a unique thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

There in the Bulge, did your company lose any of the officers?



Mr. Dentz

Yeah, a First Lieutenant was killed and a non-commissioned officer was killed.

Mr. Misenhimer

After the Bulge, you just kept advancing in Germany?

Mr. Dentz

After the Bulge, we were taken back, well we marched back a couple of miles and then trucks were supposed to pick us up to take us back to Liege, Belgium to get a shower.

We had the same clothes on for 5 weeks. We were feeling pretty scrungy.

We sat there at a crossroads for two days and they never showed up for us, so we didn't have any food. So we went into an old bakery and broke up furniture or whatever wood we could find and put a fire in the big oven. We put our feet up on there to get our feet thawed out and my feet were frozen. The soles of my jump boots, rubber soles, wore down about 2 or 3 inches and were ruined. Somebody said there was a barn in the back that had a bunch of German boots, so we went back in there and found boots that fit us. Two days later, finally, the trucks came to take us back to get a shower and winter clothing.

In the meantime, we were hungry and I saw a GI truck down about a quarter of a mile on another crossroad. So we went down there, waiting for another truck. We stopped it with our rifles and demanded something to eat. Which was something you would do to try to get something to eat. They threw out hard bars that they made up. You could hardly get the chocolate off and the other guy got a ration. The two of us went down and stopped the truck. That's what we did to get something to eat. They were from a rear echelon outfit going back somewhere.

They picked us up and we went back to Liege, Belgium, got our shower, got our clothing and the next day we were trucked up to just before the front in Luxembourg. We were there just one day in a small village and then got on trucks to take us up to the front. I ate some frozen potatoes that were in the road that we cooked with some old grease and got violently sick during the night. Going up to the front in Luxembourg, I was having the heaves over the side of the truck and the medic said to stop the truck put me in the battalion-aid station just behind the front. I laid there for two days and people were coming in that were seriously wounded, so I was just laying in a room with water and some seltzer tablets. So, I walked out of there and went on up to my company. I didn't have that many treatments, I was just sick.

I'll tell you one story about the Battle of the Bulge.

During that time, those two days there, friends of mine tried to get a sergeant off the hill there that had been badly wounded. His name was Sergeant Platt from Grand Cane, Louisiana. Everyone that had went up to try to get him was getting wounded. My two friends, a medic and another friend from New Jersey, went up to try to get him. The friend from New Jersey had his fingers blown off and he was sort of happy that he was going back home. They brought in Sergeant Platt and he eventually went back to the United States but he was in the hospital for 28 months. After the war, he went back to Louisiana. In 1962 we visited my Supply Sergeant in Illinois. We said we were coming from California through Louisiana and he told us to go visit Sergeant Platt. In 1962, we went into the town. He said you can't miss him, he is the Post Master of this little town. So at 10 o'clock in the morning I walked into the Post Office and here was my friend from England. I stood at his window and it was a one-man operation. I didn't say anything and he finally blurted out "Dentz". At 10 o'clock in the morning, he came out

and shut the Post Office down, put the sign out, "Closed for the Day". He went down the street and got his wife out of where she was working and told her to go to the store and get large roast and then we went to his home and had a feast. I was the first one to come see him from 1945 in January until 1962. It was a great home-coming for him that we came to visit him in Louisiana from New Jersey. That's an aside, but it's an extension of the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's the kind of stories we like to hear.

Mr. Dentz

He was in the hospital longer than I was in the service. He was a gentleman, a real fine man. The Supply Sergeant that we went to see was his friend. I was about 19 and they were 39. So, I became friends of theirs because I hung around with my medic friend at the supply office area. I became friends with them even though they were old enough to be my father, they became friends.

The Supply Sergeant came and stayed at my house for a reunion in New York state and went to New York City back and forth 30 miles and used my house as a hotel. Then we stopped at his house for a weekend on Easter in the '60s in Illinois and sometimes we met fine people in the service. They were two fine gentlemen. He was the one that told us where Sergeant Platt was. It was an interesting time for my family.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then after you got out of the Aid Station, what did you do?

Mr. Dentz

After Luxembourg, we were there (the Bulge was over) I was on a patrol at 1:00 o'clock in the morning. We were on a patrol to make a complete encirclement, unit to unit. I

was on a six man patrol at about 11:00 o'clock or 12:00 o'clock at night to make contact with the next unit. We made contact completely around the base. We had sealed off the Bulge area from the Germans. After that, we went back. We were going to try to capture a German that night for some information. We got into some fire fights, but we didn't capture anybody.

We were taken back to France in preparation for the airborne operation. We were taken back in February for a month. Then we went to Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go back to?

Mr. Dentz

We went back to near Nancy, France. Then we were taken to an air field a week before, all the units were taken to a different air fields, enclosed in barbed wire. We had taken all of our airborne patches off. We were in this enclosed air field for a quite a while. We couldn't have our patch on, we put an American flag on our shoulders. We were there for one week of intense study of the land where we were going to land. The air corps were taking tree-top level photographs and made a sand table showing the barn where he was supposed to land behind.

