

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Manuel E. Quijas
Corpus Christi, Texas
January 16, 2012**

**820th Tank Destroyer Battalion
Battle of the Bulge**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is January 16, 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Manuel E. Quijas by telephone. His phone number is 361-884-1577. His address is 235 Driscoll Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78408. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Mr. Quijas

September 18, 1919.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Quijas

I was born in a town in the Valley, Mercedes, Texas in Hidalgo County.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Quijas

I had brothers but they are not living any more. They were older than me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they in World War II?

Mr. Quijas

My brother entered the Air Force but they sent him home because he had a wife and three children.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

I managed to make it with my family because my mother was helping in every way. We made it through the Depression alright. The main thing was nobody got sick during that time. We were all able to do some work.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Quijas

My father passed away when he was a young man. I had to work in bakeries and stores and restaurants.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you live in town or out in the country.

Mr. Quijas

I lived in the city.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you able to have a garden or anything like that?

Mr. Quijas

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you could grow some of your own food. Did you have any chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, plenty. My mother raised lots of chickens and hogs.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you sell eggs?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, chickens and eggs. She had turkeys and she had peaches and two or three pigs.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were able to have something to eat during that time?

Mr. Quijas

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Quijas

I finished high school in Pharr, Texas. The school covered three towns, Pharr, San Juan, and Alamo.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish?

Mr. Quijas

February of 1951. I finished high school under the GI program.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Quijas

July 13, 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you went into the Army is that right?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, I went into the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Quijas

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Quijas

My basic training was at Camp Wolter, Texas, south of Waco, near Mineral Wells.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that training. How was your basic training?

Mr. Quijas

Basic training was pretty rough. We had 13 weeks of Infantry training. It was for battle. It was very rough training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do a lot of marching?

Mr. Quijas

Plenty of marching. We marched five miles, practically every day.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of weapons training did you have?

Mr. Quijas

I remember we trained on all of the weapons the Army had to offer. We trained on machine guns, big guns. We had pistols, we had grenades; hand grenade throwing. We had every weapon. Machine guns and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the infiltration course, where you crawl under live ammunition being shot over you?

Mr. Quijas

Yes sir. Right there at Camp Wolters, Texas. We went through that training.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that?

Mr. Quijas

I wasn't scared, to tell you the truth. Not only the live bullets, but even the hand grenades that were dug in the ground; when they exploded, they filled my mouth and my eyes with lots of dirt.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was quite an experience, wasn't it?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, very rough training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were your drill instructors pretty hard on you?

Mr. Quijas

The Sergeants and Corporals were just following orders.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food during basic training?

Mr. Quijas

It was pretty good. There was no problem with the food. We ate all that we wanted to eat but we had to walk five miles every day. The last march that we had; the final march was 15 miles.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a full field pack on that march?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, a full pack. Canteen, ammunition, duffel bag that we carried in the bag.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in at basic training?

Mr. Quijas

The basic training that we had at Camp Wolters we moved from there to Camp Bowie, Texas. At Camp Bowie we marched all the way to Fort Hood, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you moved to Camp Bowie after you finished basic training, is that right?

Mr. Quijas

That is right. That was a march of over 100 miles.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you walked over there?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. We stopped and spent the night and would rest and then start marching again. We got to Fort Hood, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would take you several days, right?

Mr. Quijas

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Why did you walk instead of going on a truck or something?

Mr. Quijas

Because the only ones that rode in the Army were the ones that were mechanized. We were not mechanized, we were Infantry so we had to walk.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do at Camp Hood?

Mr. Quijas

We did more training for Infantry at Camp Bowie. When we came to Fort Hood, we had been at Camp Swift, which is 35 miles east of Austin, Texas; we had already formed the 820th Tank Battalion at Camp Swift. Then we were doing different training. There was no more Infantry training. The training was to destroy enemy tanks.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you did that training where?

Mr. Quijas

At Camp Hood we were training out in the fields to destroy the enemy tanks. I was a driver. The training we had, five people in a tank were supposed to know each of the duties. I was supposed to know the duty of a commander, of a driver, everybody's, the loader, the gunner. All five people were supposed to know each other's jobs.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of vehicle did you have?

Mr. Quijas

A half-track; two tires in the front and tracks in the rear.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of gun did you have on that?

Mr. Quijas

A three-inch gun.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is a pretty powerful gun, isn't it?

Mr. Quijas

It is. Like the artillery; it is pretty powerful.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some of the things that you did in the training there?

