

Mr. Perry: .....and I'm old enough to vote.

Where were you born?

Mr. Perry: I was born in Bridgeport, West Virginia, which is maybe four or five miles out of Cartchburg. It is on Highway 52. Bridgeport is a hillside town.

What branch of service did you serve in?

Mr. Perry: Well, back in those days it was the Army. I went into the engineers and took engineer basic simply because when I got out of high school I went to work for TVA in New York State outside of Syracuse. The purpose was to develop control points for aerial maps. With that background they put me in engineers because I wanted to be in. In order to qualify for a field that they wanted to put me in I went to the University of Kentucky and took all the survey courses that they gave in the civil engineer degree. From there, well I was inducted at Fort Niagara, New York. Roosevelt said, sometime in the summer or early fall of 1942, that he was predicting the weather for the fall. He said that the first draft would come in the fall and it did. Sometimes in December before Christmas they called all the teenage people in and enrolled them and then sent them home for Christmas and New Years. Sometime in the middle of January they inducted us in the Army, inducted at Fort Niagara, New York. From there I went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for engineer basic. Following that they sent me to the University of Kentucky where I took the survey courses. The Army, being a very intelligent organization, all at once realized that they did not have to have maps tied down to foot and inches for the pilots to find the target; all they needed was to furnish them with current maps and pictures of site and they could find their target. That meant that that background I had in survey was not needed any more so they put us in a staging area. They had us doing important things like picking up cigarette butts and all that sort of thing. Finally I got a chance to go into the Air Force which was the Army Air Force then. The Air Force didn't become a separate unit until I think in 1947 they established the Air Force. They made us an attachment really to the survey, a survey attachment unit with the Air Force. They had us going to different places. Part of the time we were in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I remember we had a \_\_\_\_\_ where we went up into the hills in Colorado and shot the sun. You take shots at the sun to determine you longitude and latitude. We had a Staff Sergeant that was in charge of the mission. We were doing our thing and when it came time to go home, to go back to camp; he couldn't find the way out. We finally managed to get back to camp and they told him that as a survey unit you don't ever get lost. That was an interesting thing. When I was there we played war games and I was in Colorado Springs. We were up in the "Garden of Gods" they called it, which is rock formations of various shapes and sizes. I was behind one of those rocks playing soldier and all at once I heard a click. I turned around and there was an M1 pointed at me. That thing was big enough that I could crawl in it and set up housekeeping. The guy said, "You are dead." I said, "I will be if you don't move that thing out of the way." That was an experience.

Were you really scared when that happened?

Mr. Perry: Oh yeah. That thing was big enough that I could climb down the railing and set up housekeeping. I had another experience like that down in Louisiana. That was when the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was preparing to go overseas and they broke the Army up into two teams and they played war. The survey outfit was out laying landing strips and the survey crew always had a whole lot of red flagging tape. I was holding the rod and a guy on the end was taking shots and all at once I turned around and there was another M1 looking at me. He told me again, "You are dead." I said, "I will be if you don't put that thing down." He picked up the red tape and said, "You are in the red Army. I got you." So that was my experience.

That was when you were in basic training when all this was happening?

Mr. Perry: Basic training was at Fort Leonard Wood. We went through infantry basic to fight with the engineer unit. Because we were going into a specialized field, they shortened the 13 week training program down to five weeks. When that was over that was when they sent us off to school and to our assignment of where people were assigned to.

Let me go back to your background and everything. What were your parent's names and their occupations?