It was very intensive orientation on just where we were going to land but, ironically, Axis Sally was broadcasting out of Berlin. We heard the radio inside the air field and her broadcasting telling us by name and the exact city where we were going to land, invited us to come in and walk down on the Flak. They were ready for us a week before we ever landed, by division name and the exact area where they were going to land, which was sort of frightening. They were prepared with anti-aircraft all over the place when we did come in because they knew from spies exactly where we were going to land.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was amazing the things that she did know.

Mr. Dentz

Then March 24<sup>th</sup> , they woke us up before daybreak and we had steak, eggs and apple pie as our last meal. That's what we figured. You never got steak in the Army.

I was put on one detail to go get in a truck to the warehouse to get mattress covers which the bodies were put in. I was sitting in an Army truck with mattress covers under me. I found out that was what they were for. That was the only thing we did that whole week. We were given information where we were landing so that you had an idea, if you did land where you were supposed to, which way you were supposed to go to join up with your company and get together which was harrowing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Dentz

We landed. Some guys got hit in their gliders landing. We were very fortunate. We came in and just hit a tree with a tail surface and broke the tail, but we took a hard hit on the ground and landed safely. Then we got out of the glider and hit the ground and tried to find out where we were and, fortunately, we landed where we were supposed to. Others landed way off and were either wounded or captured. One of our company gliders landed about a mile out in the field and they ran into a woods. They were immediately put under fire from the German parachute unit. Lieutenant Lancer was shot in the head and they thought he was dead. Two other guys were killed, some were wounded. A platoon-runner, a Private was sort of running around trying to find out who was left out of about 14 guys, so the Germans in English yelled for them to surrender

and they finally decided that they were completely surrounded and they all thought the officer was dead and they threw up their hands. They then were almost shot by another non-com in the German Army whose brother had been wounded. The Captain said he spoke English. So they found that the officer, Lieutenant Lancer, was alive so they were allowed to carry him. They carried him something like 25 miles until they got to a German city. Then, those who were taking him back allowed them to lay him on the street corner and send a message down to the hospital and he got into a hospital. That Lieutenant called me up two or three years ago from Chicago looking for another friend that was in the hospital that had been captured. A friend of mine.

Then, what we did, we were trying to find out where other parts of our group were and we were getting shot by anybody. If you heard the bullets coming from one direction, you shot back because you assumed it was Germans (you were hoping). We saw a British glider that had landed in our area by mistake and a British man, a British Sergeant, in the ditch with a broken leg and he was having tea. That's what the English do even though there was fighting all around. He was incapacitated so he couldn't go anywhere.

Then we tried to get to where our area was and my medic friend came in tears that he lost Truitt. His head was blown off. He was just in tears that he just couldn't save his friend. He was totally upset. That's the way the medics were, they were very dedicated.

So then we tried to go through a position where we were supposed to go between the Issel River and the Issel Canal intersection and finally half of our companies got there and we were supposed to connect with a parachute regiment company coming from the north. They landed to the south of us, so we had just the Germans in front of us at this

embankment where we were and we were getting shelled and a machine gun fired at us. The forward observer from our artillery, a Lieutenant, was hit and I was in the foxhole with my medic friend and he immediately jumped out and ran up with his aid and I kept digging deeper and deeper. He was more brave than I was and, of course, that was his job, to help the wounded.

They were carrying this Lieutenant out from their artillery position. Artillery is an observing position there. Another shell came in, not 20 feet from my hole and hit a man and killed him. The radioman for the Captain, one of two radiomen, was helping carry this guy back and he got hit. That was the day I got transferred to become the radioman, joint radioman for Captain Roy Strang for the rest of the time that we were in combat. That was where you had over 38 pounds strapped over your shoulder.

My friend that was his radioman, the second one, he went to the Captain and if he could have Dentz transferred up from the platoon up to the Captain. (I was all of 125 pounds.) The Captain said, "Dentz doesn't have any shoulders, the radio will fall off his back". It was strapped on to you. He convinced him to let me do it. That is how I happened to get over and help the Captain as his radioman.

After the lieutenant was hit and killed, we had machine gunfire coming from in front of us from the north. The Captain called everybody out of their holes and get on this embankment and we were firing at the German machine guns with our M1 rifles. It was the old wild west, fighting from an embankment just lined up with all our rifles cracking away at the German machine gun emplacement across the field.

B-24 Bombers were being used to bring supplies in, they would come in really low and throw out with a parachute supply equipment. This one was hit, went right over our

heads and into the field across from us smashed into the ground and was on fire slightly, but we didn't see anyone get out.

All during the morning that we ran, 10:00 o'clock in the morning, before we got into our position, gliders were coming in. No noise they would just swish through and they hit each other or they hit a barn or high tension wires where they dangle like a flag, like a kite. It was an experience just to stay alive and not get hit by another glider coming in. We saw one glider come in, it made it across the field and went right between two trees and sheared off the wings and they kept racing across the field until they stopped, but it didn't turn over or anything. Others flipped over and some were completely machine gunned when they landed because they were expecting us. One officer from our company, Lieutenant Loomis, was in a glider with 5 men and a Jeep. When they landed (I have a picture of it in one of my books), they were hit by machine gunfire and the Jeep with a tank filled with gas was hit and they all exploded and they all were burned up. Five men from our unit. It was very exciting, if I can use that word, but scary for a young kid.

