THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Clifton E. Woolridge
Alton Bay, New Hampshire
April 17, 2012
Company C 803rd Engineers
331st Infantry Regiment
83rd Infantry Division
Battle of the Bulge

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is April 17th, 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Clifton E. Wooldridge by telephone. His phone number is 603-875-3649. His address is P.O. Box 406, Alton Bay, New Hampshire, 03810. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

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

Mr. Woolridge:

Well there was no getting out of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

(laughing) I know what you mean. The first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure it's okay with you.

"Agreement Read."

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get back in contact with a veteran he's moved or something. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact, if we needed to, to locate you?

Mr. Woolridge:

I have two of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Either one.

Mr. Woolridge:

Well, I have a son, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your son. What's his name?

Mr. Woolridge:

Daniel.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Woolridge:

His telephone number is 603-889-4468.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address?

Mr. Woolridge:

No, I don't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's fine. What town does he live in?

Mr. Woolridge:

He lives in Hudson, New Hampshire. It's on Second Street, but I'm not sure whether it's…

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Woolridge:

3/3/1919.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Woolridge:

I was born in Cambridge, Mass.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Woolridge:

I had two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they involved in any war work during World War II?

Mr. Woolridge:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Woolridge:

Well, not too much because my father – he had his own print shop, and I started working for him in '35.

Mr. Misenhimer:

His business was okay during the Depression?

Mr. Woolridge:

Well, he apparently did enough work to get enough money to keep us kids fed. We really didn't know too much about it. I sold papers when I was a kid, but before that I worked with the milkman delivering milk.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What age were you when you started to work?

Mr. Woolridge:

Probably, I don't think probably I must have at least twelve.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you particularly recall from your childhood?

Mr. Woolridge:

The milkman – I used to tie a rope on my toe and hang it out the window because I lived on the third floor, that was where the bedroom was. He'd come along and yank the rope until I woke up. Sometimes I'd wake up anyways and get dressed and go out and I would backtrack the way the horse went and meet the milk wagon. Then I'd start delivering milk with him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What time of the morning would that be?

Mr. Woolridge:

That would be four o'clock. It'd take us until about seven to get the route all done. I worked for this guy for a good many years – it seemed like a lot of years – and then my cousin, one of my cousins, started a milk route, so I went and went with for a while.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Woolridge:

My mother's name was Jenny; my father was Edward.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Woolridge:

I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year in school?

Mr. Woolridge:

Seventh. Then I got caught smoking in the schoolyard, and they threw me out of school. My father went down and talked to them and they said that they thought that I'd be better off in vocational school. So I went to vocational school, and I wasn't learning a thing. It was ridiculous. You'd go to shop four days a week, and Friday you'd go to a classroom and the teacher would get there and he'd pass out a book, and he'd give everybody a book and he'd say, "All right, now you read paragraph 56 and you read through to 60. Then you sit down and write an essay on what you read." Half the kids that were there couldn't read anyway. You know, pretty stupid. So what we'd do is we'd sit down and we'd copy word for word what was in the book. Then the next week, when we went to class, he'd have our papers. You might get a C, you might get an A, you might get a B, you might get almost anything. I swear he used to stand at the bottom of the stairs and throw the papers up the stairs and depending on what step that thing stopped on, that's the letter you got. I just decided, you know, this is pretty stupid. I'm wasting my time. So I started playing hookie and going in to Boston. Finally I got caught. They called up home and wanted to know where I was. When I got home, my mother said, "Where've you been today?" I said, "I went to school." She said, "No, you didn't." She said, "They've already called up looking for you. So you'd better change your story." I said, "Well, I went in to Boston." So, my father had to go back to school to get me reinstated. He said to the principal, "How many days has he been out of school?" The principal went and looked at his records and said, "Just yesterday." My father said to me, "When's the last day you went to school?" I said, "I haven't been to school for three weeks." Well, the principal almost dropped dead. My father said, "Well, if you can't keep track of the kids any better than that, there's no sense of them staying in school." So, he sent me up to Alton Bay to spend the summer. He had a – my father built a place up there in 1924. I've been here ever since I was born. I used to go swimming all day long. I'm right on one of Winnipesaukee Lake. This is a big lake. It's 26 miles long. When I got old enough to

have a little bit of money, I went and hired a boat and I used to go out in a rowboat with an outboard motor on it and putt around the bay. I used to have a good time. Then he took me home in September and he'd get up in the morning and went to work, I was there and I was eating my breakfast. He said, "What are you going to do today?" I said, "Well, probably the same thing I did yesterday." He went off to work and the next day it was the same thing. He said, "No, you get on your horse and you go in to Boston and get yourself a job." Being a fresh kid, I put on a pair of moccasins and went in to Boston and walked on that heavy pavement for four or five hours. My feet were killing me. So, I went home. The next morning he said, "What are you going to do today?" I said, "Well, I'm not going to do what I did yesterday." He said, "No, you're not," he said, "you'd better come in to work." He said, "At least you can start sweeping the floor." That's where I started with him in '35. I learned the printing business from the broom up. He retired in '64, I think, he finally retired. I took over the plant then. By that time, I had put the plant in 7500 square feet and then I ran the plant from there until my son got old enough and he'd come and work for me and he was my shop foreman after a while. I was out for three years during the war. My father ran the business all by himself. He'd get up and go to work at six o'clock in the morning, go home at ten o'clock at night. Get up the next morning and start in all over again. This went on for three years. My wife would go and help him, and she got so she could run one of the hand-fed presses. She helped for a while. My mother could not run a press, but she did the bookkeeping and stuff like that. They held the plant together until I got back. When I got back after the service, I said I wanted to take off and see America. My father said, "You've got to stay here and help me. I got over a hundred orders, you're coming in and helping me get them out." That was my downfall, how I started working with him again. By this time, I knew enough about the business I could run presses. I could set type, things like that. So I was doing pretty good. He paid me seven dollars a week, and a friend of mine got a job some place else in another print shop and they were paying him ten. So I held out for ten dollars. My father said, "I'll give you the ten dollars if you get in to work everyday

on time for a week." 'Cause I'd get there at half-past eight, ten minutes of nine. I wasn't in a hurry to go to work. Anyway, so this went on, that week I tried my darndest. Sometimes I would be ten minutes late, sometimes I may be – I don't think I was much over twenty minutes late. I was late, I think, four out of the five days. Maybe three out of the five. Maybe I made it twice, I don't know, but anyway he wouldn't give me my raise. He said, "No, you made a deal with me." I was so disappointed. When it come Friday he gave me my raise.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go in to the service?