Mr. Perry: My mother went to a form of teacher's training school, I think it was a two year program, and got her certification to teach. She taught for one year and then she was married to my dad. My dad and his family were farmers in West Virginia. When the war was going good they had an oil strike and he and his dad worked as teamsters in the oil field. When that played there were all these loose ends and they were building a football stadium at Ohio State and he had some experience in carpentry. He went there and worked on the stadium and went to Ohio State on reserve. In the last element of his degree he had an uncle on his mother's side who was a medical doctor and an uncle on his father's side was a medical doctor and he decided that he would make a good horse doctor. He went into AG School but he couldn't finish it because he married and had a family by that time and he didn't have funds to continue so he dropped out. He raised his family as a carpenter. That was his background.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Perry: I have two brothers, both younger. Both of them went overseas during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. My brother next to me, he went in inducted with me at the same time but a year younger. He applied for Air Force; he wanted to be a pilot. He had night problems and he wasn't accepted so they put him in navigator school. During the course he got a very serious case of pneumonia. I guess a very serious cold but they call it pneumonia today. The class that he was in gave him the opportunity to pick up the next class at the same stage he was when he had to drop out. He didn't want to do that so he went in as a radio gunner on a B24 I believe it was. He flew his 35 missions out of Italy and a lot of the areas he flew over it's a wonder it hadn't had a lot of trouble with today. He got his missions in and was on the way back to the Pacific when V-E Day was signed. He was one happy individual and so were a lot of the other family members. My youngest brother went to Okinawa and arrived there on V-E Day and it had a typhoon. They needed truck drivers. He had never been in a car and didn't know how to drive. They put him in a truck cab and he learned how to drive and helped in clean up. That was his war experience. My time was spent in North Carolina at Goldsboro. That was a P38 training base. Those planes were very low in occupancy. They were made for a solo pilot, only one person, but they had the training so they had to have a copilot go with them. They had to strip out some of the gear to make room for the copilot and the trainer to ride with him. They trained out of Fort Seymour; I believe it was, at Goldsboro, North Carolina. We were at a radio station at that time and they were trying to start triangulation. What they do is they put three radio stations at designated indications and they found that we would get some kind of noise like if you recite a poem, it had to be a continuous speech so they could get a radio fix on it and get it from three different points. Where they met is where the plane was. From that point they could direct them to where they wanted to go, to home state, home port or to another port because they knew where they were not only did they know what magnetic direction they were taking to get where they wanted to go. Our end of it was what they called the home station because it was our responsibility to give them directions to get back to base. Of course overseas we used the same principle. They would take a fix on an enemy aircraft and they would be able to send out interceptors to take them out of the air. I spent most of my time at the home station in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

Do you have any memories of the Great Depression, that time period?

Mr. Perry: I guess we do. We didn't really know a whole lot about it. All we knew was that there wasn't much to eat and you didn't have enough money to buy and things weren't available. I was pretty young then and it didn't make a great register.

How did your family manage through the depression?

Mr. Perry: Well there wasn't a whole lot of money and dad was working as a carpenter at New York State and he was on heavy construction. There you can't work when there was snow on the ground; unless your building is closed in you are out of work. He was usually out of work during the winter. What he made during the summer wasn't enough to pay off the debts that occurred during the winter so we didn't have a whole lot to live on; but we weren't alone.

Did you have a job before you went into the service?

Mr. Perry: I graduated in June 1942 and TVA was just coming in looking for people to build up a survey crew. They were really nothing more than a laborer. You had to clear grub so they could see with there \_\_\_\_\_. We used what they called a \_\_\_\_\_ rod which is about eight or ten feet high graded off in feet and tenths. We would take the \_\_\_\_\_ or the level, whichever they are using, and take a reading on it to tell the height and then they would do that at other points to determine elevation and be able to develop a contour map. They would chain off the distance from one point to the other with steel tape. They called it a chain and they would establish the distance from a control point and establish a location of point they were working on. That was the way it was established and so called control for the maps. I spent about from June to December on that and that is when I went into the service in January. I signed up in December and activated in January.

Did you find that job as kind of difficult?

Mr. Perry: It was an interesting. We were on what they call per diem; daily payment allowance for lodging. There was, I think, a 15 day limit; after 15 days it cut off. So being in a survey outfit moving from point to point we were able to move every 15 days or less. For a young fellow that was a lot of excitement and I enjoyed it quite a bit.

How much did it pay, that job you were doing?

Mr. Perry: I can't remember.

Before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threat to America from the Nazi's and the Japanese?