Mr. Quijas

The special thing that we did, not only me but the others that formed the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion was to train the new soldiers that came in from the state of Michigan. We had to train them what we had learned in our training; to train these new ones.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long was that training at Fort Hood?

Mr. Quijas

I was there for about six months.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you left to go overseas, right?

Mr. Quijas

No sir. We went to the port of embarkation at Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts. From there we left to go overseas on October 8, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel up there?

Mr. Quijas

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got to ride that time?

Mr. Quijas

They put the tanks on flat cars and we rode the train to Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you left from there to go overseas?

Mr. Quijas

Yes on October 8, 1943 out of Boston to Liverpool, England.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of ship did you go over on?

Mr. Quijas

It was supposed to be a passenger ship in peace time, but in war time they converted it.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about your half-tracks, how did they go?

Mr. Quijas

We left the half-tracks behind. They took them by ship. I don't know how they got them over there but we lost those half-tracks in the Battle of the Bulge. No more half-tracks after that. We came all the way back to Belgium until they brought us some tanks; medium sized tanks.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to Liverpool what happened there?

Mr. Quijas

We got over there a week later, after October 8th. It happened to be my mother's birthday. The following week we got to Liverpool on a Saturday, early in the morning. It was very foggy. After we got off the ship we marched to the train station. We got on a train and we went to the other port. Another port where we got on an English ship and crossed the English Channel. We landed at Omaha Beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you cross the Channel?

Mr. Quijas

It had to have been around the 15th of October. If we were there one week, that would have been October 16, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

You weren't in England very long before you crossed over the Channel.

Mr. Quijas

They said that the narrowest place was 8 miles wide. Where we crossed we ended up on the beaches of a little town called Cherbourg, France.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that is where you went in, to Cherbourg?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, we were camping outside of Cherbourg. Then we got orders to move further in. The front lines were far away from where we were at in Cherbourg.

Mr. Misenhimer

By then they had started the breakout from the invasion there. Did you have your vehicles then?

Mr. Quijas

At the Battle of the Bulge we had the half-tracks. We didn't have the medium tanks yet.

Mr. Misenhimer

When was your first combat?

Mr. Quijas

In the Ardennes at the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that was the first time that you got into combat?

Mr. Quijas

That is right.

Mr. Misenhimer

From Cherbourg to there did you drive your vehicles there, or how did you travel to there?

Mr. Quijas

We traveled on our half-tracks. We stopped on one side of Paris to take a break. That's all I remember. Someone said, "That is Paris right there." I didn't care too much about it. What did we care? We were going to the front lines to fight a war.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you driving your vehicles down there?

Mr. Quijas

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you hadn't had any contact with the Germans before that?

Mr. Quijas

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what happened at the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Quijas

We went to relieve another battalion on the front lines. We had to relieve the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion in the middle of the night. They told us that it was pretty quiet. I think we only stayed there for about a week; that is all. The 16th day of December the Germans started their offensive and they drove us back and back. We stopped several times to fight them but they kept pushing and pushing us until we got to Belgium.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you shoot up the German tanks?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. They called them, they had a name, those big German tanks.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had Tiger tanks and some others.

Mr. Quijas

Yes, the Tiger tanks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you shoot at those?

Mr. Quijas

We stopped and fought them with everything we had but they were coming too strong. They gave us orders to keep retreating, back and back and back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could your guns stop those Tiger tanks?

Mr. Quijas

No sir. We kept retreating. They gave us orders to retreat and retreat. But during that time the Germans caught some prisoners from my outfit and maybe from other outfits also. They caught prisoners; some of them were wounded and some of them were prisoners, but they might have got killed. We didn't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did they get captured?

Mr. Quijas

They were overpowered. There were too many German soldiers against too few American soldiers.

Mr. Misenhimer

So they were overrun.

Mr. Quijas

Yes. They put up a fight. They got killed or captured or wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any machine guns on your half-track?

Mr. Quijas

We did. There was plenty of firing during the Battle of the Bulge. They had cannons, like artillery shooting at us. Big shells, machine guns, hand grenades, everything. They had a lot of weapons throwing at the American soldiers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a machine gun mounted on your half-track?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. It was a 50 caliber machine gun.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all shoot that at the German soldiers?

Mr. Quijas

We were shooting but we had the Infantry on the sides of the tanks. They were doing more shooting with their machine guns than we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you still have half-tracks now or had you gotten the medium tanks?