Then, after we had that area secured, we went on to start going around the Ruhr Valley area from town to town. We didn't go back there, we stayed right there and went from town to town. On April 9, we were going down a long hill and we stopped at a tree, a half a dozen of us, and the German artillery shot behind us and then in front of us and that's zeroing in and we decided to get out of there in a hurry. So we were going down the hill and a mortar shell came in. I heard it coming in and I hit the ground and was completely knocked out from the concussion and the shrapnel was so close it ripped, cut off my canteen off my back and nipped my backbone. When I woke up, there was a hole next to me from the explosion, but I was completely unharmed by the shrapnel.



Across the field, I was not far from a fellow I was in the Bulge in the foxhole with. He was from Texas and we called him Tex. He got hit by an 88 Shell that ripped his whole arm off and his whole side was blown open.

We went further down the hill through some woods and a couple of men came through, one with a crease in his skull and the other with a bullet in the stomach. The reason was the machine gunfire was coming from across the field, but when you have that you have no idea what height it is and you have to go forward. So my medic friend caught up with me and we went across the field with machine guns over our heads. We got down to a railroad crossing, a railroad line, and we ran across the railroad and there was a low fence there. So he jumped over it and I followed him into the backyard of a small farmhouse just near the center of this little village. He ran up the back steps and so I followed him and we went into a kitchen and it was noon. There were scrambled eggs and black bread on the table, so the people must have been in the cellar. When the fighting started, they must have run into the cellar and didn't eat their meal. So we sat down and made scrambled egg sandwiches. Before he could eat his, they screamed outside. We could hear them screaming for a medic. One of our men was hit. He went running out, left his sandwich. I ate mine.

Then we went in the street when the fighting was over and an old man came up to us and said, "Roosevelt is kaput." They had heard on the radio that President Franklin Roosevelt had died. He was announcing it to us before we knew it from anywhere else. This old man came up and the fighting has stopped. That was, I think it was April 9 when he died in 1945 (April 12). A month later the war was over.

We went from there to other towns and we ended up in Duisburg, Germany on the Rhine River. We stayed in contact by radio with a troops from the other side of the Rhine.

May 8<sup>th</sup> it was all over and we were very relieved that the fighting was done.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else?

Mr. Dentz

After that, we were taken back to France in the summer and then they started sending people with high points that had been over there, longer than I had. I was only over there a total of 18 months, but they took people that were longer in combat and had points. They had a point system and sent some home who were discharged. Others were being sent on the way to Japan. We were very fortunate to be put in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne.

It took us 5 days by boxcars from World War I. They were called 40 and 8. They were used for 40 troops in World War I or 8 horses. I think the horses had been in there before we got in there.

We went from France up to Berlin in 5 days, for 500 miles because we had to get off the track onto a siding so the Russian trains could take all the factory equipment that they were taking back to Russia. So we met some Russian troops. One time the two trains stopped next to each other, we were on a siding and some of our G.I.s were selling the Russian troops Mickey Mouse type watches for \$100 until the Russians learned later when we were in Berlin that you had to open up the back and find out if they had jewels. Some of these guys found watches in the factory near the end of the war in Germany. They were selling them to the Russians.

Then we were in Berlin for several months up there. Then we went back to France and into Le Havre. We went to a camp called Lucky Strike. They were just processing camps to send you back to the United States in December, 1945. Then we were in tents and December was very cold in France out in the field there. We had a pot-belly stoves and we would fill it up. Get some gasoline and put it on some wood in the pot-belly stove and in the morning everybody lit matches trying to start the fire before we had to get out of the bunks, out of the Army cots. Some of the men burned one of the tents down because the stove pipe was too hot.

One night, about mid-night I took two fellows and I said, "Let's go get some firewood." I'd found out where there were some logs over by the railroad tracks. We took one of the old boxcars, put the brakes off and pushed it over to a point at the top of a slope and pushed it down to break up some of the beams of wood. You did some things that you wouldn't normally do in civilian life. We got some firewood and got right back but they didn't find out who had wrecked the boxcar – derailed it. We were warm for a little while anyway.

We were there a couple of weeks and then went back to England to get on the Queen Mary. The 82nd Airborne Division of 5,000 was brought back on the Queen Mary. They had every nook and corner you could believe to go to New York City for the Victory Parade in January, 1946. Up 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, we marched, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. That was an interesting experience.

I got tickets for my Mother from New Jersey and my brother to come and see the parade at the New York City Library on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It was an interesting trip. Paid for by the U.S. Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in Berlin, what all did you do there?

Mr. Dentz

In Berlin, our company was placed on guard duty to protect a German paint factory that hadn't been moved. It hadn't been moved and protected from the Russians. The Russians were cleaning out every factory they could find. So I stayed out there about a day and I would sit out there with the platoon and I talked to the platoon sergeant. He said to do a little work around the office and disappear. I don't want to see you.

