

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Mr. Amos McGinnis
Flora, Indiana
April 22, 2014
508th Engineers
Company LP

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer. Today is May 6th, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. Amos L. McGinnis by telephone. His phone number is 574-967-4052. His address is 416 East Jackson Street, Flora, Indiana 46929. 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. Amos I want to thank you for taking the time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, I did it with the joy in my heart for my country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

“Agreement read.”

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that okay with you?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, that's ok.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. McGinnis:

Yes, my daughter is a retired nurse. She just noticed my ankle swelling. She said 'Dad, that might be a heart condition'. She's the one that got me to a local practitioner then she got me to a from there to a heart foundation where she worked as a nurse, this was before retiring and yes, I can give you her name and address right now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's her name?

Mr. McGinnis:

Carol.

Clements. She's my daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And her phone number?

Mr. McGinnis:

Let me give you her address. 1270 Chalmers Road, Chalmers, Indiana. Did you get that? Then her phone number is 219-984-5470.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what's her zip code?

Mr. McGinnis:

Her zip code is 47929.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Ok, good. Hopefully we'll never need that, but you never know.

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, many have asked—at my age, who is your next of kin. At 92, they never know. And I don't know either, but anyway, you've got that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. McGinnis:

10-26-21.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. McGinnis:

EauClaire, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yes, I had one sister and three brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your brothers in World War II?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, one was. He was 5 years younger than me and he was in The Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yes, he's terribly diabetic though and he, his voice is garbled. It's very hard to understand what he's saying and his balance is very poor. He has a lot of trouble swallowing and it's a lot of stress on his wife.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. McGinnis:

We were working—my dad was working the oil fields. We were living there under a half house, half tent, wood bottom and up the sides and then the tent on the top and that was it, permanent dwelling and a big flap over the tent. We could see them shooting the wells that Dad and they were drilling. So, I was in the third grade at the time and when the Depression hit, in the midst of all that, the oil wells just shut down across Pennsylvania. So, my parents moved South to just next to this place where I was born, Eau Claire, Pennsylvania, moved back there to the farm with my grandparents. Dad bought the farm I think for \$2,500, something like that at the time and the buildings. So, we moved into the homes there. We had a pretty tough time through the Depression and Dad put us to work. He was a tough master. He put us to work in the garden, equivalent to what he was doing on the highway. At that time, he started building some highways with government help, turning dirt roads into black top. So, we worked in a vast garden, 2 of us, my brother and I. We had a trained steer to pull our two wheeled cart with car tire wheels on it. We'd go 6,7 miles to Parker, Pennsylvania which was close to the Allegheny River, a large town there, Parker. We would take this trailer loaded with produce. I think they bought as much stuff off us two kids the novelty of us and that steer than they did the vegetables. We were quite a sight, but it helped with our income some. Granddad and Grandmother lived with us and pretty much our living was what we raised there. We had a couple of cows, chicken, pigs...that sort of thing. Granddad, he always used to ask questions when I was sitting in the outside toilet, he was going down to milk the cows. He'd be talking to himself, asking himself questions and giving a good answer to the whole thing. So, we were quite a survival bunch there and I thought 'Oh my! That must be something!'. Well, now I know what he was doing. I talk

to myself a lot when I'm doing jobs here, when I'm working here. It was pretty tough going, but we had them cows so we had milk and cream and that sort of thing and Grandma was a good cook and so my mom—my grandma was a member of The Pentecostal Church and she kept after me and so one day, I broke her heart, but it did a great thing for me. I told her—she wanted me to go to The Pentecostal Church and my parents didn't go to church anyway. I said 'Oh, you people, you never let up'. And, oh, it just broke grandma's heart. She just look disappointed. When I left for the war several years later, she gave me a New Testament. I can see it laying over there right now. I carried it all over Europe in my duffel bag and it was leather bound and the leather is a little bit worn, but it's still readable. It's old letters, Amos L. McGinnis and that I would open up. She wrote it from almost memory. The Holy Book. Thou Art Devine. Dying to teach me what I am. Then she put what I am and those words she underlined in red crayon. Hard lead pencil, colored pencil. She kept with me. I drug that with me all the time. Many times in this story, you'll find, not that the Germans were bad shots or anything, it's just that the Lord was with me. They didn't strike me down with the fire power I was under. So that was a quickie there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. McGinnis:

I went to high school at Eau Claire. I went to grade school at Sit Points School which was 2 miles East of our home and we walked in them days. Winter, snow and all. When I went to high school, I went to high school at Eau Claire High and graduated there. When I graduated, we were still feeling the effects of the Depression and dad said 'Well, I'm gonna take you to the oil fields with me, Amos and I'm gonna make a man outta you'. So, the oil field was back and

working then, by that time. They got back to work and I guess I was about 6 or 7 years old and Dad would go back and work up there for a month and then come back, drive home. He didn't have a car. He always had a ~~too~~ pusher. Dad was a driller. He had a, he had a name at the oil field as a top driller. He could dig more ditch than any other driller. They had a well for him to drill, the contractors would call him. He'd go back there, 100 miles from us and drill another well. Then he'd come back and we'd get to see Dad for a while. Before that happened, he was working in the coal mines and it was pretty rough in them days, in the coal mines and the Depression. They shut it down, but he left the coal mines and went to the oil field. Then we came back from the oil field and worked on the farm. So, high school when he said 'I'm gonna make a man out of him?', he didn't mean like going to college or brain. He was talking about muscles. He did that too. Well, I was in pretty good shape by the time I hit the service because I worked the oil fields for Cooper-Bessemer and I worked in diesel mechanics in Grove City, Pennsylvania, which was about 20 miles from where we lived. I'm trying to think to tell you the name of the diesel factory. At one time, I knew that, but today I'm not thinking of it right now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish high school?

Mr. McGinnis:

In 1939.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. McGinnis:

Let me look here. I got it right here in my discharge. December 29th, '42. Date of induction it says.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7th, '41, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. McGinnis:

I sure did. I was working at the diesel factory at Grove City, Pennsylvania and I got a card from FDR and he said 'Hey, McGinnis, you heard about Pearl Harbor? Well, I need you. I've got a job for you'. I had already been signed up for flying tigers. Cadets flying, cadets in those days.