Mr. Woolridge:

I went in the service in November of '42.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Woolridge:

I volunteered. They had a deal up here in Boston that you went to the armory and they gave you a test, and if you passed this test you could get into the Air Force. I went in and passed the test. So they accepted me in the Air Force and told me to report a certain day. So I got on a train in Boston and went to Devons and went through all the stuff, you know, midnight and two o'clock in the morning, and did all the high speed tests and everything. Went all through that, put me on a train, I ended up in Atterbury, which was the 83rd Infantry Division. I was pretty mad about that, but at that point what can you do? So, I waited until I got a chance to talk to the Sergeant and he said, "You can't do anything, you can't even talk to the Captain until you've got through basic training." So, I waited 'til after basic training. After basic training, I went in and got a chance to talk to the Captain, Captain Hedgpath, don't ask me how you spell it. I have no idea. Anyway, I went and talked to him and told him I volunteered to get in to the Air Force. I wanted to get in as a mechanic. I knew I couldn't fly because I didn't have the education, but I figured that if I was a mechanic I might get a

chance to go up with these guys once in a while when they were going someplace. I like to fly. He didn't want to let me go. The next thing he did, he made me a PFC, so that gave me a little bit more money, and gave me a little bit more that I didn't have to be the last guy getting paid. I was the last guy as a PFC getting paid, but I had all those Privates behind me. That's what I did. He wouldn't let me go. I got a furlough in March in '43 and I went home for ten days, I guess it was ten days, then I got back. When I got back, I wanted to see the Captain. I wanted to get a transfer. He shipped me off to Texas. I went to San Antone. They put me in a camp near San Antone, which was an automotive school teaching you about engines and all kinds of parts of it and operators and we had to go through different classes. They had some classes where you had to – one class would go and do something to the engines, we had all these Jeep engines, not only did we have Jeep engines we had two-and-a-half truck engines sitting on the mounts all on some kind of a metal frame that sat on the cement floor but you could get them running. You could get the running right there. You had to do something to these engines and then the other class would come in and have to straighten it out, find out what you did to that engine and straighten it out so they could get it running again. Some of the things we worked on were regulators and generators and we had to know how to do them and how to check them out and things like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me go back and ask you some questions. Where did you take your basic training at?

Mr. Woolridge:

Camp Atterbury.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's in Indiana, right?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do in basic training?

Mr. Woolridge:

Most of the stuff at basic training they were teaching you how to march. They taught us how to march, and know which is our right foot from our left. Sometimes we didn't even know that. We'd be going on with a whole column of fellows all together and all of the sudden they'd give an order and you'd be the only one going in the other direction. Then you had to find out where you were going the wrong direction you'd have to run up and catch up and then get in step again. Which I did most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of weapons training in basic?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yes. You learned about your rifle and how to take it apart and how to clean it and all these different things. If you had – I suppose if you had mortars or something like that then you had to learn that. I was put in the engineers. I was an engineer. I went in the 308th Engineers. I was in Company C. C Company was connected with the 331st Infantry. A Company was with the 329th and B Company was with the 330th and C Company was with the 331st. Any place the 331st went, we got to go, too. If they had a river crossing or something, we were the troops that had to take the assault boats and paddle them across.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get in to these engineers? That wasn't in basic training, was it?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yes, the basic training was there. We learned how to build bailey bridges, and we had to build – I don't know how many we ever built – we built quite a lot of them. At one point we had to build a double one. This was to carry tanks across.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that when you were overseas?

Mr. Woolridge:

No, that was in Camp Atterbury. Well we had a little brook, it was supposed to be a river running through the camp there someplace, and we had to build these bridges across this. A little bit of a brook there, but we built this stuff across there. At one time, and I don't know when it was, it was before – I think it was before I got my first furlough, they had a simulated battle with the infantry, and we had to paddle the infantry across in assault boats, which was nothing but a plywood boat, a bunch of plywood put together with nails or screws, I guess they screwed it together, and I don't know who was in charge of the engineers, but they were throwing dynamite at us. They put dynamite in this river, and we had to paddle these infantry guys across and they were told, "Do not go in the bushes when you get on the other side because that's where the charges are." Well, they put charges in the water six inches deep, and when they set the things off, it blew the bottom out of the assault boat. I don't know how many guys they killed. I know there was some of them that drowned because they couldn't swim with their full field pack and their rifle and all the stuff they were carrying. Several of them drowned, I don't know. I was in on the crossing, and we made it across and they didn't blow our boat up, but there was a couple of the guys that went in to the bushes when they got across and then they got blown up. Then, the next thing I know, whoever was in charge of the engineers at that point lost his job. We got Colonel Dodge. Colonel Dodge was 25 years old when he'd become a Colonel, and he went up to see the General and he walked in and saluted the General and said whatever he said. The General said, "Oh my God, they're sending me babies," when he found out he was only 25 years old. He was a smart guy. He was about the smartest officer I ever run in to.

We did have an episode in Atterbury when – we had a Lieutenant, he was a 2nd Lieutenant and the guy was allergic to wool. Of course, we'd have to wear those wool uniforms and that guy would

break out in a rash something awful. Well, he knew every nurse in the hospital. He spent more time in the hospital than he did with us. One day, the Captain put him in charge of the retreat and he come out with his pistol hanging down like a cowboy. He stood out there and they went through the operation of inspecting our rifles and this and that that they had to do, and he went along with the inspecting officer, he was the inspecting officer. Then he goes back to where he belongs and he happens to look down the street and here comes Colonel Dodge up the street to see what he can find out. This guy was having a fit because he was out of uniform. Anyway, he could see the Colonel coming closer and closer to C Company, of course he went through and he stopped at A Company and then he stopped at B Company and then he come to us and all of the sudden the bugle starts. This guy calls "attention", you know. He got through it and the minute the bugle stopped, he hollered, "Dismissed." The Colonel had to turn around and go back. He got out of his situation. It was kind of hairy at the time. We thought for sure he was going to get caught, but he didn't. I don't know if you want a story like that or not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, sure, that's great. Anything that happened. We're interested in everything that happened.

Mr. Woolridge:

Then, you know, all these guys would throw cigarettes around, you know, and they had to dig a six by six. I never got caught. I always field stripped my cigarette when I got through with it. I was lucky.

One other thing that happened, and I didn't remember this until two years ago when I went on a reunion down in Williamsburg and there was a fellow there that showed up with a foot locker and all the stuff that we had in the barracks. When we went into barracks we were told we could have a radio, but the radio during inspection had to sit on the shelf and it couldn't be covered with dust or anything else anymore than anything else was. So I called my father and asked him if he'd send me down a radio. Well, he went and bought a radio, put it in a box, and sent it to me. Well, when it got

there, they had bakelight and that case was smashed all to pieces. I went out on furlough and bought a tube of glue that was for plastic, and I brought it home and I put that whole case back together again. I stuck it with all this glue and everything. During the inspection one time, that thing was sitting on the shelf where it belonged and it fell apart. It fell down on the floor and, of course, smashed some more. It was just when the Captain was standing in front of me inspecting my footlocker and my bed when that thing fell. I almost exploded, but I didn't dare to laugh because I knew he'd gig me. He turned his back on me twice because he wanted to laugh and he turned around so he – the guys on the other side of the room told me he was killing himself laughing. That was another situation that I got in to.