Mr. Quijas

At the Battle of the Bulge we had half-tracks. That was the only battle that we had the half-tracks. We left them behind. We kept retreating back to Belgium.

Mr. Misenhimer

You retreated without your half-tracks?

Mr. Quijas

Yes sir, everything. Half-tracks, gone. We just got out of there as quick as we could get out of there. They knew how many battalions the Germans were throwing at us on the Western front.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do anything to disable your guns or half-tracks?

Mr. Quijas

They gave us the order to destroy them. We put shells in the guns to destroy them. They had some soldiers that hid there. They went over and took the carburetors out of the half-tracks so they couldn't use them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you disable the guns also?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. We dismantled the whole shell mechanism.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is what I wanted to get clarified. The Germans could not capture them and use them.

Mr. Quijas

They couldn't use our equipment.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the closest you got to German soldiers? Were you real close to some of the German soldiers when you were retreating?

Mr. Quijas

The Infantry captured some German soldiers and we helped them search the German soldier prisoners for guns, knives, bayonets, or whatever. There were plenty of German soldier prisoners.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a rifle or anything?

Mr. Quijas

I always carried a machine gun with me.

Mr. Misenhimer

A tommy gun?

Mr. Quijas

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fire that at the Germans?

Mr. Quijas

Day and night.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know if you hit any?

Mr. Quijas

They were firing at us and I guess we hit some of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

How far back did you retreat?

Mr. Quijas

Our front from their front must have been about a mile.

Mr. Misenhimer

Pretty close then.

Mr. Quijas

Yes. The machine guns could reach. The 50-caliber machine gun could reach. Also, their guns could reach us.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were starting to retreat, were any of your half-tracks hit by any of the German guns?

Mr. Quijas

We never knew. We just retreated. They ordered us to get out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you shoot at the German tanks at all?

Mr. Quijas

We shot at houses where we thought the German soldiers were hiding. We pretty much shot at everything. They gave us the orders.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened there at the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Quijas

The Battle of the Bulge finally stopped after the weather cleared up and the Air Force started driving them back into Germany. The Germans drove us back to Belgium and they committed a massacre at Malmedy. We went over there after the massacre happened. The American forces drove them back in to Germany again. We kept pushing them back and back and back. We got to the Rhine River. That was the second battle. They called it the Battle of Rhineland. We pushed them into Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

At the Battle of the Bulge I understand that it was real cold. Is that right?

Mr. Quijas

It was the longest battle. The weather was very cold. There was nothing but snow on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have enough warm clothes?

Mr. Quijas

The clothes were not the problem, it was our feet. Our feet got so cold that we needed to warm our feet. When you got frostbite you were not able to walk because the soles of your feet hurt a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of overshoes?

Mr. Quijas

We had snow boots.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you dig foxholes?

Mr. Quijas

We dug foxholes around a tree to save us from the shells of the Germans.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was the ground too hard to dig?

Mr. Quijas

Some of the ground was very, very hard.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you get fed there at the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Quijas

No. Let me explain this. The American kitchens were far behind. We left them far behind because we were rapidly driving the Germans back into Germany. So we had to eat K-rations and C-rations. That was the only thing we had. We couldn't get a warm meal because the kitchen was too far behind.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had to exist on C-rations and K-rations?

Mr. Quijas

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of a sleeping bag or anything to sleep in?

Mr. Quijas

Sometimes we were lucky to get hay in a barn. Other times we slept in the snow.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened there?

Mr. Quijas

The Battle was bad. Too many people didn't come back. They were wounded, captured or killed. I never saw the rest of my buddies from the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was anybody hit close to you?

Mr. Quijas

Not that I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your medium tanks?

Mr. Quijas

We retrained in Belgium. We lost all of our half-tracks but when we got to Belgium we stayed there until we retrained. While we trained we got ready to go forward again.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these Sherman tanks, or what kind of tanks were they?

Mr. Quijas

They called them medium light tanks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have a turret on them?

Mr. Quijas

Yes they had a turret.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of gun did they have?

Mr. Quijas

I think they called it a 75mm gun. They were smaller than the three inch guns we had before.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened when you got those tanks and started moving.

Mr. Quijas

When we got to Rhineland we were pushing the Germans back. Sometimes the German tanks would open fire on us and we would open fire on them also. I was an assistant driver in those tanks. I don't know if we hit the German tanks. We lost one tank in our battalion; we lost one assistant driver by a German tank.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which Army were you in?

Mr. Quijas

They kept saying that one time we were in Omar Bradley's and then at other times they said we were in George Patton's.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was moving pretty fast.