Then I was working at the diesel factory for a year or so before Pearl Harbor and I started getting cramps working night shift from 11-7. Daytime I was getting bad cramps, they sent me to West Penn Hospital, my dad did. They didn't give me anything to eat or drink, but just juice for about 10 days and they discovered I had what they called a low type infection and if they hadn't operated on me right away, I would've died probably because they couldn't treat that kind of thing, you had to wait until it became a local infection, became localized. Anyway, they did it blindly and one day the nurses put me to bed length ways and they kind of spread my back. And they needed another nurse to help because it was a higher bed that I was in and when they did that, I felt something in my back, my shoulders pull back and I felt something from my groin. You could feel it flowing up around in my collarbone and in a couple of days, the doctor said 'That's what we were looking for to localize'. So, then they operated on me. Then that time, they said I had a disease that would destroy the ^{lining} of my heart, said I'd never make it to my flying Tigers or even the Army, but when they did call, by then I was recovered and out hunting ground hogs and back to my work at the diesel factory, but they found that was coming from a fluid from an engine that caused my affliction and this spirit they called it spirits. See, they made the engines right there and the foundry dust had to be all flushed out of the interior of the engine or it would blow up the bearings and it wouldn't function right. So, that was the part—our

engines we made were built for big high speed electric generators on the back and they had been from that to a high speed motor and they used them for sub chasers in the war. Yeah, sub chasers in the war. Okay, enough of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you went in, were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. McGinnis:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went into the Army.

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they give you any choice of Army, Navy, Marines, anything like that?

Mr. McGinnis:

Oh, yes. the Army because I was in diesel mechanics so I was taking the engineers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, the engineers. Where did you go to your boot camp? Basic training, where'd you go for basic training?

Mr. McGinnis:

Camp Gruber, Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel down there?

Mr. McGinnis:

They picked me up in Pittsburgh and then by train right out there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, them days it was coal engines and you got some coal smoke on you when you traveled, but it was a good trip.

We were young we could stand all kinds of—

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right. Had you been that far from home before?

Mr. McGinnis:

No, not before. Well, I'd been, no, I'd only been North of where we were, up by Bradford, Pennsylvania and we were home and back in Eau Claire so that was the longest trip for me that I'd ever been.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do in basic training?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, they taught us a whole lot of soldier commands—marching and knowing how to march and how to change under the commands and that sort of thing, basic. By the time they were breaking us in on that, 4 mile hikes and one thing and another? Of that sort, they started us to building bridges. Most of the bridges we built, they were floating on the lake right near by there. So, that was very strenuous work. They said 'Don't pick up a double one' or that was what they'd call a light plank. It was 8 inches wide, a couple inches thick and about 10 feet long. Don't pick any up except to take off on the double, that means as fast as you can go. A fast walk

or a little run. Anyway, we were learning how to build the bridges. Then, at night, they would have us do hikes, night hikes. I mean it was vigorous. They had obstacle courses for us and towards the end, they had us crawling under fire and that was something different. My captain was ahead of me and he was bigger than I was and his butt was a little bigger. I figured if he can make it over that trench, and not get hit, pretty good chance I wouldn't get hit. But, we did that crawling around under fire because we were trying to get accustomed to that sort of thing when we got overseas to the real thing. So, we were going to go to the Pacific under MacArthur and MacArthur had a good report on the scouts with us. They had-he said he didn't want us. We were burned out. He was right. So, we went in the First Army. We were in about 6 weeks. During that interim period, they give us our choice one of two things, march, my goodness, march, we'd already been marching in our sleep. So, that or play football. So, we had the other guys so we had 3 football games going on at the same time. One of my buddies, one of the biggest, ruggedest men in our course, they call him Rock, Pennsylvania coalmines and they called us underground farmers. But, John Farber was one of the biggest men in our outfit and one of the games he was in, one day, unraveled a big pile he had on top of him and one of the charges they made in the game. He couldn't get up. They found out John Farber had his back broke. I never saw him again after that. They took him to the hospital and he was not even out there anymore. So, they told us to be careful in our football. They didn't want to have any casualties before we even got overseas. Well, I got pretty good at diving through the line and block the pass, if the guy was gonna pass or if it was an opposite pass and or whatever he was going to do with that football, it was my job to block him. Well, I got to doing it too much and the other guy said 'Hey, we're gonna throw that McGinnis out' and they came down on my shoulders and my back with knees and elbows. I tell you, I survived all that. They got up to

block the guy that was going to pass or kick and I was all on the weight on my left foot, everything I had and one of the guys on the opposition came over and kicked my heel around while all my weight was on it, on my left foot and I mean to tell you, I twisted that ankle pretty bad and my shoulder was hurt. That night, after they had a bus that run back and forth through our camp to Muskogee, Oklahoma and I was going in to meet my wife then. My wife then, I had met earlier on one of our leaves. At that time, I could go back and we got married and that was at Franklin, Pennsylvania nearby our home. Anyway, I went in that night for my shoulder had hurt and my left hand was inside my shirt and my ankle was hurting bad so I was limping on that. She came out at the top of the stairway of this beautiful home that was made into a big motel for servicemen and families and she came out and looked at me in that shape and she took a big laugh and put her hand over mine and she said 'And you're going over to kill Hitler?'. But, that cleared up by the time, before I—see when they switched from MacArthur to the Army, there had to be paperwork and a whole lot of assignments and this kind of work to change over to the First Army and then to Belgium and Germany, of course, in that operation. So, in that time, I survived and went back on the ship with my duffel bag and I was always limping, but I was getting along alright because I was left handed those days and I could—I had to throw my hand grenade just as good as some of the guys right handed. But anyway, I'm here to tell the story.

Mr. Misnehimer:

After basic training, then what happened? Did you stay in the states or what happened?

Mr. McGinnis:

Oh, no. After basic training got out, we had to have that 6 weeks interim. We had them obstacle courses and them babies worked you out pretty good, over walls and diving down and jumping

across the water and everything, but they kept us in condition. So, we left there and then we shipped out over to England?

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you ship out?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, this one is a little difficult for me today because I don't have this--that would be D Plus 5 to Normandy, Northern France, the Ardennes in Central Europe so it doesn't say a date there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you leave from to go to England?

Mr. McGinnis:

Oh, we left New York Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, in New York. What kind of ship did you go on?