About a month later, I went up to the USO to play ping pong with a friend that was coming in from the next division. That night they opened up the Berlin Philharmonic . It was a Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. They were going the play in the Titanic Palace which hadn't been damaged. I like classical music, so I went there. Each week I went the Berlin Philharmonic concert there.

Also, we met some German girls that spoke fluent English. One of the fellows from our bible study in England met a nice German girl and we were allowed to fraternize at that time in Berlin. They spoke fluent English, having taken about 8 years of English in the German school. We went to a German Opera that opened up for several operas there and they, of course, were all in German but they interpreted it for us.

Several of our fellows went to the home of a German Chaplain that let us use the back of his church and we went and visited their homes. I still have correspondence with one of the daughters that was in that home, the pastor's daughter, who lives out in Seattle. One of our fellows that were in that company got her to come over when she got old enough to come to Duke University. She graduated from Duke.

I am still in correspondence with the people in England and Germany. The German people from World War II which is unique also.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to the states where did you land?

Mr. Dentz

New York City-I was flat out on the deck of the Queen Mary. First of all, they put us way down, as far forward and as low as you can get on the Queen Mary. Various stench filled the air there and there were 8 bunks high, canvas bunks. I got seasick, so I went all the way up on the all-weather deck and put my blanket down and stayed there for 5 days in a horizontal position because I was seasick. I didn't eat and the guys brought me some water and bread, but as soon as we got into New York Harbor and somebody yelled, "Statue of Liberty", I was miraculously cured from seasickness. Then we went up to a camp and had steak and ice cream up the Hudson River and then came back to march on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Victory Parade.

After that, we were sent home and within a month or so I was discharged at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in March of 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the Queen Mary, coming back, how crowded was that?

Mr. Dentz

The Queen Mary – I didn't eat there, but they were eating at a swimming pool without water, actually. Every nook and cranny was taken so it was crowded. I've been to the Queen Mary in the 1960's out in Long Beach in California with my wife and found the exact spot where I slept for 5 days.

We came home in a north Atlantic storm and it was kind of rough. One of the aircraft carriers left Le Havre about the same time we left Southampton, England and they had something like 40 feet of their flight deck caved-in from the waves. They had to cripple back to France. I can't remember which one it was. It was a full-size aircraft carrier. It was a rough trip and it was crowded.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the Queen Mary, I know when they were taking trips over to England back in 1943 and 1944, they would have as many as 21,000 people on it.

Mr. Dentz

I know when we came back, it was strictly with our airborne division and I think that was close to 5,000. I don't recall the exact number. The Queen Mary, when I went on it in 1962 out in California, they had a plaque in there about the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. It was a big red plaque about 2X2 telling about the trip back to the United States with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. I remember reading that. I don't know how many trips they made back and forth during the war. Of course, they were famous on the one we were on going over. They could go by themselves because they were faster than any German submarines. They would go zig-zagging across the Atlantic by yourself instead of going in a convoy at the speed of the slowest ship. We went over and back single ship which was faster than a submarine. So I think it was probably close to the same speed as the Queen Mary. I remember it was about 5 days over and 5 days back. Whereas, on a convoy, it might have taken 10 days. They go much slower.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned Axis Sally, did you hear her yourself very much?

Mr. Dentz

We didn't see any other ships either way.

They played this song over and over again. What was the name of that song - Sentimental Journey. I guess it was a movie just about then and I can remember that being played it all the way back. They were playing different music but I remember that song coming back on the Queen Mary.

I didn't move from where I was so I didn't see much of the ship at all in the storm coming back. I toured the whole ship down to the engine room and the Captain's place and where all the crew was that was steering the ship – a very nice tour.

In France, we heard her the whole week. Axis Sally was naming our division. That's the only time. We never really had a radio over in England in training but for some reason they were playing it over the loudspeaker system in the airport. The air crew had a radio show and they were piping it up into us. That is the only time I heard her speak.

After the war, Mickey Rooney came while we were in France and we could go and see him. In Berlin, Marlene Dietrich, the movie star, came because her mother lived in Berlin. She came up there, but she also put on a show for us. Those were the only movie stars. I didn't go to see Mickey Rooney but Marlene Dietrich was right in our area so we got to see her perform

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Dentz

Right at the end of the war, you weren't allowed to fraternize. People would be court-martialed if they were caught in with any German civilians. At the end of the war, of

course, there were a lot of forced-labor people in our area. That was sad to see. They were going back with whatever conveyance they could find: horse and cart, pull carts. . In our area, we saw a lot of them heading back from Germany heading north back to Holland. They were forced to work in Germany. We had our cooks set up big buckets of food in the street. We would come out of the apartments that were livable. After we ate, the German old people would come and take coffee grounds and whatever they could find out of the garbage pails that we wasted—any food.

