

Interviewer: Ok, you want to tell us your full name and where you were born?

J.C. Qualls: My name Johnny Clay Qualls, I was born in Perry County, 1924.

Interviewer: What branch of service did you serve in?

J.C. Qualls: In the 100th, I was in the 100th Infantry Division. Which I served in California my first year in the..... with 40 millimeter gun and then they transferred me to Oklahoma, no Colorado.....I went from the infantry then into..... And they put me in the 100th Division, and we went overseas, we landed in France in 44', uh, we worked our way through France to relieve the 45th Division, and worked our way through France, got all the way to Germany and there was a bridge we were suppose to go and guard, we had to go packing, and so we lost all of our men except 7, and I was a lucky one to stay alive, and we were working our way on up to Germany, and we were almost to Berlin when the war was over, and I was sent back to France with the 45th Division, at one point I had enough to come home, so they sent me back to 100th Division and I stayed in for a few more months and come home with the 100th Division, I was discharged in 46', in Haderbury, Indiana. February the 2nd, I made it back to Landon, Tennessee, that's where I was. Now what do you want?

Interviewer: Uh, What were your parent's names and their occupations?

J.C. Qualls: My parents were Solomon Cadbury Qualls, he was in World War1, my mother's name is Mary Louis Barbra Qualls, and she was uh, she stayed at home, house keeper.

Interviewer: So your father, was he in France in World War 1 or Belgium?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, he went to France about the same direction I did.

Interviewer: Wow, do you remember him talking much about...?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: Wow, do you have any brothers or sisters?

J.C. Qualls: I had, I got 2 sisters, one died before I was born and then I have another sister, she married a.....,had 2 boys and they both was in service, after the war was over.

Interviewer: Did they serve in Europe?

J.C. Qualls: No, they didn't go overseas

Interviewer: So they stayed home?

J.C. Qualls: They stayed in the United States, yeah.

Interviewer: So how long did you remain in school?

J.C. Qualls: I finished the 8th grade, and started high school and got half way in high school and I wrote my daddy a note saying that I was expelled from high school and he said good I'll put you to work. So I have been working ever since.

Interviewer: Oh, so he was kind of glad you were gone from school, he wanted you to work at home?

J.C. Qualls: In a way yeah, that's all the schooling I got, I got half of the first year of high school.

Interviewer: Hmm. You have any memories of hard times during that depression?

J.C. Qualls: Well, it was hard times all through, uh before I married, I married in 43', I went in service in 43', and we had been married 66 years, going on 67.

Interviewer: How did the depression affect your family, did they coop with hardships at the time?

J.C. Qualls: Well, uh, we had a little hardship yeah, as far as you know, my daddy was a farmer, he raised his hogs and cattle, raised milk cows, had his meat to eat, and he had mules,, and I started behind a plow when I was 9 years old, and I plowed up through church, and I was..... when I got my letter to go be..... and I lost my peanuts route.

Interviewer: So did ya'll grow peanuts?

J.C. Qualls: Well, we growed peanuts and we growed corn, we growed hay, we stocked well, cows and hogs, mules, we didn't raised hogs and cows to sell, we raised them, we had one milk cow, maybe a calf or 2 and our hogs run outside, they made the biggest part of their living in the woods, eating hay and picking nuts and things like that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did ya'll have a lot of land in that area?

J.C. Qualls: No we just had about 12 to 14 acres, but we made a living.

Interviewer: So you started working when you finished 8th grade?

J.C. Qualls: I started working when I was 17 years old, yeah, but I was plowing with mules when I was 9 years old, but school was out see, went to uh, a one room school house, one teacher from first grade to 8th grade, after 8th grade went to Lyndon.

Interviewer: So you went to the same school with a lot of the people at the same time all those years?

J.C. Qualls: There were several, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember your teacher?

J.C. Qualls: Pardon?

Interviewer: You remember your teacher?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, Miss Shelia Edwards, well she finally married.....Mr. Vern, I called him, Miss Gussey Goblet, well in high school I had uh, well, her name left me, she was a Magee.

Interviewer: Magee?

J.C. Qualls: Miss Ira Magee.

Interviewer: Hmm, so what job did you say you had, you were just raising uh, raising crops and things like that or...?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, we raised our crops and we had our hogs and cows.

Interviewer: Just farming was your job?

J.C. Qualls: Hmm.

Interviewer: How much did it pay?

J.C. Qualls: There wasn't no pay.

Interviewer: Wasn't any pay.