Then, after I went to the camp down there in San Antone, I was down there for – wait a minute, backtrack. I was in the line in April and May, I think it was in April, they loaded us all on trucks and took us down to Vincennes, Indiana. The Wabash was coming up because the snow was melting and they wanted to know if we could save the town of Vincennes, Indiana. We went down there, we didn't know where we were going or what we were going to do until we got there. We got off the trucks and we stood in ranks, and that's when the Captain told us, "You guys are down here to build up the levees. We've got to build them up two feet because when the Wabash comes up, it's going to be two feet over the top of the levees and we've got to try to get it above that." So, we worked all that night. We got there about two o'clock in the morning. We worked all that night and all the next day, and then he come around and he wanted to know who could work the next night. I said I could work the next night, I'm fine. I worked the next night building up those levees. The levees that were dirt, we went out and piled up sandbags. We worked on sandbags for a long time. Then, the Captain said, "What I'm going do is," he said, "I'm going to let you guys go, and you're on your own. You put six hours on the levee, six in bed, and six hours in town. I don't care how you do it, it's up to you guys. But, I've got to have everything covered, so make up your minds." So, he had different platoons taking care of this thing and this is what we did: if our platoon was on the levee that night,

we were there. And this gave us so that every six hours your duty changed so we could get away with that and that worked pretty good. Well, I was uptown and it was getting late and I had to be there for reveille, and I was running like the dickens, and I heard this motorcycle coming. I knew it was my 1st Sergeant, so I stood there in the middle of the road, and he's coming. I jumped on the motorcycle with him, and we made it to the reveille in time. When we got there – before that, I was down on the Wabash and I was looking at this little bit of a stream. There was a guy there with a tape measure and I said to him, "You mean to tell me that this little river is going to come up, way up, over here?" He took the tape measure and on one of the boards he pulled it up and put a line on there. He said, "At noontime tomorrow, the water will be right on that line." I kinda snickered a little bit because the stream wasn't that big. Anyway, the next day I went down there and that thing was within a sixteenth of an inch of being on that line. I couldn't believe that that guy would know that, but he was Corps of Engineers. Anyway then the water when it come up would back up the sewers and blow the sewer covers off. We were out there sandbagging the sewer covers to keep them down. We had to sandbag it all through that town. We saved the town. The levee broke on the Illinois side, and once that happened, of course, it relieved the pressure on our side. So we just picked up and went home, back to the camp. Then about, I don't know, maybe it was a month afterwards, Colonel Dodge, he was in touch with the people in Vincennes, Indiana and they gave him a thousand dollars to give to the GIs who'd helped save the town. Because we were GIs, they couldn't give us the money. He went out and had bracelets made, silver with a chain on them. On one side it says "Vincennes, Indiana 1943." And on the other side was our names engraved in this piece of silver. I've still got mine. As far as I know, I'm the only one that's got it. I've taken it to the reunions a couple of times and none of the other boys that I know have got theirs. They don't know what happened to them. I talked to one fellow there I was very friendly with, lives in Philadelphia, and he said, "Oh, my oldest son wanted it and I gave it to him and he lost it." My son did get ahold of mine, that's why I've still got it, I guess.

When we were on – we went to Washington, D.C. on a reunion four or five years ago, I run into Colonel Dodge's daughter and her brother. I have been in touch with his son-in-law, Caroline's husband, and I've been talking to him. I talk to him every once in a while. They had never seen, they didn't even know about the bracelets. So when I get there, that was first thing they asked: "We want to see the bracelet." Well, since then, Colonel Dodge, he ended up a Brigadier General, he also – he was the head engineer on the metro system. He was a smart guy. I met Roy and his wife at the Pines one time, and I said, "Dammit you're a General, what do we call you now?" He said, "I'm still Roy T. Dodge." So, that's what we always called him. He had a flag, engineers, and it's a beautiful flag. He gave it to this fellow George, I can't remember his name. I probably could at six o'clock in the morning or two o'clock, but right now I can't. He gave this flag to George. Well George lived in _____, Pennsylvania. I think he was drinking too much, and he went off his rocker. He got so he couldn't do anything. He was in a nursing home in Pennsylvania and my wife and I had gone to a reunion down in Kentucky or Tennessee or something like that and on the way back I stopped in to see George. All George did was sit there and babble at me. He couldn't put two words together. Well he died, I don't think, maybe two months after I went down. So the flag went to his son. We had a fellow by the name of Al Siverio, which was Lieutenant, he got a battlefield commission. Al kept after this kid, George's son, and said, "You don't belong to this flag, it belongs to the 83rd engineers." He said, "I want that flag." Well, he kept after him. I think he made such a pest out of himself the guy turned around and sent him the flag. Well, Al couldn't get along with anybody too well, and then when I took over as treasurer of the 83rd Infantry Division because the fellow that had taken it over I think had a stroke or something and he just couldn't function properly. I had paid my dues, I sent him a check I want to say in May and in October it had never been cashed. So I talked to – this was Bob Ganganth he was the treasurer at the time and I called him up and I said, "Bob, when did I pay my dues?" He said, "I can't get into the computer right now, I'll have to call you tomorrow." Come to find out, he couldn't run the computer. He didn't know how so he had to

wait until his kids got home from work, and then they would tell him, "Oh he sent his check so and so." He called me the next day and he said, "Yeah, you paid your dues in May." "Well, where's my check?" He said, "I don't know, it's probably in the bank someplace. It'll be in in a couple of days." He never said anything more, but I said to the executive board, the Chairman of the Executive Board, which was B. John Prinze from Florida, and I said, "I think we're in trouble." I said, "Bob, I don't think is handling the membership too well, but," I said, "I'll go down and see, I'll go down and talk to him." Well, he's about four hours from here, so Nancy and I got in to town and we drove down. It took us about four hours to get there, and I said to him, "You need help?" he said, "Yes, I do." I said, "Well, give me the stuff you want me to help you with, and I'll take it home and I'll call you on the phone." He gave this whole big pile of envelopes. I brought it home, I started going through it, and I find an envelope there with $750 in cash. I called him up and I said, "What's this for?" He said, "Oh, that's membership." I said, "For who?" He said, "I don't know." The next day I called him back, after I was thinking about this, and I said to him, "This was after our reunion in" down in Kentucky, just the other side of Cincinnati. Anyway, I called him and I said, "Didn't you have a lady helping you at the registration desk?" He said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Didn't she write anything down?" He said, "Oh, wait a minute," he said, "yeah, I think she did." So he said, "Oh, I've got a book here." I said, "Send it up to me." So he put it in the mail and I got the book, and I looked in the book and here's everybody's names, when they paid their dues, and how much they paid, and the whole thing. Taking care of the whole $750. What a relief. That was one of those situations that popped up. Anyway, I've had this thing ever since.

We had a fellow by the name of Bob Ganganth, and in March – I can't tell you what date, not without looking at *The Thunderbolt* - but he died. He was the secretary-treasurer. He also published the *Thunderbolt.*

Mr. Misenhimer:

So now you've got someone to take over for the magazine, then what happened?