Mr. McGinnis:

We went on a big cruise ship. A big one. And man, I mean to tell you, that was a honey compared to some of them others, especially when we come home on light ships bouncing all over the place.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, it went good. There was no seasickness or anything like that for me on the trip and the food to eat, the tables were fastened to the floor and mounted high enough that you could stand up and that's the way we ate. The tables were continuous across the length of the ship. So, that

was a pretty good trip. We came in at, I'm trying to think of, it was a port somewhere in Scotland that we came in. And I did know the place, but I can't think of it--Glasgow.

Yeah and we were there all winter long, fall and winter until spring when we took off course for the crossing of the English Channel. That was exciting. That channel was 80 feet--80 miles long and it was one of the worst turbulences they had ever seen on it. And we left from Southampton and while we were there, it was so rough that they held up task forces, much of our forces going over and the British published in their paper because of the violent channel, much of our force was held up in Southampton so the Germans appreciated that news. They used their V-2s. A V-2 was a high speed rocket and we had a huge array of ships, one of them a rocket hit close to it. It didn't hit the ship, it hit close to it. They were all anchored and when it hit that, the concussion from it, the force turned the ship over at anchor. It wouldn't have happened, probably if it hadn't been anchored, but it was and there was a Captain's rule that it had to be anchored until they told them when the heck they were heading across the Channel. Anyway, we lost some men in that ship when it turned over. But, a day or two later, they said 'Well, they gonna release us '.

Another thing happened, they snuck over on the other side where we was gonna land, 3 liberty ships, blew the bottoms out of them. Then they made a break water where we could land. So, when we started on that trip across that channel, I knew this was the roughest thing. It was nothing like that nice cruiser I came across the ocean in and wow, I jumped in my bunk and hanged on because I didn't want to be seasick when I got over there. I was going to be driving my truck and he had the pipe up as high as the top of the windshield out of the water because we had a mount up on the high mount with a 50 caliber machine gun on it. So they had pipes in the carburetor and the exhaust up that high in case we went under some water. But the operator on the landing barge got away with it because by the time we got almost to shore and the violence

was going on and then the ship was under fire. he unloaded it with the ramp down a little too soon and then we dumped it into the water. My goodness, I had to stand on the seat of the truck to reach down through the water to the steering wheel and the motor kept running because these pipes were up in the air for the breathing and for the exhaust and pretty soon, then when we had got out of the water and had come up out of it up on land. That was pretty scary though for a little bit while it was happening. There's a lot of things that you never really rehearse before, my friend, they couldn't be rehearsed. You had to go through them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you landed, what happened?

Mr. McGinnis:

When we landed, they had things pretty well planned, Eisenhower and his chain of command right down to the different outfits. We had a certain area to go and set up camp in and our camp was just tents, at that moment, at that time. Germans weren't bombing us much right then. Later on, they got to giving us a lot of bombing, but they weren't right at that time. So, our problem was going out at night and picking up stones off all the area we could find and truck them to a machine, a pressure machine. We had a big crusher machine already made for this thing and it took 2 of the trucks hooked together to make a big crusher machine. The tanks, not only the bombing, but when tanks would hit them black top roads like we have here at home, they'd take it up in that weather. So, anyway, that's what we were doing. And it wasn't very long we went to a rock quarry that the Germans had used before and we set these truck units up and we brought the quarry rocks was in 2 or 3 steps up the hillside. We had the thing organized and produced it. So, we were doing that for a while and then we got the bridges and we were building bridges then. We had to blow the bridges out to take Hitler down so now we had to build the

bridges up so our troops could get in with their tanks and artillery and all that wheel stuff, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you landed, you landed at Omaha Beach, is that right?

Mr. McGinnis:

That's right. That would be about the 11th of June, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there much wreckage along the beach when you landed?

Mr. McGinnis:

Much what? No, no. They'd had some fellows that made it before us, just directly before us almost to clean up litter and that sort of thing. Then, the bombing—the bombers, we talked to some of the Air Force afterwards. They said they bombed their own debris back and forth down there. Thinking they had everything cleared for us to land, but they didn't know that underneath our bombing, they had tunnels with artillery on tracks and so when we started to attack, our attack, launch it, they rolled them big guns out and just fire on us. Some of the guys, didn't make a difference if you were an officer or what, they were just shooting at anybody that was walking. So, some other guys made pole charges and crawled up in the hillside into those places where the guns were. They set that charge off and they blew up the gun like that. It was kind of a hellish war there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened there?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, a little further in, we were building bridges and one night, some of the 82nd airborne came back from up in the front. They said they'd been on the front up there. And it was so many men, both German and American that they killed so many. I forget the number—thousands and in this area, it was a big, long strip where the 2 armies could come together. They said they shut down the war for a day so they could both clean up their dead. I thought man that's—of course, they were having their first cooked meal with us at our big, double kitchen truck and our cooks cooked meals for them. They had their first meal. It was their first meal for them to be back instead of using biscuits and dried rations and that sort of stuff. So they was out in the middle—and they were telling us about all this. When we got out there, I could see what they were talking about, my friend. There was like bodies stacked on each other between apple trees as you would drive along for a mile or two. You're talking at a pretty big field where the army's met and where all this slaughter happened. After a mile or two of seeing the bodies, they hadn't had a channel to bury them. After I saw that many bodies, I'm talking American bodies, I said a prayer out loud. 'Oh merciful God, do we still have enough men left to win a war?'. I was seeing thousands of bodies laying there. My goodness, when you go 2 or 3 miles and they start getting a little low there as back as far as the eye can see, there's bodies stacked up. We paid a mighty price, but our president we got down there now he doesn't have an idea of what that was like. I'm pretty sarcastic about our president, so. I'd like to go to Washington D.C. and do the same thing. That's not helping your report any, so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. McGinnis:

Then we came in with some difficulties. Two of our officers wanted to go what we call GI. They wanted formation and this kind of thing and formation was not the answer as we were merging into the middle of France at that time. When they did a formation and what they didn't know, sad to find out when they made a formation, there was a German up in one of these like a church tower, that's what they had—big church towers, with a machine gun and started firing on our formation. Wow, man that was havoc. That just blew people down like they were sitting ducks, you know. So, they didn't make any more of them huge, mass formations in troops moving up through France after that. Of course, they took the guy down that was up there, but they had snipers who were pretty good at this kind of thing and they had to battle them along at different times. They were places—in fact, it looked like some of those they had built—the observation towers so they could see and direct their artillery out into our troops coming in. They knew some of our boys were doing. They were night time fellas and blew some of those towers down. They didn't have drones and all kinda things up there flying around telling them where we was at, that sort of thing. Now, they did later as we got on in to Germany, they did have some things that would come up and fly and give them some directions, that sort of thing. Then, we started running in to, as we got more towards Germany, what they called buzz bombs. They look like a little airplane going through the air with fire flying out of it, but it was a ton of TNT in that thing with wings on it and then they'd direct them out if they could. Anytime they found a concentration of troops or some of the hospital areas or anything else with a concentration, and somehow or other they'd have some people in amongst us there, still in favor of some of them and they would give them points where to land some of these buzz bombs. That was kind of a mixed up mess there. So, we were still down building bridges and some of the areas were getting pretty close to Belgium and one, I have story on here. Many times, we had

our troops divided up in so many directions doing different things. I was driving my truck and I went to come down this hill to a city where the Germans had blown the trees over the highway to slow down our procedure coming in there, progress. Of course, we had a dozer. One of the guys with a dozer pushed all the trees out of the way and I come down with okay, driving down there with my truck and trailer and crossed the bridge site. When I crossed the bridge site, there was a—one of our bridges with a tank retriever on the bridge and in fact, on the retriever. Now that's a pretty big load. But, the bridge underneath it was sagging and way down in the valley and across the tank retriever couldn't move that way. It was stalled right there. What had happened, The Germans had put pressure charges in the approach to the bridge so a lot of weight like that type would cause it to set these bombs off and it would go up and that's what happened to the bridge. We got there to build new ones right alongside what was already sagging. One of the fellas was already making a placement for starting our new bridge. He was dozing the dirt up in a pile from where we were, away from it and he got it up about as high as oh, I'd say 18, 20 feet high, something like that. He was doing a good job of it and all of a sudden, his dozer hit a bomb they pushed in there because the Germans knew we'd try to make a second and it was—it blew the inside of all that D8, the pistons and oil and everything, that engine just flew out in all directions. That operator on that thing, he went up in the air and turned over, I don't know what his name was or whatever, but he landed on top of the dirt he just pushed up there on his butt and walked right back down. I shook his hand and said 'Thank God for your safety'. He said 'I had no idea something was gonna happen like that'. I said 'No, I didn't either'. So one of the fellas right there, he said 'I'm gonna take this mine sweeper down here at the end of the bridge that was already sunk in the valley that I was talking about and go down there and see if they have any more down there in the ground yet. So he was down with the minesweeper and he found one

so he hooked onto it with a dragline and he came back about 150 feet or 200 maybe with his line and yanked it and BOOM, it blew up there dirt and everything. It was a mess. After that occurred, he shook his head and we did too. He said 'Well, I wonder if they've got any more down there'. Well, the Germans are so good—see we had been trained on a lot of that stuff that they were doing when we were still in England and now he said 'Well, I'll go down and see if they've got any more down there'. So, he walked down with the minesweeper and his hook line that he used. Just about the time he got to it, it blew up one in time release. The other one it had already blown up. It blown his legs off and he just fell over dead right there. So, that's the kind of stuff we was in called non-combatant. Well, that was some of the kind of excitement we were running into there. So, there were some good things happened though. We were right close—by this time, this was happening, we were close to what the Germans built to keep everybody out called the Siegfried Line. The Siegfried Line was a big cement giant dragon piece up in the air from the ground, in the ground sticking up. So, anything motorized wouldn't be able to go beyond it. So, we took our trucks and hauled a fellow with a dozer pushed telephone poles up on top of these things and in between them and then we hauled slag and dirt and covered up bridge over the top of those things, the Siegfried Line, so we could go on in. At about that time, what happened was a thing called the Bulge. And so one night, one day a truck hauled that stuff up for the Siegfried Line. On the way back, he said 'Hey, it sounds like one of them boys has got a loud muffler'. Some of the guys did make—they did put a can over their exhaust pipe and drive a spike through it and it was making a noise like that. It was probably about—maybe one of them black boys has got one of them souped-up trucks, he said. I looked a little bit and I said 'No, no, no. It ain't the black boys'. I said 'I'll tell ya, we got a buzz bombing went right past us over about 300-400 yards from us and out over the hill and it blew up just before it came to the

field hospital. It was pretty scary stuff. We're up there getting a ridge built for that, but we're looking at an outhouse—what had been a school building, like a high school troops were in the rest and getting a rest and getting ready for the next attack. In come a train down below us loaded with soldiers and GIs. There were some times, I wanna tell you this. There were some times when the morale was very low and victory didn't seem to be happening and they needed something extra to revive them, it would be things like this happen. So, they came up there and the train stopped. They always had a big station sign suspended and they looked the sign had been shot down with artillery and everything else. About half the men that was on there, I would stand to guess that at the time there were probably, 8 or 900, maybe a thousand and then 4 or 5 flat cars that this train was pulling. Anyway, one of the guys took out his canteen that we had strapped on our belts and inside the canteen was a cup. He took that cup and he held the cup to his mouth. Now anything that was remembering of home in them days would boost your morale. He held that up to his mouth and he said like he would to the radios back in here, he said 'There will now be a short pause for station identification' and the guy yelled 'Woo!'. They jumped off that train, off both sides of it and moved right up for the next attack/the next charge. I could tell ones who were older soldiers in the battle than the ones behind because the ones that kept following him had new uniforms on, nice green uniforms and them boys was battle scarred that was heading the bunch. There were long lines on both sides going back up. People were hollering and yelling and "Woohoo!". Of course, that guy said in them days, they were used to hearing on the radio at home 'There will now be a short pause for station identification'. When he said that, that really boosted the morale and revived them all and away they went to the next operation. So, we saw things like that. Sometimes, we'd be in an area that had been shot at pretty bad and maybe we'd find that once in a while, in one of the old war torn houses, a piano

with enough keys on it they could make a little music and then we could get a few fellas together and do numbers and songs and sing some and get the guys revived and boy, away they'd go.