Mr. Perry: Well, at that age I didn't think a whole lot about it. I remember when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor I was in high school and was listening to the radio. I think it was a firestone and they had classical music playing and they broke in and said that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. That is when it hit home that we were in serious trouble. That was in December and I finished out my high school year in June. Both of my brothers were taken out before they finished. I think they both, Jim was out in December where he and I were inducted together. The next year my youngest brother was out in December also. Neither of them graduated from high school. They got a G.E.D because their military service qualified them for it. They studied things that equaled to what they could get out of a formal G.E.D program in the states. All three of us went to college. My brother next to me and I both graduated. My youngest brother, he left school in his third year. Everybody talks about how hard it was to get funds for the needs to go to college but without the Second World War, we would never be able to go to college. The three of us were on the GI Bill. My brother Jim, he got a degree in teaching and the only teaching he ever did was when he took his student training to get his degree. He never did teach.

Oh, he didn't?

Mr. Perry: No he never did. He went in to aircraft industry as a weights engineer. He spent his career as a weights engineer. They calculated the loads that the planes would carry in testing and I guess they determined the center of gravity too. That is the way he spent his career.

Did ya'll ever read newspapers? Did ya'll keep up with the news with what was going on during the events of 1939 to the war end?

Mr. Perry: I read the paper but it didn't register. When I was in service we used to listen to, they broadcast the war progress on a public address system in the camp area and we would all listen to that. That probably meant more than anything we read, not because it wasn't available to reading but it's a lot easier to listen than it is to read so we followed that pretty close. That was during the war when we were in service.

That was the only way ya'll heard what was going on? Was it like a radio?

Mr. Perry: Yes, it was radio. We had loud speakers put up throughout the compound and they would produce the sound through the loud speakers; the public address system.

When you first heard the news you say you were at a dance or something you were saying; when you heard the news of Pearl Harbor being attacked?

Mr. Perry: No, I was at home. It happened on a Sunday. I was listening to the radio and they broke in. The program I was listening to was a classical music program. I forget what they were playing in but they broke in and told us that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Did you listen to F.D.R's speech "a day which shall live in infamy" the following day?

Mr. Perry: Yeah, I think I heard it but I don't remember more about it.

Did you approve of the way F.D.R handled his office at the beginning of the war?

Mr. Perry: Yeah, I think he did a good job. At the time it was happening though he didn't realize how good it was, but I think he was a very good leader for that period of time. Very good.

When did you realize that you would have to be drafted?

Mr. Perry: I guess with that attack on Pearl Harbor I knew that I would be in service but I didn't know where. I didn't know anything about the branch but I was drafted and that pretty much sealed where I was going; drafted into the Army. A lot of people, not a lot, but some people when that happened they joined a branch of their choice. They joined the Navy or Marines but when you waited for the draft you didn't have any choice, you were into the Army.

So you didn't get to pick where you went?

Mr. Perry: I could have but I would have had to bypass the draft. You had to register and of course before you were inducted you had the opportunity to go into the Navy or the Marine Corp. They didn't have any separate Air Force then. When you were inducted, I think if I remember right, you had some opportunity to indicated desires to the service. You could indicate that you wanted to be in artillery or infantry or Air Force which was part of the Army at the time. Quite a few of them that went in with us chose the Air

Force. My brother did; he wanted to go into the Air Force. I think he wanted to be a pilot but of course he couldn't because of his eye condition. You had that opportunity to show that if you had a preference you could indicate it, but that didn't guarantee that you would be able to do it or be accepted for it.

When you were in the Army you said that you were in the infantry?

Mr. Perry: Engineers; the engineers had infantry basic.

You were drafted in 1942? Is that when you said you were drafted?

Mr. Perry: Yes, in December 1942 we were inducted. We were signed into the Army in January after Christmas and New Year holidays.

So you went into an induction center?

Mr. Perry: At Fort Niagara, New York, yeah.

Did they test you for skill and IQ levels?

Mr. Perry: We had to take a, they gave you a test to determine I found out later that it was more an ability to learn; an ability to pick up information and sort it and be able to use it as much as intelligence. They had a cut-off point of 110. If you were 110 you were eligible for officers training. Some of them did and some of them chose not to accept it. Of the three boys in my family I was the lowest. I just made the 110 and that is all. It's a combination of intelligence and the ability to learn and it's geared that way.