Mr. Woolridge:

I told this fellow that I – they were expecting anybody that was on the executive board – because I had taken over the printing of the *Thunderbolt*, that automatically put me on the executive board. So they had to make another position for me in order to give me recognition. So they made it publisher, so I got that. Then, when I went down to Bob Ganganth and tried to straighten out the finances, then I got that job, too. Then I was publisher and treasurer (laughing). So, I got both jobs now. We put out a heck of a good magazine right now. Knowing what I did in the printing business, I got a printing press out here in my garage. It's an old press, it's a new series built in 1915, and I can print with that, it's a hand-fed press, but I can do it. I've got a Ludlow, which is a type machine, I can set my own type and everything. Because I've got all the stuff, I can do more than the average fellow can do when it comes to printing. Then, when I finally got in to this thing and started doing these magazines, well then I'm working with a fellow that's got a color copier, a big one, he's got a color copier he can print any color, a picture or a sheet thirty-five inches wide by six-feet long, if he wants to. We got a color copier, so I decided to do the thing with colors, so I got colors. Well, we always did the colors, our colors were gold and black, so most of the stuff we'd put it on a goldenrod sheet, but the colored ink doesn't work very well with the colored sheets. So I had to go back to white, and I've stuck with white ever since because now we're using color all the time. The last one I put out, and you should give me your address and I'll send you one and see if you see how we're doing and the colors and the pictures are just unbelievable. You're not close enough to Bob Freeson.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, we're a long way apart.

Mr. Woolridge:

I sent him two of them. He just bought two hats and a book from me. We got a book from the Army that they had printed in Germany after the war. I took mine apart and reproduced it. I had a hundred

of them and I sold them all. Now, I've got a couple of people wanting books and I don't have anymore, and I don't really want to get in to doing it again.

Then I went to San Antonio and they shipped me down there in September, and I stayed until December. I stayed at the camp all the time. I learned a lot about automotive, but because I had my own car, I had learned a lot before that. I knew that you've got to have a spark, and you've got to have gasoline, and as long as you've got the two of them and they're in the right place and doing the right things, the engine will run. When I got back to the Company, now they're in Breckenridge. I wanted to go see the old man. Well, then they shipped me out to demolition school. I've got to learn how to blow up dynamite and TNT and nitro starch and all these different things that they've got. So, we go to the classroom, and they are saying, "Well, don't hold on to the caps, they're liable to explode." One guy said, "This one fellow put the primer cord and a cap together and then he puts it his mouth and bites on it to crimp it." He said, "Well, you're not going to get me to do that." I used a pair of crimping pliers. Anyway, they had a formula and you measured the circumference of the tree, and I don't remember now, but you multiply it by this and subtract it by that or something or other, and it'll tell you how much TNT you need to put on that tree to blow it down. Well, I went through the whole thing, wrapped the thing, set off the thing, and all it did was blow a piece out of the tree. I said to the Lieutenant, "What happened? How come? It should have fallen down." He said, "You've got Trojan powder instead of dynamite. Dynamite is 50/50 and Trojan powder is 40/60 and that's the difference." I finally got through that. Then I went back, and by this time I was sick and tired of trying to get a transfer so I just forgot about it.

Then, Captain Hedgpath come back to the outfit, we were in class at this time, and he come back one time and he said, "You know, there's a Jeep down on the edge of the river down there that's blown up and has four flat tires on it. Why don't you guys go down and get it?" So, being in the motor pool, we take a two-and-a-half ton truck down, which is a dump truck, we put the dump up in the air, hitch a chain on to it, hitch it on to the front end of the Jeep, let the bed down, pull the front end off

the ground, we drag it back up to the motor pool, we take and we – there was a hole in the side of it where a piece of shrapnel had hit it. We took the four tires off and took them over to ordnance and got four new tires for it. There was a hole in the radiator and we took it off and they soldered it and so we put the thing back together again, and now we've got five Jeeps.

So, we get the Jeep, they put the same numbers on that Jeep that's on Number One Jeep, which was the Jeep that the Captain was supposed to be riding in. The Captain doesn't want to ride in the command car – he wants to ride in the Jeep, he was supposed to ride in the command car, but he doesn't like the command car. He wants the Jeep. So, he gets this fellow Clemment, and Joe Clemment was his Jeep driver. They're out on the road one time, and a sharpshooter took a shot at Jimmy, I guess, and the bullet hit a rock and the rock flew up and hit him in the knee. When you sit in the Jeep, one knee kind of sticks out. Now, he's got water on the knee and the knee all swells up and everything, so he can't drive. So they pull me out – I was the last one in the motor pool so they pulled me out to drive the Jeep for the Captain, so I drove the Jeep for two weeks while this guy got over his swollen knee. Then he come back, and when he come back, then this Jeep that we just rebuilt, I get the chance to drive this one. Now I'm driving the liaison officer, and of course we had to go up to headquarters and sit around and wait until they decided what to do with the company, and we have to go back and get the company and so many men and we've got to fill in a road crater or whatever we had to do, work on a bridge or something like that. This is what my job was. So, Lt. Beam, when I first started out, I started driving like I would anywhere and he said, "Slow down." He said, "I don't want you to go over fifteen miles an hour." Oh boy, okay. So, I'm driving fifteen miles an hour, and I don't go any faster than fifteen miles an hour. This went on for I don't know how long, but I'm sure it was a month. Then, we had to go – we were down on the Moselle River, and we had to check the troops, they were all spread out along the Moselle River, and I had to check them every day. It was 125 miles a day. I'd start out at fifteen miles an hour. Well, I used to lead convoys at fifteen miles an hour, and I'd get to wherever we were going. Sometimes he would say,

"We've got to move the company out. So let's go find a good field." So, we'd drive down the road and finally he'd get down in the place where this is where he want to be "What do you think of this field?" I'd say, "This is pretty good, you've got trees on the outside so that you can get the camouflage nets up and cover up the vehicles," and things like that. He said, "I'll get out and you sweep the place for mines, see if there are any mines." He'd get out of the Jeep and I'd drive all over the field. Then if they didn't explode we would go get the company, and I'd lead them over there and then the guys would come and say, "Why do you go so fast?" I said, "I'm not going fast." I said, "I don't go over fifteen miles an hour." "Well, you get a big convoy and it's like an accordion." You know, the first guy's going slow, everybody else has too much space in between them so then they speed up to catch up a little bit and the next guy he's got to speed up, and the poor guy on the end is doing about ninety miles an hour. Anyway, we got through that. This time, we get on the Moselle River and I started out at fifteen miles an hour. I'm thinking, "It's going to us until tomorrow." He said, "This is as fast as we're going?" I said, "No sir. How fast would you like to go?" He said, "You go as fast as you want to, and I'll tell you when you're going too fast." He never said boo to me after that. We just took off. He used to hold – he had an aerial map, and he would hold that aerial map with two hands. If we're going along and we come to an intersection, if he sticks up his right thumb I'd make a right turn. If he sticks up his left thumb, I'd make a left turn. If he didn't do either, I'd go right straight ahead. That's the way we drove all the rest of the day. I went down and back. I went ten thousand miles in four months with this Jeep. Then when it came time to change the oil and get the thing straightened out and keep it in running order. I carried a can of gas on the little running board on my side, a can of water on his side, a can of gas on the back, and a full tank at all times if I could. We'd never run out of gas. I drove for how I don't know how many months. I drove quite a lot. Our Captain Hedgpath, he would sit in the Jeep with his foot on the front fender and his carbine up against his foot. They went over a bump and he pulled the trigger and shot his toe off. So, he left. He went to the hospital. Then Captain Sweider, he was the first platoon commanding officer –