The next few hours on an assignment a whole group of them, they're like we would have here at a drive in theater, you know. I think there was a song that they were singing and humming over there at that time. If I can bring it back to mind—let's see—I told somebody about it today, I'm having a little trouble bringing it back again. Boy, I'm thinking of an old place—No, I can't get it started right for you now. Yeah we all sing it then. We knew it. So, anyways, somebody would get to singing them songs until we get revived and away they'd go again. Yep, got the morale up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You mentioned the Battle of The Bulge. Were you in that?

Mr. McGinnis:

Our company was right in the edge of it. We were already camped and I'd been guarding about 100 of our trucks and trailers with 2 other men. We had kind of a dug out where we could watch the operation and guard our trucks. Down over the hill from where we were, there was a little village called Hependok. At night time, they would have their scouts—German scouts would come through and we didn't bother with a scout. You just turned your back and let them go by, didn't say a word, didn't let them know where you were at. What was happening across the Bulge, it was kind of like a glitch in the commands. The 4th Division was there with their artillery during the time that we moved in there. Then the 4th Division was replaced with a group that trained where we were in Oklahoma. They had the cross stitch patch on their shoulder and I forget the outfits number, I knew at one time. Anyway, they pulled in and they didn't have any artillery support and that's what these German scouts were coming through at night—to see why

that part of line wasn't allowed artillery, they were getting fire from them. So, they reported that of course to Hitler and headquarters and they brought a big armament men and heavy material all down around that side and then---

Mr. Misenhimer:

This is side 2 of tape 1 with Amos McGinnis. You said something about a carbine. What was that?

Mr. McGinnis:

Our company was only armed with carbines. We weren't having anything big. Our company of 205/210 men. They had nothing but what trucks and equipment they had, get away from the Bulge. They came over to a place called Uopian and I was at Raian with a special group I had with me for bridge repair there and our guys came up over the hill from Uopian toward Raian and there they parked bumper to bumper which was against all combat rules and the Germans spotted them and they came over and bombed them right there. I could have shot the German in the plane coming over to bomb them. I didn't know if it was my own troops or my own outfit. There were so many troops all around us. They said to me 'Don't you fire!'. See, I had a placement already set up for my 50 caliber machine gun and I had training to know how to do it. I would've taken him right out of the air because he was low level, flying just above the trees. But, they said to me 'Don't you fire or we'll shoot you!' They didn't want me to reveal the mass of troops that we had in that area. That was the reason they didn't want me firing at that guy. So, then from behind that—now all that was going on, the rest of Batogne was fighting the Bulge, but the great miracle that happened from it was the Germans pulled everything from many of their area around there for the attack of that area and when they did, they were weakened as we started through early in the spring and right through the Remagen Bridge and on

over into Germany. The ones that died in Bastogne paid the price for it. That was some of the things that was going on in the midst of it all. And then you know, oh, do you have time?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Go ahead.

Mr. McGinnis:

I noticed when we were marching up through Germany, on our way to Berlin, the German people on both sides of the street were cheering us on and bringing out cookies and hot bread and good treats. 'Americans! Stop the Ruskies! Stop the Ruskies!' is what they were saying. Also, I saw one thing else. They were people just like we are. They weren't space people or aliens from outer space or anything—just ordinary people trying to make a living. Then Hitler, in '39, he dissolved the 2 other parties except the Nazi party and then the people had no way to fight against what he and the Nazi party said. If they resisted them, they got wiped out. So these nice people were just trying to stay alive and we had some great times there with them. But, I saw the Germans—actually, I gotta back up here. I saw Russians with a GI truck, one of our trucks with a big beef animal in it taking it away from us towards Russia and we paid the price back here for every one of those things they stole and took back to Russia. It was factories right there where I would see like V-8 engines and there was a long stretch, like 300 feet or more and Russia just stripped the nation of that stuff, all of that, anything they wanted while they built the wall and couldn't get anything back then. So, that's a little story, something maybe newspapers didn't have, I don't know.

Mr. Misehimer:

Was anybody close to you wounded or killed?

Mr. McGinnis:

No, none of our fellas. One of them died in a truck accident. I don't know how that happened and I wasn't near when that happened. He was some miles away from me. One of the guys got hurt in an accident, I don't remember if it was the same one, but he came out of it and out of the hospital and he was okay. But, we watched one of them and I don't know what happened. He turned it over, maybe he was going too fast, I didn't know—in them days you didn't get all the news of it because it wasn't—you weren't right where it happened and it was bits and pieces and that sort of thing so I didn't know what the problem really was. Now wait a minute, I have to back up a little bit on that time I told you that we parked bumper to bumper and the bomber came over and bombed it. Now, he bombed that line and there were 2 or 3 of them that lost their life. One of them was a sergeant and he was a whale of a guy. We really respected him. He jumped out of his truck when this came by and this bomb blew his tank off the truck and blew it open and it blasted fire all over him and he ran in flame until he died and fell. Anyway, one of the boys was blown up into the side arms that brace the electrical arm that goes across them, the little insulators are screwed in. He got pretty bad mangled and some of them blown some skin off of them and got caught with the blast. They ran out from both ways from their vehicles out into the field. It was minimal-1 or 2 got killed. But, that was a terrible waste. Make a break from the Bulge. They'd run from it. They didn't want to go, their officers. Then as they come up, they go into a bomb shelter and our guys just ordinarily when we were driving a convoy we'd have officers out, front leading them where to go. When they didn't know where to go, they just started bumper to bumper to bumper which was against all our training—never to be close together like that so if anyone did go over and bomb them, they couldn't just rip up a whole bunch of them. So, that was kind of some of the terrible things that we were encountering. Where I was at, there was no one killed, where I was standing was where I was going to fire at

the Germans. These were people on the, in the convoy during the fight, not near me though. It was my outfit though that was all parked down there from bumper to bumper from the way up over the hill Upiana to Raian at the borderline between Germany and Belgium.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by German tanks?