Your civilian job, were you an engineer as well?

Mr. Perry: It was survey crew. My civilian job was survey crew for Tennessee Valley Authority.

Did it help you in your military job?

Mr. Perry: Oh yes, with that background I got into the survey group in the Army. They sent me to the University of Kentucky where I studied; as I said, all these survey that you get in a civil engineer degree and with it they gave me a degree. The school we went to in the Army oftentimes had a grade when you finished, if you finished successfully. The survey school was a Specialist 5 which was about an E3, which they would be an E4 because they would put in another grade. They would recruit I guess as a new grade they had. By finishing their school successfully you got a Specialist rating of E5. At that time the grades went from the top down. A Master Sergeant was an E1 and Private was E7. So an E5 was not very high really. The theory behind that I guess is still true today is that a Specialist doesn't have any leadership responsibilities except in his field whereas a line grade Corporal would have some responsibility for managing a group of people. The Specialist did not have that responsibility. He is only a Specialist in his field. If he had other Specialist working with him of course he might supervise them if he was a higher grade than they were.

Were you an E5? Was that your rank?

Mr. Perry: Yeah, Specialist 5, E5. E5 now is a whole lot different than it was then because they numbered from the top down. The Master Sergeant was an E1 and a Tech Sergeant, I don't think they even have that any more, but he was an E2. A Staff Sergeant was an E3. A buck sergeant, three striper, was an E4.

You did your basic training; it was in, was it Fort....

Mr. Perry: Fort Leonard Wood. It was an engineer base.

You were selected to go into the engineering field there. What was your impression of your fellow recruits?

Mr. Perry: Most of them were like me. They were there because their friends and neighbors selected them. I don't know that there was a great deal of resentment but it wasn't a volunteer Army. There were some NCOs that were regular Army, but most of them were recruits like myself. We weren't there because we necessarily wanted to be but we were there because we were selected. We had to make the best of it. One of the main things was how much longer we were going to be here. It's a whole different life in the military. They tell you when to go to bed and when to get up, when to go to the bathroom and what to do when you get there. That doesn't sit too well with some people you know.

So was that your first time away from home or the greatest distance?

Mr. Perry: No, I was away from home when I got out of high school and went in for TVA. From June to December and January I was away from home.

So that wasn't the greatest distance you ever traveled was Fort Leavenworth. Did you participate in maneuvers stateside?

Mr. Perry: I'm sorry?

Did you participate in maneuvers stateside?

Mr. Perry: The closest we got to it was when we were down in Louisiana with Patton's Army playing war games. We were trying to do our thing practice of laying out landing strips, that was the closest we got to it; and then the experience in Colorado Springs we were playing soldier but I never did get into a combat zone. I never left the states. The closest I got to it toward the end of the war they sent us to California and of course they didn't tell you a whole lot about where you were going or what you were going to do there. It evidently was to send us out to the South Pacific, but the war had moved to the point where there was no point in that so they sent us back from there, back to North Carolina again. Our unit was detached from the home unit up in Norfolk, Virginia, so after the war wound down they sent us back up there and processed most of us out and sent us up to Fort Dix where we were discharged. So that ended my war experience.

How good do you think your training was for the task ahead of you?

Mr. Perry: It was good; it was adequate.

Did you feel that you were well prepared to fight?

Mr. Perry: I don't think you ever are. It's something you learn as you go I guess. They had a term for it, on-the-job training.

So how good were the living conditions in the camps you were at?

Mr. Perry: They were good for the situation. The worst camp was when we were in Louisiana. That was before they had air conditioning. They didn't have ways of preparing the meal except on a coal burning

stove. When it came time to go to a meal you didn't take a whole lot of time because the humidity and the heat and the heat from the stove made you want to get out of there as fast as you could because it was uncomfortable; extremely uncomfortable. Outside of adjusting to the temperature in the area I think that the housing was adequate. It's not what we have today. They were just buildings where you could see the studs on the wall; they were uncovered. A lot of them were considered temporary structures and not the kind of buildings they have today or the foundations they have today. Today they have, I forgot whether it was two, three, or four man units with each man having a separate bedroom and a common living area. We didn't have anything like that. The NCOs had a cadre room they called it where that were in charge of the barracks, he had his private room that they were in. The enlisted, privates, and corporals lived out in a big open barn basically. That was not uncommon and you didn't think a whole lot about it. It was just something you had to do. It wasn't like you had at home, but I wouldn't say that it wasn't unbearable.