platoon leader – anyway, he was the one that took over for Hedgepath and he was a nice guy. I drove for him a couple of times. When Jimmy was driving with him, I'd be going down the road all of the sudden they'd come up behind me and run slam-bang into my Jeep and there would be damage. I said, "Jimmy, I'm going to catch you one of these days." Well, it went on for a long time, and one day we got into this apple orchard. I was behind Jimmy coming in, and the Captain got out and I started chasing him through this apple orchard. Well, the wire catcher caught on the limb of a tree and lifted the front wheels off the ground, and I pulled right up behind him so he couldn't back up on me. Then I jumped out of the Jeep and I beat him. I said, "I told you I was going to catch you." I finally let him down.

But we get into a pillbox over there, in France, right on the coast, and I picked up I think three different pistols, I got a broomstick (Mauser), I got a Luger, and I picked up a small Waltham. The Waltham was one that I carried the rest of the way. I carried that all through the war. I never carried anything in the chamber except when I thought I might need it. A couple of times I'd put it in, but after I got through and got to a different place, then I'd take it back out again. I carried that Waltham all the way through. It was a nice gun. It was shaped like an American .45, and I think probably it was maybe a .38, probably a 9mm they talk about today. I thought that it looked more like, the shell itself looked like a .38. It was a nice gun, and I always felt secure with it. I carried it all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go overseas?

Mr. Woolridge:

I went overseas in April.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of what year? '44?

Mr. Woolridge:

I guess so. I don't know. Being in the engineers, they gave us a Boy Scout knife. The Boy Scout knife had one blade and the rest of it was a can opener or a bottle opener or a screw driver, belt punch. I used the belt punch and I put all the addresses, all the dates, on my canteen cup. It was soft, it was aluminum, and you could chisel stuff on it. I've got in the bedroom, and if I go get it I can tell you the dates.

April the 20th of '44 we left – I got to England April 23rd of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You left on what day?

Mr. Woolridge:

We went over on the *George Washington*. We landed in Belgium on December 26th of '44. Germany on December the 5th of '44.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to Germany before Belgium?

Mr. Woolridge:

I've got Luxembourg September the 23rd of '44. France, June 25th of '44. Belgium Decemeber 26th of '44. Holland – I got into Holland on March 21 of '45. Crossed the Rhine River, I think it says March 29th.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That sounds about right.

Mr. Woolridge:

That's '45. Oh, I've got 11:01 PM, when I crossed the Rhine. When I got back, they said, "Oh, you've got to throw that away. You've got to throw it in the hopper will all the rest of the stuff." I said, "No way am I throwing this thing away." He said, "You've got to." He was a Corporal. I said, "You know what you can do with it. I'm not throwing that cup away, I'm taking it home." When he

saw I had Sergeant stripes, he didn't give me any argument (laughing). I don't think he wanted to give me an argument after he found out I was in combat.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you landed in England, where did you go in England?

Mr. Woolridge:

We went to some place in Wales.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do there?

Mr. Woolridge:

(laughing) Well, one of the things that they had us do was waterproof a vehicle. They had us waterproof our three-quarter-ton Dodge. That had to have pipes put on the carburetor, so the carburetor could breathe. We had to have pipes on the gas tank so it could breathe. We had to cover all the gauges with this stuff, it was like a putty but it was more oily than putty. It was more like, I don't know, the consistency – you could put a gob of it on and then just work it around so that it could seal up the whole thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the spark plugs?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yeah, they all had to be covered. They all had to be covered – the spark plugs and we had to cover… every one of the gearboxes had a breather on it. We had to cover them. The gas tank had to be covered. The holes where the cap breathed. Just about everything that I know. Anyway, they had this pond. I don't think maybe the pond was – it might have been a football field, I would guess. I said, "Does anybody know what the bottom's like?" They said, "No, we don't know." Anyway, they picked me to drive the three-quarter ton across there. They had no idea what the bottom was like or anything. I said, "You know, if it's muddy, this thing is just going to sink down into mud." They

said, "Yeah, well, we know that." So they put a tow truck across on the other side, and I drove down this ramp into the water, and just my head was sticking out. The rest of me was all underwater. I could keep the engine running but I couldn't go anyplace because all of the – the four-wheel drive, the wheels just spun in the mud. It wasn't anything. It was pretty stupid, I thought. So, somebody had to come from the other side and come across the pond or whatever it was and hitch on to me and pull me out. Anyway, I'm almost freezing by that time. This is in April and over in England, in April, it is not as warm as it is over here. I think it's a little bit further north than us. I'm sitting there shivering, all I've got on is a pair of trunks. They finally pull me out and they take me back to the outfit. Of course, by this time I'm almost froze. That was a waste of time. Then, when we get ready to go to Southampton, they didn't waterproof any one of the vehicles. I don't know. That's the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you went across to France in June.

Mr. Woolridge:

Yeah. We left Wales. It seems to me it was a week after the invasion. Some of them landed on June the 18th. They landed right away. We got into the Channel and we were on a good-sized ship, I don't know maybe it was an LST. I wouldn't know one ship from the other unless they had guns on them, then I knew it was a battleship. We got there and we had to sit right there outside of the place because the storm had come up, and these ships were bouncing up and down and, oh, and we had a bulldozer, and they didn't know how they were going to get that bulldozer off because they had it on the crane, and it got too close and the waves come and the LST come up – they couldn't put that thing – the bulldozer would go right through the bottom of the thing. We sat there for quite a while before they finally got it off of there. Every night, the German planes would come over and try to strafe us, but they had barrage balloons up so they couldn't get down to us. We'd watch them. I found out the other day that Axis Sally come from Pittsburgh. Some guy talked to me about it, knew

