

Interviewer: So back to name where and when you were born and branch of service.

Ringler: John Ringler born in Tonawanda New York the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1918. I went into the service in 1940 as a private at \$21 a month. It was an infantry unit National Guard infantry unit that was called to active duty. I stayed with that unit and then when the war broke out I still stayed with it until we went on guard duty on the west coast and at that time I was on my second year of service with the unit. And I wouldn't say unhappy but I couldn't see any forward movement as far as progress or advancement. And that's when OCS had opened up and several of us applied and all of us went in and came out as Second Lieutenants in August of 1942. So I was sent then to the 30<sup>th</sup> infantry division at Fort Jackson South Carolina and when we were there our regiment was sent to Fort Benning Georgia demonstration troops for the school. So while I was there at Fort Benning my platoon had received several accommodations by the instructors and of course then at Benning I saw the air borne training. And that's when I decided that was for me and it took a while a lot of arguments from the commanders giving me permission to transfer to the air borne. And finally I succeeded and joined the air borne in the first of January of 43 went air borne. And I was sent to the 511<sup>th</sup> at Dakota Georgia and I stayed with the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 11<sup>th</sup> air borne division until we got to New Guiney into combat. I had the advantage of being with the unit training with the unit at Camp McCall North Carolina where our training was after we left Dakota. From there we assembled there and then for our training we went to Camp McCall outside of Fort Brag North Carolina. So from there we went to New Guiney and New Guiney was the beginning to our jungle training and it was almost a year of training in the swamps and in the jungles. And then we were alerted for movement to our first combat mission that ended in a hurry. We didn't even get involved and preceded out to Laity the Philippine Islands. Then we replaced another division regiment and then that was the beginning of real combat in the mountains of Laity. That was at that time as an infantry unit the infantry division that was there was loaded down with heavy equipment trucks which could not proceed in the mountains. So it was our mission then so we went through there. That was our first combat that we lost personnel in. Close friends that you develop over the training period. We came out of there successful of accomplishing our mission cutting off the Japanese supply lines combat was constant there from the day we started to the several months that we completed. It was a devastating affect on our whole regiment that we lost people. We went through bomb side attacks from Japanese forces a number of personnel were eliminated would exceed hundreds because of the types of attack we were under all of the time. And when you're fighting in the jungle it's a different war far the plane areas there and the mountains the rain and devastation that you have. The living conditions that you have most disturbed whether you're living on the ground or whatever it is. You don't have hot meals, I noticed that was one of the questions those things in fact sometimes the rations you'd get c-rations or k-rations initially was all we had. And k-rations I don't know if you've ever seen one of them but they weren't fit to eat but you had nothing else. So we finally got our means of resupply was C47s free drop in other words our ammunition was just kicked out of the doors and we lost personnel by getting hit by falling containers and everything that way. But that was your survival for a while and when the raids came in we had no supplies so our regiment went seven days without rations or food or anything. You figured it's difficult there's no question. And then the first hot meal we had was when we got down to the beach ready to reassemble refurnish our troops we lost and that was our first

hot meal. I've heard various stories about what was served and I said I don't remember any of it at that time and I don't really.

Interviewer: You were just happy you had a hot meal.

Ringler: Well as long as it was hot that's right especially at that time when we hit that period of seven days when we had no rations. And so when we got there immediately we started to go back address all of our equipment to get ready for the next mission in Luzon itself the main island.

Interviewer: Luzon?

Ringler: Yeah that's the main island in the Philippines.

Interviewer: Oh that's so interesting my grandfather my father's father died in Luzon.

Ringler: What unit was he?

Interviewer: I have no idea my grandmother does not like to talk about it.