J.C. Qualls: Daddy worked at the sawmill, every Friday evening he would come in, Saturday morning he would pitch me about half a dollar and I would go, walk all the way to town, 6 miles, Saturday evening, buy my ticket to the show, coke and a bag of popcorn was 50 cents, and then walk back home 6 miles.

Interviewer: That's a long walk, ya'll were used to doing that.

J.C. Qualls: We was used to walking.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: I walked to school.

Interviewer: Uh, before Pearl Harbor happened uh, how seriously did you take the treat on America from the Nazi's and the Japanese?

J.C. Qualls: How seriously did I take it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: I didn't think nothing about it, I was too young to think anything about it, I went into service when I was 18 years old.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you didn't know what was going on then, like before.

J.C. Qualls: I did know it was happening, I had a radio, we had a radio you know, we caught that over the radio.

Interviewer: Did ya'll have a battery radio or was it...?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ya'll didn't have electricity at all, did you?

J.C. Qualls: No, electricity was coming through probably about that time, but I can't recall having electricity.

Interviewer: Did you read newspapers to keep up with the news in 39'?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, the Tennessean, the mail man did, we was on uh, Glyndon route 3 from a long time, before I can remember, to here 2 year back, they put me on 4393 Highway 412 East, Glyndon, Tennessee, that's my address now, but it was Glyndon route 3 or route 3 Glyndon. For a long time after I come out of service, they didn't know who Johnny Clegg was, W.C. Duncan was the only one.

Interviewer: So uh, do you remember where you were when the attack on Pearl Harbor happened, in December 1941?

J.C. Qualls: I guess I was working in my, you know that loft building over there right by the First Baptist Church, where they used to, in Lyndon, where the used to have the Sadey Hawkins Ball?

Interviewer: I think I know where that is.

J.C. Qualls: I helped build that.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

J.C. Qualls: Hmm, I was a lot smaller than you.

Interviewer: Was it a really hard job to do?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, it was hard, I mean when you've got to quit, you can say you were tired at quitting time.

Interviewer: Did they pay you to do that or was it a volunteer job?

J.C. Qualls: No, they paid us, it was a small amount, it has been so long, I don't know how much they did pay us, had to of been in 38' or 39'.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: When that building was built. Near City Hall, where the electric office used to be.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: Did you listen to FDR's speech, "the day that shall live in infamy"?

Interviewer: FDR, Franklin Roosevelt, President at the time.

J.C. Qualls: He was President at the time I was in service, I got 2 citations, from the President.

Interviewer: Citations?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, when I was in service.

Interviewer: What were those for?

J.C. Qualls: Staying alive I guess. Yeah, I got one citation, in Germany to guard a bridge but we had to take it, I got one first citation there and then we went on further and I can't remember what exactly the other citation, I don't remember the other citation, but they awarded me over there.

Interviewer: Did you like FDR, did you approve of the way he was handling office?

J.C. Qualls: All I knew that he was the President, I don't take much interest in the President deal, they handle the job and I do the best I can to get back.

Interviewer: So when did you realize you would be drafted?

J.C. Qualls: Uh, in July of 43'.

Interviewer: July of 43'.

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, they said, they told me after I got back home, some of the board members told me that I went in the other fellows place but they never did tell me what other mans place I went in.

Interviewer: Did you have a choice which branch of service you would go in?

J.C. Qualls: No. Well, I did when I first went in, they asked me did I want the Marines and I told them no, when I went out to the lab first for examining he said you're in theTroopers..... I said the hell you say, I'm not either, and I went out the back door, well when the time, 2 or 3 days or maybe a week after that, why they took us all to California, with 40 millimeter guns, 150 millimeter, and as I say from there to Colorado in the Infantry, and they sent me to uh, Fort Bragg, North Carolina and from there into New York and overseas, I went overseas with the 100th Division.

Interviewer: Did you go to an Induction Center, where they test your I.Q. level?

J.C. Qualls: Well, they checked me from one end to the other, yeah, but I couldn't tell you.....

Interviewer: Yeah. Did your civilian job have anything to do with what you did in the military?

J.C. Qualls: No. No it....

Interviewer: Did it help you out in the military what you did....

J.C. Qualls: It didn't help me a bit. When I quit school, my daddy took me to a sawmill and we stacked lumber, until farming time and when farming time started up, I was farming.

Interviewer: Yeah. So where did you say you did your basic training, where was that, where at did you say you did your basic training at?

J.C. Qualls: California.

Interviewer: California, you know what fort it was?

J.C. Qualls: Camp Horn, Camp Horn, California.