exactly where she come from, even knew her before she got into Axis Sally. Most of the time overseas, I was a Jeep driver. Once in a while, we'd get out there and – the trucks were trying to fill up road craters and things like that, I was in the motor pool helping them. We had one day we had 21 tires we had to fix from shrapnel. We had a guy with a bulldozer, had a bulldozer, in those days they didn't have hydraulic systems. They had nothing but cables on the bulldozers, and this guy he went out one day to spend all day digging holes and burying animals. I don't know how many he buried in one day. The only thing that he could do is the blade would only sink as far as the weight of it was concerned. There was no way that he could put pressure on that thing so he could dig a hole faster. It was just the weight of that blade. After a while, they put me back into the motor pool, and I would drive a couple of Lieutenants once in a while, they didn't have a Jeep driver or something like that. We had a guy, I don't know what his name was, but they used to call him "Foxhole Earl", and I drove for him one time during the Battle of the Bulge. It was on this muddy, it was a dirt road and it was muddy, we had nothing to put water on and it just turned muddy. I had this thing in four-wheel drive, and there was a big crown on the road. I could get up on the crown, but I couldn't stay there. I'd get up there and then all of the sudden I'd slide down to the other side or slide down the side I just got up. He thought I was an awful Jeep driver. He said, "I don't want that kid anymore." I was just as happy, because I wasn't too happy with him anyway. Then I was driving the Jeep. Jack Beam got hit in the stomach with a shell and it hit on his belt buckle but it broke the skin. They put him in the hospital for, I think, five days or something. I think they were trying to give him a rest anyway, whatever it was. He went for a few days and I had this replacement. This guy drove me crazy because, when a shell would go over he would jump. We could tell by the sound of that shell where it was going to land. You could tell whether it was going to come in here, or whether it was going next door, or where it was going to go just by the sound of it. One day, we had gone out to fill in a road crater and had a two-and-a-half truck with us, and all the guys went out in the two-and-a-half ton truck and I just went out with the Lieutenant. After they got the road filled in so that they could

passage through there, we were told to go home. We couldn't find the Lieutenant. We scoured that – it was like a rock quarry. We went all over that rock quarry, everybody trying to find this guy. Finally we found him wedged in a little place where the rock had, I guess they'd broken it or something, it was just enough room for him to get in there. That's where he was. They got him out, and we start back, and I'm going down the road and all of the sudden I look he's not there. I put the thing in reverse and started backing up the road. I can't see if he's there when I'm going backwards than I could forward, but anyway, I didn't go a very far distance and here he is walking down the road. He heard a shell going across and he just got right out of the Jeep. Anytime that he heard a shell, he'd jump. He'd make me so jumpy I couldn't stand it. Finally, my Lieutenant got back and I said, "Oh am I glad to have you back. That guy drove me nuts." I was getting so jittery. And he'd just get right out of the Jeep at twenty miles an hour. Sometimes I was doing forty and he'd get out of the Jeep. He probably fell on his face a couple of times, I don't know. He'd get right out of the Jeep. That went on for a while.

I know during the Battle of the Bulge I went out with this guy, he had the command the car and his name was Joe Clemment and he was from Lynn, Mass. Joe died here, oh he's been dead now for, I guess, twenty years. He was the command car driver. For some reason or other I was driving the command car. Why, I don't know. We come around the corner and there was a real heavy rut in the road on that corner, and it was covered with ice. I come around that corner, and this thing started to spin. It went around one-and-a-half turns. The guy sitting beside me, Joe, keeps saying, "Once more. Once more. Once more." (laughing) I had nothing to do with that. He thought I had done it. No, I didn't do it. I had a bad reputation. People didn't want to ride with me because I would drive too fast. We were down someplace in Germany, and the Captain said, "Take these guys over to sick call," which was a couple of towns away. Okay. Well, the first day I had, I think, twenty. The next day I only had fifteen. Every day that I drove them over to sick call, they got less and less. These guys wouldn't ride with me. They told me I was crazy. I did drive faster than usual, but I carried 11

sandbags in that Jeep and that would hold the thing on the road. So I could travel faster than some of these others. I had enough center of gravity to offset it, you know. I did drive too fast, but hey the thing stayed on the road.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do during the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Woolridge:

Well, at one point, my Lieutenant Beam, we had to take a truckload – we had a two-and-a-half ton truck behind us loaded with concertina wire. We had two concertinas we had to deliver up in the front and this was a forest just full of pine trees. Pine trees or evergreens, anyway. I don't remember whether they were pine or whether they were hemlock or what, but anyway. We had to deliver them and we went down this road. I'm sure it was a dirt road. I come around and here was a whole bunch of GIs laying in the middle of the road. They were exhausted. They'd been down fighting all day, and they were exhausted. Half of them were asleep. I pulled up and saw these guys and I got out of the Jeep and I went looking for the Sergeant. I wanted to find the Sergeant. I finally found the Sergeant and I said to him, "You'd better get these guys out of this road. I've got a two-and-a-half ton truck coming behind me." He's from the Red Ball Express, he's black, and I said, "He's not going to be able to see these guys. Anybody that's in the road is going to get run over." So the Sergeant went and got these guys up into the woods a little bit further. This was the worst road. It was terrible. It was all full of rocks. It was terrible, just terrible. We went down this road and we were supposed to drop off one of the concertinas down there someplace and we couldn't find anybody that was supposed to be there to take it. The Lieutenant said to me, "Shut off the engine and bring your rifle and come with me." So, we walked down the road, and I didn't like leaving the Jeep by itself. But he didn't want to go down by himself. He said, "You come with me." I walked down with him. We walked down the road probably maybe a thousand yards. Maybe not quite that far. Maybe a football field, but anyway. We couldn't find a soul. So he said, "Let's go back and we'll go

over to this other one." Anyway, we get back in the Jeep and we go back, and then we go down this other road. This was full of rocks and stuff. Anyway, we get down there. He found this place. I don't know he found it, but he did. They said, "Well, just back this truck up, throw off the concertinas along with the pegs to hold it down and stuff like that and then beat it." They said, "The minute you drop this last one, just take off quick because if you don't they're going to start shelling the place because they're going to hear a big noise and they're going to figure that we've got some big, heavy guns so they're going to start shelling right away. You guys take off fast." I said, "Yeah, this road it a mess. It's full of rock." He said, "That's not rock. Those are Germans. All dead Germans and they're frozen." Here I'm driving over them and so is the two-and-a-half ton truck. I don't remember too much about that, but then we got into the Elbe River, and the bridge over the Elbe River, it doesn't say the _____engineers put it in. It says the 296th Engineers put it in, and they were an engineer company that was attached to us. Colonel Dodge could use them for anything. They had bridge equipment and things like that. After the war was over, I found one guy that was in that outfit. In civilian life I had been doing work with this guy in Boston. He was in a print shop, too, but he owned the print shop. I had some equipment that he didn't have, and so every once in a while he'd send me down a job that had to be done and I was the only one that had the equipment to do it for him. We were very good friends, and after the war, he called me up and wanted me to go down and get one of his presses running. I spent six days down there. Finally I got the thing running for him and his son was running the business. He was in kinda bad shape, he couldn't breathe too well. He had trouble breathing. When they put the bridge across there, and I was out there, and I was picked as a guard to get out on one of the pontoons and shoot at everything coming down the river. So, anyway, I had a whole cartridge belt full of shells and I had it full, and I used them all up on that bridge shooting at stuff coming down the river. Cigarette wrappers. We had a fellow by the name of Joe Noses that lived just outside of Hartford, CT and he was on the other side. He was over on the, I guess it was the west side of the river. He saw this mine coming. He

took two shots and missed. The third shot he hit the aerial and broke it off. It exploded the mine and blew out part of the abutment. It took us about fifteen minutes to fix it, so it was all back together again. We took tanks and everything over there. I was down there at the Elbe River when they took a tank across on assault boats, and I wasn't too sure that we were going to get the tank there. It was kind of hairy all the way through because those assault boats pretty far down. They're pretty heavy tanks. Anyway, they got it over there. We were there.