Mr. McGinnis:

No, no. Some of my friends that came back—now this was on Mortain Hill. They had an awful fight there and bombing our troops and tanks and artillery. I found one day, snooping around a little bit, after we got landed there because we were going to do some more bridge building, I remember this soldier there and I wish at that time, I would have wrote some things down for later. He just opened his care package from home and a bomb went off and he died right there sitting by his fox hole. But, some of the boys that come back and had supper with us after that thing. This was not the 82nd Airborne, these were just soliders. They said some of the hellish things they witnessed down there. Our guys was dug in and the tanks came over and it was down off the Mortain Hill, on a plain like and our guys were dug in fox holes and when the tanker went over, they would wait until they went over them and they would raise up out of a fox hole and take a what they call a Molotov cocktail, it was a bottle of gasoline with a rag around it and throw it into the engines in the back of the tank and it would burn them out. When the tankers saw what was happening, then they would do—what the boys was telling me when I was there, they would find—they would watch one another, where these guys were and they would drive over there with a tank and grind a man right out while he's down in that fox hole. Pretty gruesome stuff. That was a number of them that happened there. I didn't see it, but the boys that did said 'Man,' he said 'It was just unspeakable to see some of your friends being ground right

out by them.' You see, a tank would hold the one track and grind the other one and grind the person right out in the ground. Yep, some of the pretty hellish stuff there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. McGinnis:

Shortly after we got into France, oh, 2 or 3 weeks, we were being bombed pretty good one night and we had dug in and I saw a lot of other animals laying across—the poor animals had gotten bombed and German soldier and officers also. It was a terrible looking battlefield. I saw one young Gelding, a beautiful horse out across one of them fields there. It was a pretty nice vista yet, what was left of him and that thing was, I could tell it was bewildered, looking for some kind of comfort or something from all the fear and it went (neighed) and gave it a good whinney. I could do it in them days because I had horses at home and talked with them, played with them. She answered and came bouncing back over to me and I couldn't believe it. Yes, she understands my horse talk and a couple guys took turns riding her around in the field there. That was a big thing and I was thinking partially digging in for—in case a bomb came over, dig me a hole get away from the bomb because many times, you wouldn't get hit with a direct bomb, but if you were above ground, the concussion sometimes would get you. We had a little fun there. Some of them really had a kick out of seeing the guys ride the horses, or that horse. They would change riders. That animal was just as happy as could be to see somebody living. I'll tell you, a whole lot more things, my goodness, the whole war we were working there for, goodness, oh we had some things—as the war was over, we were taking some of the people in Belgium and some of them in France didn't want all of our military equipment left there. They said it takes some jobs away from hands. So, being an engineer, they had me on a big truck crane and we were

lifting from a stock yard heavy, bulletproof cabs for half tracks, things like that. They're heavy. That would be a half a ton or something like that and they were in stacks 20 feet up all cabs, all covered in crating and everything. And so, one day, I was switching one out and the guy was still sitting in the truck while I was bringing this, swinging this reinforced cab around to his truck and at that particular time, we'd had some rain and the hooks on that crane had slipped and just happened when it was in focus with the truck bed, the steel bed, on this heavy duty truck and when it hit. I could see his, it went out from under his rear end where he's sitting there with the steering wheel in his hand, of course about a foot, 2 feet of space when that half ton weight hit the truck and springs everything down. He was left in the air a little bit after that time, we didn't have anyone sitting in the truck while we were loading stuff off the docks getting it out of the country. That was kind of shaky there for a while, but some things did happen way out of our control. It wasn't too catastrophic anyway. There was many other times—keep things going. The fellas were black marketing tires and all sorts of things and their cigarettes, they'd take them to Southern France and get more money for it, black market. So, the guys got in all kinds of racket like that sort of thing. I didn't have time for black marketing. Oh, I did trade my cigarettes for the guy's ration that had fruit bars. They'd trade me a fruit bar for a cigarette. I didn't smoke so they were welcome to them. But some of them would take their carton of cigarettes down and they'd sell it for 20 dollars, 30 dollars, black market. Some even sold gasoline to people and take it off their trucks. It was in 5 gallon cans and sell it. Them monkeys would do all kinds of things. That's after we were not in battle anymore. It was over by the time we were doing that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit were you in?

Mr. McGinnis:

508th engineer company LP Light Pontoon.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. McGinnis:

Well, we kind of sensed if they were superior or inferior. But, they had come out of college and right into it. One of them, Lieutenant Weller, I and a few of the guys with me called him Sea Biscuit. That was a race horse at one time and he ran everywhere. Oh, he did everything. He ran. And one day, this is a kind of interesting thing to me, since I didn't smoke and dad was a part of that. Anyway, we were taking our test for overseas. We were still here in the states. He would make you run 100 yards with your full equipment on—backpack and whatever you were carrying and all your equipment and you'd run about a hundred yards and back and they'd time you. Lieutenant Weller made his, this guy we called Sea Biscuit, we didn't call him that to his face. When he came back off his run, I saw him reach in his pocket and pull out his cigarette pack and throw it in the air just as far as he could throw it and I said 'Lieutenant Weller, whatever made you do that?' He said 'I was in this man's football field, national football, and I know how my wind has been hindered since then until now'. And when he said that, I thought oh, that's good enough for me. I don't need any more cigarettes. I wasn't using any, but that clinched it for me. So, most of our officers were pretty fine guys and they treated you pretty nice too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider the most frightening time? What was some of them? Tell me some of them.

Mr. McGinnis:

I'm gonna tell you about coming down a hill on the road with the trees down on. Down in there, that morning, there was another episode completely different from the rest—everything got washed away. When we went into an area like that—that was pronounced cleared for us for construction and besides all the other things I told you about this is an another addition to that one. There was kind of a wall from my viewing and past that bridge and the tank and the tank retriever was set on. On beyond that another 100 yards was a wall it looked like kind of covered with grape vine or some kind of vines and after all this other booming happened, several of our people gathered and more men came in to see what was going on when the dozer got blown up and everything. Men were coming in there just to see what was happening and what we needed to do and right about that time, those vines just parted and here was some Germans in back of that wall and they had 50 caliber machine guns and they started firing at us. Well, of course they missed me right away. I could hear them. A 50 caliber will pop when it goes by you. Pop. Pop. It popped and I jumped out of the line of fire real quick over towards my truck and man oh man, they really let us have it. A couple hand grenades went off and it didn't hit any of us, but I think the guys had meant to throw them at the Germans and I knew somebody was going to quiet them because we had enough men coming in from different directions. All of a sudden, here comes a guy, army outfit, I don't know, but he's a photographer for the Army and he's got a big flash mirror and a flash bulb and everything, you know and just as he comes up to me, we hear this artillery that they had mounted on or on railroad tracks, big Bertha, they called it—the Germans had. They were firing and this first one just as he came to me they fired one of these big things and you could hear it in the air. It was so big, the missile, it would come out, it would go 'Woo, woo, woo, woo'. You could hear it doing that in the air. And he looked at me and "What do you