There was a rumor going around two weeks or so after we were in Germany near the Rhine River, that some prisoners were murdered. So they found out where they were buried and made the German Police Chief and council (whatever they called council members) all the officials had to come dig them out. I stood and watched them and I got sick for two days. They were pulling out 32 bodies that had been machine gunned and thrown into a ditch and covered over. They were in there for two weeks and these officials had to dig them out and they had wooden coffins made. They had to put them in there and bury them in the median strip of that town. That was a heartening experience to see that, but I never want to see anything like that again. It was so similar to the concentration camps, except these were all put in one grave, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had relieved us. We went into Buchenwald concentration camp. I wasn't with them the last couple of weeks when they went into that camp. The guy that I was a roommate with after the war in the 82<sup>nd</sup>, he had actual photographs (he had his camera) of the graves, all the dead lying and waiting to be covered up in Buchenwald. I had my own pictures of this other one. The people who say there wasn't any holocaust are full of it. It was actual. That was another thing that justified the fighting. My cousin that was an Air Force pilot was put on observation duty during the last month of the war. He



went into one concentration camp with a tank crew and they tried to give food to some of them and some of them were crushed trying to get the food. That was an awful thing to see.

For young kids that see these people burned up and hands and ... The inhumanity that one human could do that to another human. My conclusion is that war is such a waste. For a man to kill a man is a horrible thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

These 30 people there in Berlin, who were they that had been killed?

Mr. Dentz

Political prisoners. They were in jail, ready to be sent to a concentration camp. They herded them in there. Just before we liberated the town, they saw the troops coming and they took them out and machine gunned them. That was stupid. The people in the town evidently told some American officers and they investigated and found out just where they were buried and found out who was responsible and made them dig them up. It was a small part of the pre-holocaust. They weren't sent to the camps yet. Just some of what they had rounded up. So they just murdered them. It's one thing to be shooting at Germans and they are shooting back at you in uniform. That was a horrifying thing to witness.

I couldn't eat for two days. I was so completely devastated in mind and stomach. I couldn't believe it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you can recall from your time over there?

Mr. Dentz

After the war we actually got a chance to, they had a hat with names a week after the war was over and you could pick a slip out. You could go to the French Riviera or to Paris. I was very fortunate to pick Paris. I went there and the Glenn Miller Orchestra was playing in Paris. Tex Beneke was the leader at the time. Glenn Miller was missing. I went to hear them and I toured France, went all around. We had a week's pass.

After the week was over, we were supposed to meet an officer that was in charge of our dozen men assigned to go by train from Germany into Paris. We got in and he said, "I'll tell you what, we're going to do."

We were in Paris for a week and then the officer, he liked Paris. He said we were going to miss the train for a few days. We came there just to show up, just to see that we were all there. Then he'd say, "Okay, disappear and see you tomorrow." We were in there 4 days that we were absent without leave, but nobody was really worried about us then.

I went and got in line the day they opened up the Eiffel Tower for tours. I got in line but before I could get up to the front, there were people from Paris and also soldiers.

Before I got up to the front, I saw some Military Police checking passes at the entrance to the Eiffel Tower. I had to disappear quickly because I didn't have a pass. I didn't want to get arrested by the Military Police. I never did get up on the Eiffel Tower. I had a good time going around Paris. I got over to the Cathedral, the big French Cathedral there. I got up to other areas of interest in Paris.

Did I tell you earlier about my trip to London?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, you did.

Mr. Dentz

I told you about riding the bicycle built for two. The reason I went there is because my uncle, my mother's brother, was in England and my cousin, Violet was in England and by the time you could get mail around it would take months between units. So I went to London to meet my uncle. He had been transferred over to Cherbourg, France, I didn't meet him then.

After the war in Paris, I met my music teacher from high school. He was in charge of some American course over there. My mother wrote and told me he was in Paris. I met him and then I was in a USO club and a guy from my high school class walked by the table and I met him. So I did run into a couple of fellows.

Some people in our division were from my high school, but I finally got together with them in Berlin. It was hard to make contact with other units or even in your own division and get together. People are so busy training. All in all, it was an experience, all 18 months over in Europe. Before I went into the Army, I'd only been in about 2 states. Before it was over, I was in quite a few more countries. It was an interesting thing for a young kid.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Dentz

We were relieved. We had no celebration. It was pretty neat in Berlin because we had entertainment. There were a couple of night clubs open. We sat with some Russian officers at a restaurant. Then we had football games in the 1936 Olympic Stadium in Berlin. They had football games between divisions, which were college-level players. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was playing other divisions in the stadium. We would go there and

up on the top of the stadium, we would watch the British playing rugby down on the field outside the stadium and a football game inside.

At half-time, the Army had a hot dog truck setup outside and I went out and got in line behind about 20 men and who was standing behind me was the General of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, General Gavin. He jumped into Sicily and Normandy. He was behind me waiting to get a hot dog. He didn't go up in the front as a General. In General Matthew Ridgeway's book, "Paratrooper", he said that General Gavin was a soldier's General Soldier, that he stood up for his men.

After the war, General James Gavin, became the Ambassador of France. He was a very intelligent West Point graduate. Our General of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, his father, uncles, grandfather were all graduates, including himself, of West Point. General Miley was from Mississippi and I met him and his wife at a reunion in Pennsylvania quite a few years ago. He died when he was about 99 years old. He had a charming wife from Mississippi. My wife and I stood and spoke to them after the war.