I went back to the company. I don't know what town we were in, but I remember the company and the Captain said to me - _____ was _____, Joe _____ _____, he said, "I think you outta go out on the river tonight and stand guard." Okay. I said, "Don't you think the 1st Sergeant should come with me?" He said, "Yeah, that'd be a good idea." The 1st Sergeant was going to kill me. He didn't want to go out there. Anyway, we stayed in a house that was up on stilts because during the wintertime when the river would come up, they had to have their houses on stilts.

They had sent planes over to try and bomb that bridge because they were trying to stop us from putting stuff across on their side. There was a railroad bridge up further that the Colonel had utilized and was getting a lot of equipment over on the other side of the river anyway across that railroad bridge, but they wanted to stop us because we had a steady stream of trucks going across there. They wanted to stop it. They were trying everything. Well, the Colonel Dodge, being a smart man, he went and put concertinas in the river so that if they put down scuba divers, they'd get caught. They put six scuba divers in with 3,000 pounds of explosives, and they captured three of them and they think the other three drowned. They got caught in the concertinas and couldn't get through. Anyway, I've got a picture of one of them that they caught, but as far as I know they caught three of them. The Germans did not know where that bridge was. They sent planes over, usually every night, and sometimes it was darker than it should have been and they couldn't see it. They had no way, anyway near to find out where it was. They'd come over with the bombers and drop the bombs, but

they'd land every place. That's when I decided these guys don't know what they're trying to hit. The 1st Sergeant, when the bombers would come over, I'd get out of the house because there's no way to stop that shrapnel, not with just a wooden board. He'd get up off the floor, open the door, run halfway down the stairs and he'd hear the bombs coming and he'd run back in and shut the door again and lay on the floor. I was outside and there was a part of a steel ship out there and it was laying so I could climb in underneath it. I figured if a bomb lands on this thing it's going to kill me, but I'm not going to be able to get hit with shrapnel, so I stayed right there and I'd holler, "Come on, Sgt. Meyers, come on, Sgt. Meyers." He'd get up, open the door, run halfway down the stairs, turn around and run back. He'd slam the door again. I couldn't get him out of that place. He would not come out. Now I'm killing myself laughing at him. Then two guys showed up from my outfit. They had been on the other side of the river and they dropped the bomb and there was two barges up there. One of the barges was full of skis and winter hats made out of rabbit fur and all kinds of clothes and everything. They had gone over there to blow the bottom out of the boat so that they couldn't cut them loose and have them come down and run into the bridge. They were over there blowing them out when one of the bombers come over and dropped the bomb and it landed right on one of the barges. This one guy, (laughing) he was between the Jeep and the barge when that thing hit. When he opened his eyes and stood up, there was a great big hole right along side of the Jeep where a piece of shrapnel just went across the top of his head. Hit the Jeep and put a big hole in it. That's about all I did. I think that's my whole scoop.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever actually get into combat yourself?

Mr. Woolridge:

No. I was just a Jeep driver. I got into places I didn't want to be. I got out one time when Captain Sweider said to me, "Let's go up to the front lines and see what's going on." "Okay. Which way?" So he said, "Go this way." So I go that way. He didn't know where the front line was and neither

did I. I come to this place where there was several Jeeps around, and there were some guys looking around this building. I just go flying by. Well, then I get down this road a little ways and shells start falling close to me. So, I looked for a good place to pull up and get out of the Jeep and it was one of those small tanks that had been hit. He was right in the middle of the road, there was nobody around it or anything, well I pulled up right alongside him thinking that, well, there's a embankment on the other side so they can't get close enough to me to hit me and that tank will help me. So I stayed behind the tank and pulled up and stopped. The Captain jumped out of the Jeep and I get out. I'm laying on the ground and I look underneath the Jeep and he looks at me and he said, "What are we doing here?" I said, "Well, this was your idea." He said, "Do you think you can get me out of here?" I said, "Yeah, but," I said, "you stay here until I turn the Jeep around." "Okay." So I went down and turned the Jeep around and he come back and climbed in. I went just as fast as that little Jeep would go. I just go around the corner where these fellows were standing when we went down there in the first place and the shell comes over and lands in this Jeep right there at the side of the road, blows the Jeep all to pieces. I just kept right on going heading for home. I didn't even stop. He said, "Don't ever let me do that again." I said, "Okay." That's all I said to him. Then the last Jeep driver got killed. I don't know how he got killed. Then the Captain Sweider wouldn't let me drive anymore. He said, "You go back to motor pool, you've driven far enough. You've been into enough combat, we don't want to lose you. Go sit down." I never got very close to any combat after that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May the 8th when Germany surrendered, where were you then?

Mr. Woolridge:

I was down on the Elbe River.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of a celebration when that happened?

Mr. Woolridge:

No. It was shortly after that, that the Russians showed up, you know. We met the Russians. The Russians went across the Elbe River on our bridge. That's all we had. Coming back, after we got through there and they were moving us back, I don't know whether we were moving to France, no, we were in a place and they shipped us by plane to Polsten, Czechoslovakia and we got up there and there was a lot of trucks and stuff like that up there. There was a whole bunch of us that were pulled out to drive some of these trucks back to Belgium. After the war was over, of course we were connected with the Army of Occupation after that. We had – there was a couple of platoons in our outfit that were working on POW camps. They were putting in sinks and stuff like that. I guess that was gonna keep us going, I don't know, but anyway. They were working on that stuff. Some of them made some of the sinks and put them out in a big field for us so we could wash and shave and they put a big tank up on stilts and we had a German pump and we shoved the pump down into a little brook that was running through there and we pumped this tank full of water. It's sitting out in the field. Of course, the sun is shining on it all day and that was just as hot – hot water. We had hot and cold running water in the sinks there. We could go out there and shave with the hot water and everything. On the way home, the Red Ball Express, they were running these big semis. They had these cab-over-engine jobs and they had this big trailer and they were moving the troops from the train to someplace or something. They had a rack on a flat trailer and they had every so often they had chains across this rack holding the sides together. They loaded one of those things with troops. When I got on, I ducked under the chains and went up as far as I could to the cab. I figured that was maybe the safest. A couple of these chains, these guys undid. Well, this guy was a cowboy and he was going like the dickens and he come around a sharp turn, and jammed on the brakes. When he come around the sharp turn, he cut the wheel so tight that one side of this flat truck broke off. Guys fell top of each other. I don't know how many they killed. They were pulling them out from underneath the back wheels of that trailer went over them. I don't know how many they killed. I was so thankful that I was up close to the cab. If they hadn't undone the chains, the thing might have

stayed together. That was the worst thing they could do. Once they undid the chains there was nothing to hold the side together.

I sat in Camp Lucky Strike for three weeks before they finally got a ship so we could get home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you come home, what date?

Mr. Woolridge:

I come home in probably the first of November of '45. I was discharged – I was in the Army three years and three days. So I got out at November I think it was the 15th or something like that of '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you came home just before that, right?