do now?' 'Dive under the truck' . And we both dived under the truck and trailer sitting there. Of course, it was empty—the trailer and the truck also. And, he said, he looked at me—it went on over the hill, it didn't land right close to us, it went far over the hill before it blew up. Then pretty soon, another one come. I'm wrong now. I had to think back. The truck wasn't empty yet. There was still weight when we got the area that he was dozing ready for me to go over and unload it and was going to build a bridge there. So, when he looked at me he said 'What do you do now?' I said 'Dive under the truck and trailer'. And we did and then he said 'Do you think we're pretty safe here now?' and you could hear the next one coming Woo, Woo, Woo, Woo, Woo. It went way over the hill past us. I said to him 'We're pretty safe here unless they hit the truck'. And I said 'There's 10 tons right above our head'. And I said 'We'll be squashed if they hit the truck'. He said 'I don't know whether to stay or run'. I said 'Your best bet is to hang on because they'll quiet that big Bertha down up there after a while and they'll pull it back'. And then I said 'You can get up and you'll be okay'. So that was the excitement there for a little bit. When they opened up with the 50 calibers and then the big artillery from the railroad track, flying under the truck together. So it gave him some interesting pictures to take to send back home for the troops here. That was one of the exciting times. Oh my goodness, if you're in like we were so well from one to the other up to there—it's hard to catalog them all and we did have a history of the 508 engineers, but they—our boys back here in the United States after we got back made it and they got it out to each one of us and by the size about as thick as an ordinary Sears Roebuck catalogue in the old days. It was about 2 inches thick or so. I moved from Idaville some years ago, retired a second time there in ministry and I moved from there to where in live now in Flora and darned if I didn't leave that thing inside the clothes closet up on a high shelf. And I'd give anything—to have it back because it would have all the information you're

asking about from the time we landed until we were home back in the United States. When our ship—one of the things coming home—like on liberty ships, troop ships, but they were light for troops to be in them and we were in a bad storm coming back to the United States and the thing would raise up in the back and would rev up and would shake the ship until it was about coming apart. In fact, they told us if that would have went on another 3 hours, that would've—as long as they had built them ships upside down in a hurry and welded them together. That's what we were coming home in. So, when it was that bad, some of the big 55 gallon drums that they had anchored in the ship with some kind of disinfectant to swab the deck with and kind of keep the germs down—they broke loose and they would hit some of those posts. They'd have 2 posts up and cots to lay in stretched between them, like hammocks, you know. It knocked the posts out of some those. Some of the troops kind of got banged up. They didn't get killed or anything, but they got kind of bad hurt—that was so bad. After that—we noticed—the fellas, the crew who watched guard the ship, every 4 hours you know, all the crews were up having coffee and we didn't know what a really bad accident was besides the problem of these big drums going around knocking down the posts. One of the fellas, several fellas was in these like hammocks. Then a little later on, they told us, they said 'If that storm had lasted another hour, the reason they were all up, they were afraid we were going to have to abandon the ship'. And when the next day, day and a half, we were at sea, we were several miles out yet, we came in and landed and we saw that liberty up there and all the signs welcome us home. Some of the guys said 'I wouldn't do that', but I got down and kissed that old fish oil, stuff when we came in on the deck. I was thankful to God to be back home and they said 'Another hour through that storm and our ship would have never made it'. It was a pretty exciting time, my friend. Under fire.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get back? What date did you get back to the states?

Mr. McGinnis:

It was in April. 15th of December '44. It was time to go hunting a few days up in Pennsylvania.

Hunting for deer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Must've been '45.

Mr. McGinnis:

Had to of been '45. Yeah, it says here '45.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were discharged?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah. Let's see the discharge date here, '45. And it says one month after December 31, '45.

Premium due. I don't know what that means. December 31, '45, premium due.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When Germany surrendered on May the 8th, did you have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yes, oh my goodness. They really did have. They brought us in a military area with a big dinner. Oh goodness yes. They had music for us and the whole bunch, you know. They had a great celebration for us. Some of the most exciting experience over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. McGinnis:

Oh, yeah. She was on a few times. She would be telling us all the negative things she could come up with. It never broke our morale. She'd give us all kinds of negative things.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. McGinnis:

Oh, no. Not at all. See, I came home on leave. After our training, I had a break there and got married and so I was ready to get home and see my wife and our families. My dad was still working and cleaning out wells, oil wells. I worked for him for 5 or 6 months. Then I decided—my neighbor was a barber and I'd been with him years before and Dad had me there and I got my hair cut in the Army a lot. The barber said 'You outta try barber for a living'. He said 'The barber shop and the house were right there and it was all one building. The barber shop and the house was behind it and he said 'Come down and have my dinner'. And I said 'No dinner pail for me'. The wife and I both went to Cleveland, Ohio. I went to barber college. I was on GI Bill there. You were asking about the GI Bill. The GI Bill helped me in barber college and she went to beauty school at the same time. When we finished that, the back of the barber shop made us a home and it was a small amount of rent we paid, I don't remember the exact amount now, but it was a small amount, but we helped all kinds of things she needed done around the house. Trees she needed down in the back yard and I went up and cut half of it down and then got the rest of it down and did some things there, but I was in barber college. So, that was—one night while we were living there, shortly after we were there, my wife and I, Evelyn was her name and the fire engine went by real close by us on the street, screaming the sirens something awful and of course, the old military was diving for cover and the wife woke me up and looked for me she said 'What are you doing under there under the bed, Amos?' 'I'm getting away from the