Then in another incident, in 1950 I graduated from Columbia University in New York City and the President of the University was Dwight Eisenhower. He and I lived on the same street, Morningside Heights. I wasn't in the dormitory, I had a room in an apartment.

Of course he and I were in the Army together, but he went to school every morning chauffeured. I had to walk. I did live on the street with a future President of the United States when he was president of Columbia. Then he went over as Head of SHAEF and then he came back and ran for President of the United States. So we saw him a few times in our engineering building and he almost demanded from his stature, a very imposing figure, I almost saluted him a couple of times. I'm sorry I never did that –

walked over to his office and said we were in the Army together, let's have a chat. That was interesting. He spoke at my graduation and my mother and future wife and grandmother all came and heard Dwight Eisenhower speak at my college graduation exercises.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Dentz

Yeah My cousin, a P-47 pilot, had shot down about 6 German planes, killed people. He was married and had a child and he disappeared out west to find himself. Another friend, that we were in their wedding later, he disappeared up to New England from New Jersey for 3 or 4 months. I guess they were trying to get their sanity back or something. I elected to stay home and I would jump up quite frequently all week, in the middle of the night, put the lights on trying to find out where I was. That's the traumatic things that happened to me. I wasn't shook up I guess enough, evidently, to take off somewhere and people say to go find themselves or something.

It was frightening to come back and realize that you are alive and some of your friends were ..... My good friend was killed the first week in Belgium. He was a radioman from the same school that I went through at Camp Blanding training. He was a radioman and he and his Sergeant got killed the first week of January.

Years later, I put an ad in the paper in Pennsylvania trying to find his family. I don't know why I waited so long, but I put in an ad and somebody remembered his sister's maiden name. So my wife and I made arrangements through them to go and meet his wife and his daughter who never knew him. We went and had dinner with them in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Then, I also contacted, years later, I found a picture of a fellow that was training in Camp Blanding. I found a picture of him with his town on it and my granddaughter got on the internet. He had been a farmer and I figured maybe he stayed in the same town. So around 10 or 12 years ago, I located him by phone and we spoke for an hour. He had been in Italy and came home in a body cast. We had a good conversation on the phone and writing for a while before he died.

A few other fellows from our company, we visited them in North Carolina. In that way, we met a few of the fellows but it was some contact after the war. My medic friend, I'll tell you one more story of interest. I have it published in a hardcover book with other stories of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne.

We were going into the town of Munster, Germany. Our whole division was going to liberate this town and take it from the Germans. We were going across a field and the night before I was with a Company Commander in a home that we were sleeping in. This Lieutenant was from New York City. He was a tall man and he was apprehensive about being killed. He was afraid he was going to be killed. This was in April of 1945 near the end of the war. It was because of his height. We were going across a field. It was spring time and all green grass and the Germans were shelling us, and machine gunfire. A shell came in, a Panzerfaust rocket. It hit a tree near us. I was right within a few feet of him and he got hit and fell at my feet. Right at my feet. His eyes rolled back in his head into shock. We dragged him over to a ditch and he died there within an hour.

Shortly after that, we were going across another field and it was green grass and my medic friend was about 30 feet in front of me and all of a sudden a man-hole sized cover of grass popped up in front of me and it was German Sharpshooter. When he

heard my medic friend run across, past his hole, which was completely camouflaged, he popped his hole up. What he would do, was shoot the man in the back and go back into his hole. Fortunately, I was right within 5 feet of his hole and I jumped on top of him with my 38-pound radio on my back and hit him to the ground and wrestled his rifle away. Meantime screaming to my friend, and I was very, very upset. I got the gun away from him. He thought he would shoot my friend and my friend came back. We pulled him out of the hole. I smashed the rifle across the hole, I was so upset, completely devastated. We pulled him out of the hole and my friend kicked him in the rear and sent him with his hands over his head back to the camp. We were getting a lot of prisoners so we sent them back individually because we were under fire so we got rid of them that way.

That fellow, Red Wrzeszczynski, lived in Philadelphia and I lived in New Jersey. My wife and I, before we were married, went to his wedding around 1948 over in Philadelphia. We were the only ones from our company that went to his wedding. That was an interesting thing. We were friends for years after that.

That time when I jumped on the German, that became an Army release somehow. An official Army published release. It was sent to my parents and to his home in Philadelphia and to the local newspapers. The newspaper man, that I worked for as a writer and delivery boy, gave it to my father. It said, "He walked up to that hole." We had no idea how it got to the Army correspondence group. It did get released.

This friend came to my home in Florida about 3 times and stayed as a guest there. We were very close friends and I saved his life and he had pulled me off the truck and into the battalion aid station. He saved my life because I would have been up trying to get my Sergeant off the hill. He had become a life-long friend. He just died several years

ago. We've missed him very much. You did make some life-long friends in the service. Not everyone but some of the ones that you were close to. You were life-long friends because of the hazards that you shared together.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Dentz

I thought of a few things.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Dentz

I became a whole Private First Class in our groupings. The division I was in was in training for several years in the United States, in Tennessee and but, of course, all their ranks were always filled. The only way you could get in the Army weren't tests the way it was in the Navy. The only way you could get in was if you were in a platoon and the platoon Sergeant got killed and the Corporal got killed, you could be appointed that in combat. I was in a radio group and there were three of us. One guy was supposed to be doing the wiring, and he was the Corporal. Then the other carrier and I were PFCs. That was the highest you could go. I was only in, at that time, for about half a year so I never did go up higher than that.