Mr. Woolridge:

I come home – I don't know what ship I come home on. It was a German ship that they had taken over after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you come home?

Mr. Woolridge:

I come home I don't know. I really don't know. I was discharged, I think, after I finally got in to – the train went right out and we went right to Fort Devons, which was in Massachusetts. I was discharged the next day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you come from overseas just before that?

Mr. Woolridge:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long before that did you come home from overseas?

Mr. Woolridge:

We come home – I was only in the States about four days before I was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you came home just before you got discharged.

Mr. Woolridge:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you, what would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Woolridge:

When I walked down during the Battle of the Bulge looking for this place to put the concertina. That was the worst one I ever had.

Mr. Misenhimer:

April 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that? What was the reaction people had to that?

Mr. Woolridge:

I think we were in, I don't know, a muddy place. That's all I can think of when he died. I think that – I don't know whether it was… I don't know, I really don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any talk of sending you all to the Pacific?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yes, there was. They said that these guys had got all through there and now we're going to take you back to the States and probably give you some more training and then take you to the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But that didn't happen.

Mr. Woolridge:

No. Then everybody come out and condemned Truman for giving them permission to drop that atomic bomb. I said, "No way, that's the best thing in the world. We don't have to go now." To object didn't make sense. These people that said, "We can… you guys don't have to go now." "Yeah, but he shouldn't have dropped it." Yes, he should have. It was the best thing in the world he did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When Japan surrendered, did you have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Woolridge:

No. We never had anything to celebrate with. It was just another day as far as we were concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Woolridge:

I think we saw one. There was – when we got into Germany there was a lot of these carnivals and they had these people that did different things like fire-eaters and I can remember they had a girl standing on a big balloon and she worked it up this ramp and back down the ramp by moving her feet and walking on it. I can remember they had one of them. This was only… I don't think there was ten people in it. They had like a carnival. They had several people that, as far as we knew that was the only show. We used to have coffee and doughnuts every once and a while, one of those USO trucks would show up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the Red Cross? Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Woolridge:

No. I had no experience with them whatsoever.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What souvenirs did you get home with?

Mr. Woolridge:

I brought home arm bands and I brought back three pistols. We were only supposed to have one, but I brought back three. I brought back a broomstick, and this is one of those weapons that you take, it's like a pistol and you put a – it's in a wooden case and you take the pistol out and this fits on the handle of the gun and makes a rifle out of it. That I – we weren't supposed to bring any ammunition, and I brought that and I think six rounds of that ammunition, and I carried it in my watch pocket so I could get it through the inspections. When I got into Devons they gave me a pair of pants that were too small, I couldn't get into them, and I had already taken the shells out of the regular pants that I had and put them in this pants. They gave me another pair of pants and I forgot to move the shells. So I didn't get any shells, but they tell me that I can buy the ammunition anyplace now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You mentioned Axis Sally. Did you ever hear her on the radio?

Mr. Woolridge:

Oh sure. We used to listen to her every night. She did some pretty good stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Woolridge:

No, because my father had a business going and I went in and helped him. My wife was here, I was married before I went in the service. I had a little girl. That's another situation that I forgot to tell you about. When we were in Camp Atterbury, my wife lived in Franklin, which wasn't too far from camp. They had buses that'd run from Camp Atterbury to Franklin and from there to Indianapolis. You could get a bus most anytime. On Sundays, you could bring your wife in, if you wanted to, into camp if you didn't get a pass. So, I had my wife coming in and she brought the little girl. Judy was probably – this was – she couldn't have been more than a year, year-and-a-half old. She was born in '41 and this was in '42 that I was in there. This was probably in April of '43. Anyway, it had rained

the night before. So there was a puddle around and my wife brought Judy in and there was a couple of guys out playing catch out in front of the C.P. There was a puddle out there and one of the guys missed the ball and the thing rolled out into the puddle and she went out to get it. She was all dressed up, she was in training pants and she had patent leather shoes on, and she went out there and when she went to stop her feet went out from under her and she fell right in the middle of that puddle. I grabbed her and picked her right up and took her out. Her mother took her little coat off that she had on, I took her in the barracks, and I told the guys, "I'm in trouble. I've got my little girl and she sat in the mud puddle." So they all started to help. One guy plugged in the flat iron and washed her socks and got the mud out of that, gave them to the guys. The guys ironed them until they got them dry. Then I washed her pants out and stuff like that. Washed her off and gave them the pants and they ironed them until they got them dry. Then I dressed her back up again, and took her out and gave her to her mother. Then, the next day the Sergeant comes along and he says, "Hey, the old man wants to see you." What? What did I do now? So, anyway, I go in to see the old man and he said, "Well, I can courtmartial you." I said, "What for?" He said, "I understand you had a female in the barracks yesterday." I said, "Yes, I did." So, boy he went up one side and down the other. "You can't do that, there's regulations, and you can't do that…" he went on, and on, and on. Finally he said, "I'll think about it. You're dismissed." I said, "Sir, I'd like to ask one question, off the record." He said, "Yeah." "What would you have done?" He sat there for a few minutes and looked around. He said, "Probably the same thing you did." So, nothing ever come from it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He knew it was your daughter that you had in there.

Mr. Woolridge:

Yeah. It was my daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Woolridge:

A Good Conduct medal. That's all I got.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get any battle stars?

Mr. Woolridge:

Yeah, I got five. I got five.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Woolridge:

I was a buck Sergeant. I was going for Staff Sergeant and I really didn't want it because when I got Staff Sergeant then the government didn't kick anything in for my wife. So, I really didn't want it, but there was another guy that had been in the motor pool long before I was, and he was entitled to it but I wasn't. He got it, and I congratulated him. I said, "Price, you should have got it." He got it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Woolridge:

I don't know whether – I sold it. Well, a friend of mine wanted to buy a house and he couldn't buy it, but I could buy it through the GI Bill. I don't know whether that's legal or not, but that's what I did. After that, and I took flying lessons. That's what I should have told you in the first place. Never mind about selling the thing. I took flying lessons. I got my pilot's license.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you still fly?

Mr. Woolridge:

No, not since 1954.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever own an airplane?

Mr. Woolridge:

No (laughing). No, and I never had enough money to put together to get one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all the questions I have unless you know of anything else you need to tell me.

Mr. Woolridge:

Not that I know of. I was never wounded, I never got – I got run over by a truck, I got my foot run over by a truck, never broke a bone. I come home with a whole lot of German hats – the ones that were made out of rabbit fur. I did a lot of skiing during the winter after I got home, and I wore one one time up skiing up on the mountain. I couldn't stand it, it got too warm. It was awful hot.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I want to thank you for your time today, and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Woolridge:

I lost my wife two days after 9/11. This guy's name is Zeno King. We call him Buddy. He lives in Teague, Texas. His number is 254-739-2372.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And he was in the band, right?

Mr. Woolridge:

He was the leader of the band. He had a band with 96, 95 guys in it. That's a big band.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Cliff, thanks again. Thanks for your time.

Mr. Woolridge:

I think you'd enjoy talking to him. He's a good guy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, I'll give him a call.

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