Interviewer: Camp Horn. So what was your impression of your fellow recruits?

J.C. Qualls: I can't remember them names now.

Interviewer: Did you make any friends with them or...

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, we was all friendly.

Interviewer: Was this your first time away from home or the greatest distance you ever went?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, yeah, first time I was ever away from home.

Interviewer: Did you participate in maneuvers stateside?

J.C. Qualls: Well, we spent uh, a lot of the training in the Mohave Desert in California and after we left California and went into Colorado, we did uh, a lot of our training, we did a lot of infantry training there, I hiked, a 25 mile hike with a 90 pound bag on my back, and 11 and a half..... and I made it without any blisters.

Interviewer: No blisters huh, so it wasn't too hard for you?

J.C. Qualls: It was hard, but I was young then.

Interviewer: How good do you think the training was for the task ahead of you, did you think it helped you out?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, I could defend myself.

Interviewer: You learn how to shoot a weapon?

J.C. Qualls: We didn't do like they do now, we trained, we hiked, we marched, we done push-ups, we didn't watch movies then, like they do now and get fat.

Interviewer: So ya'll had to do work all the time?

J.C. Qualls: We had to work, that's right, which that's what I was used to doing.

Interviewer: So you felt well prepared to fight then huh?

J.C. Qualls: I could defend myself then, yeah.

Interviewer: So how good were the living conditions in the camps?

J.C. Qualls: Fine.

Interviewer: Fine, wasn't too bad huh?

J.C. Qualls: No, plenty to eat and a good bed to sleep on, we didn't have no television to watch.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what kind of unit did you serve with immediately after advance training?

J.C. Qualls: After I went overseas and come back, I didn't have no training. I was sent home, they wanted me stay but I told them I had enough of it.

Interviewer: Yeah. So ya'll went overseas in troop ships?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: So which port did you depart from, was it...?

J.C. Qualls: We departed from New York.

Interviewer: New York.

J.C. Qualls: Landed in Marsay, France. Left Marsay, France and come back to New York.

Interviewer: How long was the voyage?

J.C. Qualls: Now see the voyage was, I believe it was 11 days going over, and 21 days coming back, we done..... coming back.

Interviewer: Huh.

J.C. Qualls: They took longer coming back than they did to go over. We was on a big outfit, big outfit going over, 7 or 8 hundred men on it, I guess.

Interviewer: So, how good or bad was the living conditions on the ship?

J.C. Qualls: Good.

Interviewer: Was it good?

J.C. Qualls: If you could eat it, I went to the mess hall and I told them, I got a bunch of boys sick down in the hole, the guy pitched me a box of crackers and said take this down there and let them nibble on it, I nibbled on them myself, they stayed sick and I didn't.

Interviewer: They ever find out?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: So they were pretty good huh, the crackers?

J.C. Qualls: The crackers were better than nothing. When you took your tray and the ship would.....everything went together and then.....and everything went together.

Interviewer: Yeah, so ya'll got sea sick?

J.C. Qualls: Now I didn't get sea sick but I got close to it. Them crackers kept me from it really.

Interviewer: So how many soldiers were on board?

J.C. Qualls: There was uh, about, they was uh, really I don't know. If I had to guess, it was around maybe 6 or 7 hundred men.

Interviewer: So it was pretty...

J.C. Qualls: It was a big ship, yeah. And there were 2 ships in the condor, 2 big ships.

Interviewer: And where did ya'll land in Marsasay, France, you say?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, Marsasay, that's where we landed but we went through.....the 45th Division and then we stayed on our own then, all the way up through France and through, up into Germany, almost into Berlin.....come over the radio.....

Interviewer: Were you housing temporary or permanent barracks?

J.C. Qualls: For the longest, we slept on the outside in our sleeping bags, snow about 6 or 8 inches deep and that didn't bother us, but then finally we uh,from town to town, we would throw them out of one side of the street and tell to go over to the other one and we took their house, we slept on their beds then. And then we would go from that town to another town and we would do the same thing.

Interviewer: Do you know which towns ya'll went to?

J.C. Qualls: The towns I can't remember.

Interviewer: In France right?

J.C. Qualls: They was in France and up in Germany too, but uh,, there was a hill there that had hill boxes, 15 floors deep in the ground, and we spent a night or 2 down in them after we took them.

Interviewer: Did ya'll have any civilian contacts?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: No.

J.C. Qualls: We wasn't allowed no civilian contacts.

Interviewer: Hmm, ya'll never came across the locals, very much?