I told you I was qualified for the Air Corps but didn't weigh enough. I wanted to be it so bad, a navigator in the Air Corps, but I might not have made it back if I had been in the Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?



Mr. Dentz

We were awarded the... If you were in combat with the enemy, you got the Combat Infantry Badge which was my pride and glory. That's a beautiful sterling silver wreath about 3 inches long around a rifle in a blue background. That way you got actually \$10 more a month for being awarded that.

I also got the Bronze Star and European Occupation Medal and a few other of the ribbons that were associated with your area of service – European Theater. We also got glider wings with an arrow head which designated if you went in on D-Day on land, or air, or into Germany by air. That was an arrow head on your glider wings or parachute wings for airborne invasion. We got that. We got extra pay for glider riding. We got \$50 or more a month for being in the glider infantry and the paratroopers also got \$50 a month extra pay. My \$50 a month got doubled by being in the gliders and plus \$10 a month for the Combat Infantry Badge.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about battle stars? How many battle stars did you get?

Mr. Dentz

We got three battle stars. We got the Battle of the Bulge, the Ardennes and the Rhine Landing.

In April, 2004, a magazine the size of the Time magazine that is called *World War II*, ([www.historynet.com](http://www.historynet.com)) was on the front page. There is a picture in the April issue of 2004 of our glider landing in Germany and a Sergeant in our company wrote a big article in this magazine about airborne assault. "The glider man's account about the airborne assault into Germany." On the front page and so are a couple of gliders that

landed. There are 4 men in a row walking next to the glider and I'm the third one on the front page of this World War II issue.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's Time magazine?

Mr. Dentz

It's the size of the Time magazine, it's called World War II. It's not very easily found in like a Barnes & Noble bookstores who may carry it. It's called World War II and it's published monthly and it's not available in every bookstore, I mean every supermarket or anything, but they are available, I found it in a ....

I got a call from our Airborne Association and they said I was on front of the paper, so I found it at Barnes and Noble.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which one are you in there?

Mr. Dentz

The one guy in the front is kneeling down on the ground, I guess looking to see where we were going. Then there's a man behind him and I'm to the right of the second man in line. You can see the flag is on my arm, two gliders and then there's a part of a wing next to the guy in front of me. I'm to the right of him.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've got that here. I'll just go back through my files and pull that one out. That will be interesting.

You mentioned the reunions, have you had several reunions?

Mr. Dentz

In 2007, we had the last one in Virginia. That was the 58<sup>th</sup> year. It was started around Pittsburgh and I think that was about the 57<sup>th</sup> in row, every year. There was one we went to in Branson, Missouri a couple of years ago, one in Cleveland, New York City, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Fayetteville, North Carolina and in Virginia, that was the last one. Everybody is a, unless they lied about their age, everybody is over 80. There's a Colonel, he stayed in. He was an officer who got wounded in the Bulge and then came back to go into the airborne assault of Germany. He stayed in the service and he is now retired. We had magazines every year, about 3 issues a year, almost 100 pages. We had a school teacher who was the editor.

This Colonel is sending out e-mails every week of either deaths or people that are sick and addresses. So if you know them, you can send them e-mails and letters. Then we had a pharmacist that was a medic, he's out in San Francisco and he puts out newsletters now just so everybody doesn't lose track of everybody else. The association secretary/treasurer, he was in north Florida and he keeps people in touch. It's still going on but no more reunions. The reunions were attended by 500 or 600 people at the beginning. We went to one in Columbus, Georgia and visited Fort Benning three or four years ago and we sat at a table at the banquet with a fellow with his father's picture on a strapped around his neck. He was looking for people that had known his father because he was a young kid and never knew his father. That's sad. He heard his father had parachuted into Germany and was shot hanging up in a tree. Caught up in a tree, was killed in the tree.

The most recent one, there may have been only about 200 of the original members of the division, but interestingly enough there were people from Holland and Belgium there

that were friends of the division. They came all the way over to Virginia for the reunion. They came from England and in previous years we were getting people from Europe. Some were friends of our division would come to the reunion. You would meet people that had their brothers or uncles killed trying to find people that they could talk to about their kin having been killed.

The reunions were very well done. They would last from Thursday till Sunday. They had a memorial service and then every Saturday night before the banquet. It was very well organized.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was the 17<sup>th</sup> Division, right?

Mr. Dentz

17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and we had all 57 reunions of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. We did have, at the last one, we had members of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division there that were wanting us to become members to stay in contact every year because some of us had been in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. So they came in and had a table and they had a war room with all paraphernalia and magazines. In fact, that picture in that magazine, *World War II*, I think (I have at home in New Jersey) was originally in the Life magazine. It was a picture of a paratrooper, one of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne men on the front page of the Life magazine. Inside there were 3 or 4 pages of the airborne operation into Germany. That picture was originally in the Life magazine, the one in *World War II*. I think it was April, 1945 was the issue of Life magazine that wrote about our invasion of March 24<sup>th</sup>. We did get some publicity, but not too much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill?