Did you like it at all in the camps?

Mr. Perry: Did I what?

Did you like it at all or was it a place where you wished you were somewhere else?

Mr. Perry: I didn't really want to be there.

So you served in the engineer's right after training; you went straight into the engineering field or was there a separate unit they put you in?

Mr. Perry: We went through training in maneuvers where you had hikes and we had rifle training where we had target practice. We qualified on the M1. I don't think we had any side arms, but we had the side arm using target practice. We did not have any experience using the machine gun because that was not our area. I think once or twice we had bayonet drills where you had a bayonet attached to the end of your unit and you attacked dummies. A \_\_\_\_\_ was set up that showed you how to use the bayonet on parts of the body that would be most effectively injured by it. The biggest thing was the hike; we had several hikes that we took. I remember one of them was I think a 30-mile hike. We had a man in our unit who was grossly overweight, way overweight, and he went on a hike and he actually passed out. It was just too much for him and he wasn't used to it; it was just the heat. The more he strained was more than he could take and he passed out. They discharged him shortly after that because he wasn't physically fit.

Do you know what he did after that? Did he stay at home during the war?

Mr. Perry: They discharged him. I imagine he went back home. I don't know where he went but he was not fit for service; physically fit. It seemed like he was irrational after he got through the hike; he just wasn't normal. It was temporary, it wasn't permanent, but he just didn't make sense at all.

Did you know him? Did you get to know him at all?

Mr. Perry: I did not know him except that he was in our group. He wasn't a close friend in any way, shape, or form.

How bad or good was the food and all that?

Mr. Perry: What?

How bad was the food when you were in there, in the camps? Did they serve you bad food or good food?

Mr. Perry: The field?

The food.

Mr. Perry: It wasn't that bad. We had a mess sergeant who had been in the food business in a restaurant in civilian life and every Friday was fish day. He would go to the commissary and get the best he could get. He actually served a good fish meal. The Saturday fish meal was notoriously almost unacceptable but he was able to get the best pieces and he cooked them so that they were tasty. It was really good which was unusual for a lot of camps.

You were housed in, you said, a temporary or permanent barracks?

Mr. Perry: I would call it temporary but it was permanent in a sense that it was fabricated, not fabricated, but built without the wall covering on it and that type of thing. By today's standards it would be temporary. Of course there is a saying, the most permanent structure on a military reservation is a temporary structure and in that sense I guess they were permanent. It was put up in a hurry because of the need. They just put up the minimum requirement because they were needed that quickly. It was not, by any sense of the word, a furnished building; a finished building. It served its purpose. The best assignment I had was when I went to the University of Kentucky in Lexington. They took us and put us in a hotel in downtown Lexington. We had three men in a two person unit. Being military they had to bring the military into it. We had to make the bed and we had to clean the room and they would march us from the hotel out to the campus; march us out and march us back. That was a good duty and the best housing we ever had.

You got what the other soldiers didn't get right?

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

So did you have any civilian contacts in your training?

Mr. Perry: No, it was strictly military. We had to wear a military uniform all the time; no civilian clothes. In Lexington we got out of the motel sometimes and we went to civilian activities. We went to a civilian church and we met civilians there but we had to be in uniform. I remember another fellow and I one time walking down the street in Lexington and we saw a flag on the yard. We didn't know what to do so we saluted when we went by. We didn't know whether we were supposed to salute or wink at it or what to do. We solved it by saluting the flag and went on our way.

Did a lot of people see ya'll on the street?

Mr. Perry: There we had a civilian contact more than anywhere else we were. There were no civilian people in the mess hall; it was all military. Usually in the camps we were in there were no closeness to civilian activities so we were pretty much \_\_\_\_\_ in camp; that was all military. There was very few if no civilian military at all.