J.C. Qualls: Hm. The other outfits might have but the infantry that I was in we followed the tanks, we was right out in front of everything, the big guns were behind us.

Interviewer: So did you see combat soon after arriving or was there a prolonged training period overseas?

J.C. Qualls: No there wasn't no training overseas at all, it was all done in the United States, training, and when you got overseas, you live or you die.

Interviewer: So ya'll saw combat right when ya'll got over there huh?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you still in the same unit or were you reassigned to anything different?

J.C. Qualls: No I was in the same unit until the war was over and then they sent me to the 45th Division to come home, at one point I had enough, the points I can't describe what they mean or but I lacked one point coming home and they sent me back to..... and I stayed with them and come home with the 100th Division.

Interviewer: Hmm. So who was your commanding general?

J.C. Qualls: I don't know.

Interviewer: Huh. What was your impression of the officers and the NCO's in command?

J.C. Qualls: They was ok.

Interviewer: Did you get to know any?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, but I can't recall their names now, it's done left me. Now I was good friends with a boy from uh, Connecticut, but I've lost his name, it won't come to me.

Interviewer: So what kind of equipment and arms did you train with, you said, it was uh...?

J.C. Qualls: My first training was with an....., 40 millimeter, and 50 millimeter guns.

Interviewer: Did they, how well did they operate during combat?

J.C. Qualls: I don't in combat, see they took men and put me in the infantry and I had a M1 rifle in infantry.

Interviewer: Did that shoot very well?

J.C. Qualls:, where did that piece of paper go that I laid down....Abby got it.

Interviewer: So where was your first experience in combat, where did you?

J.C. Qualls: In France.

Interviewer: Was there a particular area, you remember, where you first fought at, or particular battle you were in?

J.C. Qualls: No, I, it was outside of Marsay, France.....

Interviewer: So what kind of reaction did you and other's have in the battle?

J.C. Qualls: I don't get what you mean?

Interviewer: Oh, well what was your impression of the combat, were you..?

J.C. Qualls: It was scary.

Interviewer: Were you scared?

J.C. Qualls: Scary all the way through, which they had us I guess doped up with shots so you didn't care.

Interviewer: How did it feel to be shot at or shot back at the enemy?

J.C. Qualls: I can't remember shooting back at them but we were shot at, yeah we were shot at every day, after we relieved the 45th Division, they had them mortar shells coming at us and uh, I guess your 90 millimeter, that's what we had behind us, I guess they had something like 90 millimeter shooting back at us, you could just listen and you could tell whether it's going to get close to you or not.

Interviewer: Were you afraid for your life?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, always afraid for your life, day and night, slept with one open all the time.

Interviewer: So how would you describe the cohesion inside the unit?

J.C. Qualls: The what?

Interviewer: The cohesion or the, how everyone got along in the unit, how did they...?

J.C. Qualls: We got along good, yeah we got along good, we had to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: Or get killed.

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

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, most of them but the biggest part of them are gone now, yeah there's a few left here in the county.

Interviewer: But most of your friends are no longer living now?

J.C. Qualls: No, they're pretty well all gone.

Interviewer: So what did you used to do in your free time?

J.C. Qualls: You didn't have no free time.

Interviewer: No free time.

J.C. Qualls: No, you got a chance, if you got a chance to go to town, there was nothing, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to town?

J.C. Qualls: Oh yeah, went to town until my wife come to me in California and I would get off in the evening and go at night with her and then report back in the next morning for several months.

Interviewer: Yeah.

J.C. Qualls: Then we went to Colorado, and I had done the same thing there, they were sending us to Fort Bragg, North Carolina but I come home for 14 days and me and her come home, she stayed and I had to go back.

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

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, I received letters from home, the wife and my mother and sister.

Interviewer: Did you play cards, or read, or play sports to pass time between engagements, did ya'll do anything like that?

J.C. Qualls: No. I was ready for the bed when it was bedtime.

Interviewer: Did you ever have leave time overseas or back in the U.S.?

J.C. Qualls: Leisure time?

Interviewer: Leave time.

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: When you were in the field did you get hot food or sea rations or something in between?

J.C. Qualls: I got sea rations after we got overseas all the time, the only hot food we got is if we took over a house, we would fry us potatoes, just whatever we could find in the refrigerator, we would cook. When we run them out, we took over the house.

Interviewer: This is in France?

J.C. Qualls: In Germany.

Interviewer: In Germany.

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, in France,.....but after so many months we slept on the ground.....