Ringler: That's the way most of them were over there I think you will find that. That's why I said I accepted this I turned down being a speaker and everything else. It for us now a lot of men I've got some stories in here it would be interesting reading to go through what some of the men in the unit after I was elevated to a company commander. But anyway when we left Laity we went and moved and dropped in Tiger Tie Ridge in the Philippine islands on the island of Luzon and that was another we dropped behind enemy line. But our whole regiment dropped and then proceeded from the area of Manila which was the main force of the Japanese defensive position. We were attacking from the north and the first Calvary division was coming up from the south. And our target was to eliminate everything in there. It wasn't as easy as you know our commanders thought it was going to be. We ran into a lot of resistance and that's where our regimental commander was killed from an air burst in staff meetings. A piece of a round came through the window and hit him in the chest and punctured his heart. Our battalion commander eventually took over on Luzon that was ground fighting I mean that was going in to Fort McKinley and that's where we lost bodies drooped from the prison camp and we had I was under constant fighting my company was under constant fighting it never ended. And it wasn't we were moving in under 90 attack then we were moving into Fort McKinley and prior to that time I got an artillery burst a piece of shrap metal in me for the first time. I didn't think much of it a four or five inch stitch was all it needed at that time slap some powder in it and stitch it up. They don't worry about numbing the leg they just stitch it up and your back to the commander. And we went across Nichols field other units in the regiment carried the boat load of the pressure and they had the heaviest losses than what we took in B Company. And then going to Fort McKinley we were on our way there the Japanese had put artillery pieces and naval pieces all across Nichols field all directions so that was their strongest hold. We penetrated up to the edge of Fort McKinley when my regimental commander came back and said the regimental commander wants you. So I my company was on the line and I went back and the commander said were going back in the division CP the Commanding General ,General Swing wants to see you. And I said what happened anytime a Major General wants a Lieutenat to come up its your

going to get relieved you did something wrong. And so we went back there that's when I was met by the G2 G3 and they said this is the lieutenant that's going to have the mission. And I thought oh boy what kind of a mission we went into the general and that's the first time in my military career that a division commander a major general gave a mission to a lieutenant company commander. And I've even discussed that with generals a Fort Benning or Fort Bragg and they just shook their head because that's unbelievable to have. But the mission was tremendous importance to get those attorney's out of that camp because most of them were civilians although after the raid was complete I found out there were seven or nine nurse navy nurses that were in there and nobody ever knew that they were navy nurses. They thought they were picked up in the island so they weren't known until after they were released that they were navy nurses. But we jumped in there and this here is I had written I think probably that and this is the same thing that's a more complete those I had written for my regiment after the mission was completed for military information because of the tactical operation that it was.

Interviewer: May I take one of these with me and get it back to you?

Ringler: You can look at both of those and make copies of it if you want and that would answer anything there that I think you would want to answer. And the mission as I say was we were assigned as a division mission but primarily was the air borne drop they were depending upon to do as we did and the mission that the general gave me to give each commander because it was so disperse. Each commander specifically responsibility and I had responsibility to the air craft and of course that's what everything hinged around is getting in there freeing the crew returning and getting the vehicles we used Amtrak water vehicles. And that at times is still refreshed to today in operations what happened at that time. After that was over the next morning we were back in action and just continued until the Philippine mission was completed and we were alerted to be the first occupation troops in Japan for the discernment of Japan. And that's when General MacArthur selected the 11<sup>th</sup> air borne division. In fact in the raid after it was over he gave the regiment an accommodation the whole division accommodation he said God was with us today and we should be thankful for all he did to help us out. And he was right so it was something we really looked at that's a short synopsis of going through everything in a hurry. I know I skipped over a lot of your questions.

Interviewer: That's fine I'm going to go back and hit some of the high points in here and get some of what you didn't get to. You told me before I started the tape the you were raised on a farm in

Ringler: Tonawanda New York

Interviewer: Tonawanda New York why don't you tell us what that was like. What your childhood was like.

Ringler: My childhood was wonderful dad I lost him when he was only 47 years old and my mom when she was 59 she went from cancer. My response because I have an older brother and an older sister so I was actually the brat I'd get into trouble or I didn't do the work that I was supposed to do. You've heard that expression probably before.

Interviewer: Oh yes that expression had been used to describe me a couple of times.