You weren't under command of a General at that time were you?

Mr. Perry: I suppose I was up the chain as they say. The highest ranking man we saw really was a major. He used to be a battalion commander but his command was separated from ours. We were in a company primarily and that was a Captain. He was probably the highest rank we dealt with on a regular basis. He had usually some 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenants and occasionally there would be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. They had what they called 90 day wonders with usually Lieutenants that had gone to officer training school, a 90 day training

program. They came out of it as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and then they were assigned to a company. In time they made 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. I suppose eventually they made Captain, but usually the Captains were not somebody within; they were transferred in or transferred into a company. The Captain was probably the most officer contact we had while we were in command. The Major was the battalion commander but he was removed from the company.

Do you remember his name?

Mr. Perry: Pardon me?

Do you remember his name?

Mr. Perry: No, I don't.

Do you know who your commanding general was?

Mr. Perry: I don't remember it.

So what was your impression of the officers and the NCOs?

Mr. Perry: Then never made a mistake.

They were held in the high regard.

Mr. Perry: They demanded respect and if you were smart you gave them the respect.

What kind of equipment and arms did you train with? You said you trained with the M1?

Mr. Perry: The M1, yeah.

Was that the only kind of weapon you used?

Mr. Perry: Yes, mostly. We didn't have the opportunity or the need to handle anything else. We didn't really need the M1 because we weren't under firing range or we weren't in combat. The main reason we had the M1 was to be familiar with it and to know how to clean it and keep it in good shape because if you are in combat you have to depend on it and you need to know how to use it; so that is why we had the M1. I think we had them assigned to us. I remember one experience I had with the M1; we were out on the payment for roll call I guess it was, everybody was at parade rest. We weren't standing at attention or anything like that and we had M1's with us. I feel a little foolish; I put my M1 on the butt on the pavement and it stood up straight up. I turned to the fellow behind me and pointed at it and about that time it went over.

It went off; the gun went off?

Mr. Perry: There was no ammunition in it. It just tipped and fell over. That's a no-no you know?

Yeah.

Mr. Perry: So the drill sergeant said, "You are going to be with that thing all day. You are going to sleep with it." I said, "Okay." He was the sergeant and I wasn't able to talk him out of it and would have never tried anyhow. We went in for a meal in the mess hall at noon I think it was and I had my M1. I walked up

the steps to get in and the mess sergeant met us. He said, "You're not bringing that thing in here." The drill sergeant said, "Yes he is." They got into an argument and that result was, I didn't take it in the mess hall. That night the sergeant came through and checked the bed to see if it was in bed with me.

It was in bed with you though, right?

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Was he happy to see that you were still sleeping with it?

Mr. Perry: It wasn't too comfortable but I got through it.

Did he say anything when he checked up on you?

Mr. Perry: He came to see if I had it. He felt around and finally satisfied himself that it was there; the lights were out.

How well did it operate, the M1? Did it have any problems when you were firing it?

Mr. Perry: The only time we fired it was when we qualified on the firing range. We didn't have live ammunition except on the firing range. I did enough to qualify. You had to make a certain score to qualify and of course they graded up to sharpshooter. I never got that far.

So how would you describe the cohesion inside your unit?

Mr. Perry: Well most of the time it was training when I was in that part of it. We did what we were told to do and tried to accomplish it. I would think that the cohesion was good but it wasn't a permanent situation. We all knew that before very long we would be going to other units. It was basically a training program. It wasn't an opportunity for cohesion as it would have been if we had of been together in exercises for several days, months or years, if we knew that we were going to be together for a period of time. We all knew that it was just temporary and we would be going to other units. So in that sense there wasn't the opportunity for cohesion to develop as it would you would be depending on the man next to you to protect you or you protect him. It wasn't needed and it wasn't there. In that sense I supposed you could say cohesion wasn't there.

Did you ever feel close to those who shared your time in the service?

Mr. Perry: I have never contacted anybody that I was with in the service in that sense. I don't think that they wanted to contact me; not that there was any friction at all, it just was not convenient. There wasn't an effort made to be with people.

Did you make lots of friends in the Army?