Interviewer: So ya'll must have slept on the ground, huh?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, we had sleeping bags.

Interviewer: Sleeping bags. Was it ever possible to take showers or shave or at least wash up?

J.C. Qualls: When we hit a town, we washed up.....wash your socks and wash your body.

Interviewer: Did you often feel sleep deprived and over worked?

J.C. Qualls: Not too bad.

Interviewer: So you felt that you got enough sleep?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, we got enough sleep, one would buddy, they buddied up, there was 2 together and one would sleep part of the night and the other one would stay guard, well the other one would stand guard and let the other one sleep.

Interviewer: So that how ya'll did that, were you ever promoted in your service time?

J.C. Qualls: I was promoted from a private to uh, first class private. That's as high as I wanted to go.

Interviewer: Did you feel like the promotions, the ones that received them, that they deserved them, to get promoted or were there some...?

J.C. Qualls: They deserved everything they got.

Interviewer: You think so.

J.C. Qualls: If they were promoted they deserved it, I didn't want it.

Interviewer: How come you didn't want to be promoted?

J.C. Qualls: I wanted to uh, come home.

Interviewer: Were the officers and NCO's in your unit, were they new recruits, still prewar career?

J.C. Qualls: Part of them got killed in my outfit and then they sent up some new ones. I was uh, I had been assigned to radio operator and when they sent them new ones up why they was out..... which we had new men too, there was just 7 of us left, we had a new bunch of men and a new bunch of officers and they was out there drilling them, up 2, 3, 4 and I radioed back from the front line, I radioed back and I told colonel, you need to get up here and stop this man, he said why, I said he's out here drilling them and I said it's dangerous up here. I said they're going to kill everyone of them in no time, so they stopped that, quick.

Interviewer: Oh really?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you saw all of this happen huh?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you impressed with the qualities of the enemy, like their leadership, tenacity, bravery?

J.C. Qualls: No, I don't get it.

Interviewer: Do you think they were uh, were they an enemy that was strong, you think, fighting against?

J.C. Qualls: No, they was a weak enemy.

Interviewer: You thought they were weak?

J.C. Qualls: They weren't strong, they didn't know a from b.

Interviewer: You didn't think the Germans were very uh...?

J.C. Qualls: They was easy to give up.

Interviewer: Oh really, so they surrendered easily all the time?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: So did you ever come in contact with any of them?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: Or prisoners or anything?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: Did you ever come to respect them at all or have any other feeling against them?

J.C. Qualls: No I didn't have any ill feeling or anything.

Interviewer: Ok, uh, so what did you think about the civilians and refugees?

J.C. Qualls: I didn't have time to think about them, we kept moving.

Interviewer: So you never really saw them at all?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, I seen them, but that was it. Couldn't talk to them, if you did you wouldn't know what they were saying back at you.

Interviewer: How did they react to the Americans?

J.C. Qualls: They were glad to see us come through, yeah they would hoop and holler and yell, glad to see us some through.

Interviewer: So you were part of an occupation force among the civilians, after fighting the war?

J.C. Qualls: No, I was no part of it, no occupation troops.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: Were you ever recommended for a medal?

J.C. Qualls: Uh, 2 citations.

Interviewer: 2 citations.

J.C. Qualls: President citations.

Interviewer: So you say you earned that, you just stayed alive.

J.C. Qualls: That's right, I earned that by just staying alive.

Interviewer: Did you know any uh, were any of your friends or fellow soldiers, wounded or killed?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah, they was a boy that lived up above me here, Kyle Crawl, his name is on the monument over at the courthouse, I guess he was the first one in the county that got killed and he was hit by a mortar, because he went into his fox hole and the mortar hit him, and blew him all to pieces.

Interviewer: Goodness. So you knew him pretty well huh?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah. He was in service a good while before I was in.

Interviewer: So did he go in the beginning of the war or right when it started or before?

J.C. Qualls: I think he went in before the war uh, I don't know how he managed to get in before I did because we was pretty close to the same age.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a since of the big picture, which means uh, did you ever know the strategy involved in beating the axis, the enemy?

J.C. Qualls: No.

Interviewer: So were you involved in any of the famous landings or battles in the war?

J.C. Qualls: I was in battle from the time we hit with the 45th Division, we kept pushing, pushing, everyday, we would sleep at night, but we would push in the day. Pushing them back.

Interviewer: So ya'll came in after the D-Day invasion, right?

J.C. Qualls: Yeah.

Interviewer: Alright I guess this ends our interview.(tape ends).....