Mr. Dentz

He worked for the Life magazine, Capra. The pictures of D-Day, also our invasion.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Dentz

I got about 3 ½ years of college expenses. They gave us \$100 a month for room and board and then I only paid the last semester at Columbia University out of my own money. It depended on how many months you served. I was very, very fortunate, otherwise, I never would have gone to college.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Dentz

I don't know. I guess I was too scared to think of that. I'm not trying to be foolish. The scariest time, I'll tell you what. I was telling you we were coming down that hill and going across a field when you hear the machine gun firing. You can't just lay down and quit. Going across a field with machine gun firing and you find out it's over your head. They are aiming at somebody else. That is a scary thing to run out of a woods with machine gun fire coming right at you. You have no idea what height they are going to shell because the trajectory could be over you and they're shooting at somebody either behind you or before you.

Of course, scary is the word for landing in with the Germans. You're right in with them. You're not only behind the German lines, you are in the German lines. That's a scary thing, but you don't really have time to think about it. I was sick in the glider. I was sick every time I went up in a glider. I got sick when I got off the glider and waiting in the bus

to take us back to the camp. I don't think you really have time to think about it and tell yourself you're scared.

Near the end of the war, they finally decided to be the same as the the Air Corps. If you had 25 missions or after Doolittle came over, he changed it to 35 missions. You went home to the United States. The infantry, the last couple of weeks of the war, they decided to have a pulling of names and send one guy home from a company of the infantry to the United States before the war was over. So one guy got picked from our company.

He didn't go right away, it took a week before they got orders to leave. Every morning we would say, "Did Private Bird make it?" We wanted to make sure he was alive so he could go back. I guess he was scared that he wasn't going to make it. Here he is going home in a couple of weeks, he had no idea before the war was over.

Scared is a word that is hard to describe. I think we were—like in the Bulge we were just so cold we didn't know what being scared was. When you went into combat, it was something that you were so occupied trying to stay alive. You didn't think about being scared. I can't describe it. To be absolutely honest, I guess I was.

I have a fine cousin of mine that was in the submarine service in the Pacific prior to World War II. He joined up for submarine service, because it was something where everybody was equal on the ship. Everybody was responsible for everybody else. He was on his third submarine and nine of them went into the Sea of Japan a month before the war was over and his gungho commander asked for permission to break out of the nine pack and go up to Honshu to go after some ships that were loaded with equipment, cargo carriers. They disappeared. Years later, they found out from the wreckage that they were sunk. So he lies at the bottom of the Honshu Bay and he was on the USS

Bonefish. He never made it over 22. So I imagine those guys were scared with they were hit way down at the bottom of the sea - sunk.

You are involved with a Navy Museum. We went to the dedication, the place where they dedicated the Conning Tower and stones for the 55 submarines that were lost, over in New London, Connecticut. His name is inscribed in the wall. Each submarine has a marble stone that tells where they were lost. That's bad that he never came back. He was a real good friend of my cousin and would come and visit my mother when he was in New London during the war. That's sad that he never came back. That happened to many, many thousands of young men.

Fighting during the day, it was hard not to get them to protect our feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

Trying to get your socks dry, huh?

Mr. Dentz

They opened it up to compensation about 7 or 8 years ago, if you weren't in the hospital. You could get some information in writing from a medic or a doctor in an aid station, and it was opened up to the Battle of the Bulge and to the Chosin Reservoir in Korea for the Marines where it was about 30° below. I applied for it and at one of our reunions. They advised us where to apply and it took a little over a year to get it through, but after, the Veterans Administration finally qualified me for it, I get monthly compensation and also now this week I go to the veterans clinic for my annual physical it's here in Fort Myers, Florida. They are very efficient and very good to us, the Veteran's Administration, for health care.

I belong to the Disabled American Veterans here in Florida. We have monthly meetings. The meetings are more people from World War II in closely.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Dentz

No. That's about it. I have some stuff that I have written and it has been published in our division paper and I have copies of that. I have friends that are World War II buffs and I give them some copies. In fact, we went to a museum, the young people's leader in our church and pastor, he's a World War II buff. He'll eat anything up you can give him. He heard about a museum in Punta Gorda, Florida. We went up 50 miles north of here. We went up to it last month and it was very, very interesting. The battleship, Missouri, there is a model of that. There's a newspaper, a Honolulu paper, in November saying that they expected an attack. You realize that they knew ahead of time, why did they have all the battleship lined up in row waiting? The couple that you spoke to, Gene Spencer, he and his wife were at Pearl Harbor during the attack. They have been friends of ours here for quite a few years here at our church. They are a unique couple.

Mr. Misenhimer

OK Thanks for your time today and we will be in touch later.

Mr. Dentz

Thank you very much. I appreciate your interest and if there is anything else, give me a call.

Mr. Misenhimer

Thank you and have a good day.



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