Mr. Quijas

After Rhineland where we saw the Rhine River we started moving pretty fast. The Germans were giving up a lot easier than at the Battle of the Bulge. At the Battle of the Bulge they were not giving up that easy but by the third battle of Central Europe we were already in Czechoslovakia. We were taking care of them when they surrendered. They didn't want to fight anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you cross the Rhine River?

Mr. Quijas

Pontoon bridges.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much German resistance there?

Mr. Quijas

No, they were not too far, but not too close either. They were retreating. When we crossed the Rhine River on the pontoon bridges, we were not fighting at all. We were just going across to the other side of the Rhine River. The Air Force were pretty much taking care of the Germans. They were helping us a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever bombed by German airplanes?

Mr. Quijas

They never hit us that I remember. They never fired at us. There was no firepower from the aircraft.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any dogfights between American planes and German planes?

Mr. Quijas

We witnessed a lot of dogfights. Have you heard about a little town in German called St. Vith? I saw it right there in that town; German planes and American planes. They had a dogfight.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what else happened?

Mr. Quijas

I have had people ask me how did you tell the Germans from the Americans, who they were. We had a canvas that covered the hood of the jeep or truck and it had an American star on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

In the Battle of the Bulge did you get anywhere close to Bastogne?

Mr. Quijas

Yes, but not Bastogne. We went in another direction.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened?

Mr. Quijas

We were fortunate that we were not at Bastogne because they got surrounded by the Germans. We were on the Western Front but at another part. Bastogne was not too far away from Belgium.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was a big fight at a town called Metz. Were you anywhere around there?

Mr. Quijas

No, we were not there. I remember Bastogne. I don't think we were near Metz. We were all over that area but I don't remember the names of the towns. Everybody was everywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened?

Mr. Quijas

I saw a lot of men with open wounds. I saw German soldiers dead in the field. I saw a lot of things. I was trying to save my neck too because I didn't want to get killed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you capture any Germans yourself?

Mr. Quijas

No sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else?

Mr. Quijas

During the fight, I can't remember which front or battle it was, if it was the Battle of the Bulge or if it was Rhineland, but I saw some officers getting shell shock. The shell blew up pretty close to them. They didn't get killed but their ear drums burst. There was a lot of blood coming out of their ears. They were not in command anymore. Somebody else had to take over in command because they were shell shocked and they had to take them to the hospital or some place.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever wounded?

Mr. Quijas

No sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else do you recall?

Mr. Quijas

I saw some of my brothers get wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened?

Mr. Quijas

I saw one of my brothers get a piece of shrapnel in the back. It made a big hole in his back and I saw others that got wounded in the arms and the neck. They were not killed. They took them to the hospitals or some place. I don't know how many got captured as prisoners. I don't know who all got taken prisoner and who all got killed. It was something. What the Germans did at the Battle of the Bulge was they dispersed all the outfits; infantry, artillery, tanks, we were all like confused and we didn't know which way to go. We were waiting for orders to fire or to fight or to go back or

surrender. We didn't know what to do. We had orders from higher rank; we would stay in one place until we got organized with the officers from our battalion or from our division. It was infantry. Over there were a lot of infantry divisions. They were dispersed by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. Me and another soldier were lost up there during the Battle of the Bulge. Then they found our outfit where it was and then we had to get somebody to take us over there where our outfit was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What Division were you working with?

Mr. Quijas

We were not infantry. We knew that General Omar Bradley was in charge. Later on it was George Patton in charge. But we were with the 3rd Army.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have when you were there?

Mr. Quijas

Private First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened?

Mr. Quijas

By that time, at the third battle, we were in Czechoslovakia at a little town close to Prague. We waited until the war was over. They declared the war was over the 8th day of May, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is when the war over, right.

Mr. Quijas

We waited there until we got orders to ship back to France to come back to the States. It was May 8, 1945. From that place in Czechoslovakia they gave us orders to get together and they brought us back to France for embarkation to the States. We came back to France and they put us on a ship to the States. We were going to land in New York but they changed the orders and and we landed at Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you get back to Virginia?

Mr. Quijas

We were supposed to spend the 4th of July on the ocean or land in New York, but we landed in Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do over there from May to July?

Mr. Quijas

The war was over and we were just waiting there for orders in Czechoslovakia. The war was over and the ones that were left in the battalion were supposed to get out of there because we had no business in Czechoslovakia. We just hung around all that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to go to Paris?