Mr. Perry: No, I guess not. It was just something you had to do and something you wanted to do as well as you could and look forward to something better in the future.

So what did you do in your free time?

Mr. Perry: Sleep and read.

What did you like to read?

Mr. Perry: Anything we could get in the library.

Did ya'll play any games or anything?

Mr. Perry: No, we didn't have computers then.

Did ya'll play poker or cards or anything like that; checkers?

Mr. Perry: I never did, but several of the fellows did. I never did play poker. No, I didn't play cards.

Did you write a lot of letters and did you receive mail from relatives and friends?

Mr. Perry: Yeah we wrote letters home and to friends we knew before we went into the service. Of course mail call was a very important event. Anything that came through the mail was a lift. It was something you looked forward to.

So how was California when you went there? What did you have to do there in California?

Mr. Perry: I wasn't there for a long time. I was sent there from North Carolina and on the way I went through Syracuse which was my family's home at the time. All the way, we traveled by train, and the destination was I called it, \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't have a bit of trouble; everybody knew exactly what was going on every time we had to make a change or pick up a train or anything until I got to Stockton. They said, "Well you want to go to Mercet." That is the only time I knew how to pronounce it. So it was Mercet. Of all the places we stayed, except maybe Lexington in a hotel, it was probably one of the better places; better camps. It was more permanent and it had more activity. I don't know how long, I may have been there about 30 days. You don't really develop a whole lot of attachment to a place in that period of time.

When you were in the field you say that you go hot food. Did you get C-rations or something like that?

Mr. Perry: C-rations were it. We had a few so we knew what they were like, but we were able to go to the mess hall for meals; except maybe when we went out on an outing for a hike or something. We might have C-rations for a meal. Most of the time we were able to get hot meals. We didn't have a lot of hardships that you associate with field trips and a lot of field trips necessitated basically just living off of the land. In some respects, ours was a real good assignment all the way through.

Did you often sleep on the ground, in tents, or in barracks mostly?

Mr. Perry: Well on the field trips they took us out for overnight hikes and they had two man pup tents. You had to be sure you had all the rocks out of the way before you layed down in your sleeping bag. We had pup tents. They did that as a training exercise so we would know what it felt like. We didn't spend long periods of time out there.

How did you like doing that?

Mr. Perry: It's nice to talk about but I wouldn't like to do it again. I didn't really enjoy it too much then. One time we were stationed out at Biloxi, Mississippi, and that was kind of a staging area. It was just temporary quarters while we were waiting to go somewhere else. Anyhow, we were in tent village and they had a rainstorm. It soaked the ground thoroughly. It wasn't too comfortable sleeping in one of those pup tents with the ground all wet.

Did you get all muddy or anything?

Mr. Perry: Oh yeah, it was sippy. There wasn't much you could do about it because there wasn't nothing you could build up to dry.

Did it get in your tent, water and everything?

Mr. Perry: Oh yeah. You set your tent right on the ground when it was dry and when it would rain it was on the ground when it was wet.

Was it possible to shower or shave or at least wash up during that time?

Mr. Perry: Yeah, we usually had available latrine capability. We had showers, toilets, and mirrors and by some standards were quite modern but it was still a latrine. There were group showers that had several faucets around the room and everybody shared showers. You had your own private \_\_\_\_ shower but there were several showers in there. In my situation we didn't have to go long periods without a latrine available to us.

Did you often feel sleep deprived and over worked?

Mr. Perry: Do what?

Did you often feel sleep deprived or over worked? Do you feel like you got enough sleep sometimes or did you feel tired?

Mr. Perry: If you did guard duty you went without sleep because you had to be on guard through the night. There were some times when you might be deprived of sleep primarily because you were working while other people were sleeping. I was in the homing station in North Carolina, that was 24 hours a day seven days a week. You were bound to draw some nighttime \_\_\_\_\_. Of course when you do that and you are on your way back to your barracks everyone else was about their business and there was no opportunity to catch up on your sleep. I found out that I wasn't able to sleep lying on my back. (59:05)

(Tape scratched toward the end-couldn't get the last three minutes.)