bombers!' and she said 'There's no bombers'. That screaming thing set me off. A lot of guys did have post traumatic stress, that kind of thing. I went right back in barbering. We would come back to work there. The old barber, he was retiring—bought the place out, I barbered there from about 1957, something like that and my neighbor, he came back from Africa, he was in the war, Cecil Batty and he said to me 'Amos' he said, 'You outta get started at church' I said 'Oh, I work here man oh man, from 8 in the morning until 8 at night' and I said "Even your dad comes down after he closes the store at night and I cut his hair' I said 'I'm still sleeping when these guys come home from church' 'Oh,' he said 'Amos, I heard you tell the guys in here one night that you and your wife get up at 4 in the morning to be out there on the deer crossing at 5 or 5:30 as it comes daylight to get a deer'. He said 'If you can do that for one of the Lord's animals, you ought to be able to do a little more for your own soul'. He put the heat on me and got me started at church. Several years later in 1957, God came to me in my bed at night and put the sweats on me and that's what I'm doing with my book here, I'm writing it now, dictating it and said 'Oh, you're sweating, something's wrong' he said 'Amos, come' I dreamed there was a big cloud over me in my bed and I told the wife of mine. She said 'Oh, it's a bad dream. Go to sleep'. Next week the same 'Bad dream, go to sleep'. The third time it happened I got up at 4:30 in the morning. She said 'Where you going?'. I said 'I soaked my bed with sweat. The Lord's calling me. I'm calling the preacher'. And I took a shower and called the preacher and she didn't get me back to bed that time so I met the preacher and then told him what I was going to do. He said 'What's the matter? I thought we finished all the business in the meeting last night.' I said 'We did. That was old business, this is new business. What's new?' He said 'Well, it's new to me'. I said 'Oh, I want to give my life to Jesus' He said 'You do?' He looked like his eyeballs were going to jump out of his head, like he was on camera. His eyeballs looked like—he said 'If you

do this, you gotta do this, you gotta do this. It's for keeps.' And when he said that, I said 'Let's get down to the altar' and we prayed. He didn't have a sinner's prayer like I use with people. Anyway, after we prayed, and we started getting up and I don't know if we made it all the way getting up, about half way up, I had a sensation there. I yelled 'Yahoo! I'm clean!'. It seems like God pushed my brain out and his in and everything's been different since. So, that's some things I'll be putting in the book. _____ the very thing he's talking about happened in Job 33:14. Job 33:14 says "God speakth to man who's slumbering in his bed". I said 'Oh, that was me', but 'he availeth not'. It gives him direction so when he wakes up, he will not depart from his purpose, not mine, from God's purpose and that was my call to ministry.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, I had a couple of things. Let's see, I had a German compass and it wasn't very much souvenirs that I had. I did have a bayonet and a scabbard, something like that. And years and the many moons that I've had it, I don't have any of that with me right now. My daughter, she's trying to find some of my pictures that I used for this June 6th anniversary celebration for our soldiers. Some of our boys we had news here today and I was there a year or two ago on this. It's called an Honor Flight to Washington D.C. I saw it was on the news here showing some of the boys on there today how they change the guard and all the memorials and that sort of thing. It's pretty impressive. I was fortunate to get down there. Two years ago, we got the gals that raised the money and this Honor Flight didn't cost a thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, that's a good organization.

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, very nice.

Mr. Misenhimer: August the 15th of 1945, Japan surrendered. Do you recall where you were when you heard that?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, well I kind of expected that right after Hiroshima. That's a good question.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you still in Germany or were you back home?

Mr. McGinnis:

No, we were there after the war processing a whole lot of equipment. We had big equipment. I can't quite remember right now. The coastline places. They would redo old cranes and dozers and all kinds of artillery equipment making them in good condition they would send them to Burma. We got to watching the numbers on the ships and saw them send them to Burma the powers back here didn't want that junk coming back so we dumped a lot of it in the ocean. A lot of guys worked out there for several months after the war was over and I was part of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions since you've been out?

Mr. McGinnis:

Yeah, we have them down near Gettysburg. It wasn't Gettysburg. I knew the towns there, but I knew the—all those things. It's kind of faded now. I didn't write it down at the time. I know when we come away from the reunion, we'd come over and check the battlefield at Gettysburg. I just don't remember. Yeah, we had nice reunions year after year down there with our outfit and our officers and we were in good celebration in those days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On April the 12th, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. McGinnis:

I remember him coming to our camp before we left to go overseas. He came to review and we stood double lines on both sides of the highway where he entered in our camp area to salute him and guard him and he pulled up after 2 or 3 miles to the parade field and up on a big ramp they had for him and he's still holding that big old cigarette holder and he had his cigarette in. That was kind of like a sword he was holding up in the air. So, it was good. We were in good spirit, but I don't remember now where I was or what when I got the news of his dying. So many things and I don't have them all logged down.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. McGinnis:

Well a little further in, we were building bridges and one night, some of the 82nd. airborne came back from the front. They said they'd been on the front up there, and it was so many men, both German and American that they killed so many, I forget the number- thousands and in this area it was a big long strip where the 2 armies could come together. They said they shut down the war for a day so they could both clean up their dead. I thought man that's of course they were having their first cooked meal with us in our big double kitchen truck and our cook cooked meals for them. They had their first meal. It wss their first meal for them to be back instead of using biscuits and dried C rations and that sort of stuff. So they was out in the middle--and they were telling us about all of this.

When we got out there, I could see what they were talking about, my friend. There was like bodies stacked on each other between apple trees as you would drive along for a mile or two. You're talking at a pretty big field where the army's met and where all this slaughter happened. After a mile or two of seeing bodies they hadn't had a chance to bury them. After I saw that many bodies, I'm talking American bodies, I said a prayer out loud. "Oh merciful God, do we still have enough men left to win a war?" I was seeing thousands of bodies laying there. My goodness, when you go 2 or 3 miles and they start getting a little low there as back as far as the eye can see, there's bodies stacked up. We paid a mighty price, but our President we got down there now, he doesn't have any idea what it was like.

There was so much, I don't--. I sure wish I would've kept that book because I could've given you a mountain of material with that. It was a history of our—to being inducted and training and war and home. It was all in that one beautiful book I had. I don't have it now. I don't have the memory of it. I think that's about as far as I can go right now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all of my questions, Amos. Thank you again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. McGinnis:

You're welcome for that. I was happy to go. In fact, I had a couple of cousins that acted like they were losing their mind or something to keep from going in the service. No, I was ready to go. Oh, you and me—maybe you said, you're working for there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, the Nimitz Museum, right.

Mr. McGinnis:

Alright, my family will be asking me 'Are you doing this book for yourself?' that sort of thing.

And I said 'No, I think it's something more than that'.

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