Mr. Quijas

No but some of my friends did. I did not go to Paris.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any time off to do any sightseeing?

Mr. Quijas

They gave us time off to go to a place they called R&R. Many soldiers went. It was a place on the Rhine River. The other side of the town, on the other side of the Rhine River, there was a town with the name mentioned many, many times in the history of the battles over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to Norfolk, Virginia, what did you do then?

Mr. Quijas

They took our winter clothes. It was pretty hot in the states. They gave us khaki uniforms and we waited. They shipped us by train to San Antonio, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Quijas

We stayed there. At that time soldiers were getting out on points, if you remember. I was single and I stayed until they lowered the points and then I got discharged under the points system. That was November 19, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

So from July until November you were there in San Antonio, right?

Mr. Quijas

They told us that we were not going to be discharged. They told us they would give us a furlough to go home but then we were to report back because we were going to invade Tokyo, Japan. I said that I was going to have to think it over. I didn't want to go fight anymore. I was released on November 19, 1945 at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you went to San Antonio, after that then?

Mr. Quijas

From San Antonio we went to Atterbury which is where I was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

I had a hard time. I used to tell my mom I was full of military and I wanted to stay and make a career out of the military. But my mom said, "No, you come home." So I had a hard time adjusting to civilian life. I used the GI Bill to finish my high school education. When I finished high school I was already married and had one kid. I had to find a job so that I could support my wife and child. I had one boy at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over in Europe, what would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Quijas

All three battles. The Battle of the Bulge was the worst because the Germans were advancing so rapidly. There were so many German soldiers against our troops. That was the reason we left all the half-tracks and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any one day that you felt more frightened than other days?

Mr. Quijas

I considered myself pretty lucky and some of the other fellows that we were not in the worst places. The Germans had those soldiers they called the SS and they were very mean. They did not want to take prisoners. Their mission was to kill American soldiers.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Quijas

It was pretty fair; not very good, but not very bad either.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

They were trying to do a good job and I remember that we never had any problems with our officers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Quijas

When we were staying in Czechoslovakia we joined the Czech people; they would do dances and holidays and some things like that. Those people in Czechoslovakia were not waiting for us they were waiting for the Russians. But we got there first and they changed their sign up there, it said, "Welcome Americans."

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

No. They told us that we could take souvenirs from Czechoslovakia but we had to find a box and all that and I didn't want to go through all that. Some of the other fellows took guns and bayonets and all that. I didn't bother to do anything like that. I just wanted to get out of there and come home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Quijas

The Red Cross was pretty good, especially right there in Czechoslovakia. They were right there with the American soldiers. I was very proud of the American Red Cross. I was so glad to see Americans so far away from home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Quijas

No. They told us about the woman in Japan. They said there was a German woman that would speak to American soldiers but I never heard her. If I did hear her, I must not have paid any attention.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

Yes. The news got to us. We were on the front lines waiting for orders to advance when we got the news that President Roosevelt died.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Quijas

We started talking among ourselves about who was going to take over. We didn't know what was going to happen.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

Not that I remember. We just knew that we were going to get to go home and we were still alive.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then on August 15, 1945 Japan surrendered. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. I was not at camp. I was at home. They gave us 60 days to go home and get prepared to go to Japan. I told my mom, "I don't think I am going to go. I think I am going to stay here." If I went over there they might kill me in Japan. I told my mom that I didn't think I was going to go.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were home then.

Mr. Quijas

I remember that at that time they dropped the atomic bomb and I said, "Okay, I am going to go." We went to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. They dropped the points to 34 or 35 or something like that. They called my name for discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do?

Mr. Quijas

I know I went to celebrate with my friends that I did not have to go and fight in Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions since you been out?

Mr. Quijas

We had several reunions after the war was over but we didn't celebrate too much because some of my buddies from my hometown, they didn't come back. So we were just glad the war was over but I missed two or three friends from my hometown that didn't make it back home.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Quijas

I got the Good Conduct medal and bronze stars.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many battle stars?

Mr. Quijas

Three battle stars.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get the EAME?

Mr. Quijas

Yes. The European medal and the Atlantic medal and some of those medals, and three bronze stars.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Quijas

Not at this time. If I remember something else we will give you a call.

Mr. Misenhimer

Manuel, thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Quijas

Thank you.

Transcribed by:

Lesle Dial
Beeville, Texas
May 31, 2012

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer
PO Box 3453
Alice, Texas 78333
Home (361) 664-4071
Cell (361) 701-5848