Ringler: You know on a farm you had your chores its work there's no question about it. You go in the morning your up to milk the cows in the evening if it's in the summer time at that time we only had horses. We didn't have the modern equipment you have for farming today. The oldest equipment that you could possible think of existed and a lot of it was just plain muscle. You had to get in the hay and get in the grain but taking care of the horses that was your livelihood. The cows you had to milk in the morning before I would go to school 6 o'clock in the morning that was my task and in the evening the same way. So we always got a little extra time though to get in trouble of course we had the Nile River of course that goes through the Riviera goes right down around Niagara Falls. And in the winter time ice would come down from Lake Erie and jam what they would call ice jams all the way through you might have heard those or read about Niagara Falls how the ice jams took out the old Rainbow Bridge down there. As young kids we used to go out on the ice mother and dad never knew we did that. And but those are the things we thought that was a lot of fun crazy foolish when I got older I realized how stupid I was to do those kind of things. But you do a lot of things when you are a youngster. And entertainment we'd find a hill to go skiing on and we'd take old barrows and tare them apart not soap them but wax them down make a pair of skies not what you have today. So we entertained ourselves with everything and we had our chores to do all of the time. And then when I lost my dad my brother and I he was the worker he was five years older than I he had to carry the main load. And he decided that he was going to get married and I said I'm not going to run the farm by myself that's for sure. So we gave up the farm at that time people we used to lease the farm at that time the people who owned it lived in Buffalo New York. And they sold it I imagine to a realtor which now what was farm has got probably three or four homes on it. It was over 240 acres of land. But I went to work in a small fiber company when I was 18 I guess I had finished school at that time High School, College was for the rest of the people because of the money the same situation as today which is difficult for families. AS I say then I earned 35 cents an hour, I thought that was great to earn 35 cents and hour but when word went out for possible of sending troops that's when I joined in 1940 joined the service I enlisted in the service. My uncles and my aunts they were so disappointed in me I was an outcast there and I they tried to get congressmen and everything to get me out of the service. I said I'm of age I will do what I think is right to do and I says its right for me to serve my country no matter how anybody looks. Of course that was on e excuse but the rest of all the buddies the ones I knew in school there was very few of the high school graduates who went to college. Other than those in the upper brackets with parents who had money or businesses. So we didn't think anything of it in our status so in the service all of us went. Then here it is today a lot of time has gone by. That took me into the service and it was different life style. When we went to camp from Buffalo New York we went to Fort Dix New Jersey and we had to chase the cattle out of the fields the cow fields and put up tents it was a miserable winter. It was like telling someone to scrub a floor with a toothbrush well they told us to shovel snow with one of those little trenching tools. But the forces our forces at that time their training was practically good. And we were organized our NCOs some of them were heavy drinker and I couldn't see that. I enjoyed entertainment and I would go and stop some nights after work and have a beer but that was it not the way they were. And we did have permanent buildings at that time we had 40 on a floor and that room was laid out with the bed and you had to walk sideways to get in there. One of my neighbors I say neighbor the fellow that slept right beside of me he was an old farm boy and he didn't want any part he was drafted he didn't want any part of the service. I don't know if it got easy or harder but I was going to go to lunch and get something to eat and he said I'll

see you later and I heard a bang and I ran back up there and he had shot his brains out and it was splattered all over his bed. He was the first person that I had seen do this to himself there were accidents that would happen but that kind of stuff you didn't like to see but you got through it. There was investigation and everything else and there was nothing that could be done what's done is done. And then when we left Fort Dix after a certain amount of training I don't remember how long we stayed there. We went on the Carolina maneuvers well that day we realized that's when we were running around the Jeeps with six foot length long log representing a military piece. Our weapons were the oldest weapons we used the old infield rifles that were nothing like the modern weapons you see today. That dazzles me when I go out to Fort Campbell and see the modern equipment that they have today. From there we went to the West Coast and as I say when we got to the West Coast I the maneuvers the North Carolina maneuvers taught me one thing this unit wasn't ready for war that was for sure. The men didn't have any interest the NCOs didn't have the experience and neither did the officers. That's what made me say if they were officers I can match their capability any time with that kind of confidence and that's why I went to NCO. But then I was out of that unit later the unit was completely dismantled and reassigned to other units. Even the General in command was relieved of command while on the Carolina maneuvers it was that bad. So there was a lot of incentives that made me more or less look at the future in a way that I have my whole life styles because it's something that wasn't familiar with. Now I've got to adjust to and see what I can do with it and with that determination that was my opportunity. So that's what happened up to that time.

Interviewer: Going back one more time December 7, 1941 today's date is December 7, 2001. You were already in the service in 41 what was it like being a serviceman on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Ringler: I said we are at war. That's the only thing in fact I'm not sure if that was a weekend or not but the

Interviewer: It was a Sunday.

Ringler: Sunday yeah okay that's right. Because what was my future wife we were watching a movie when they announced that and I said I'm going to be going off there's no question now I'll be right in the middle of it. And of course we were going together about three years about that time and our getting married at the time we didn't have funds it takes money to do that. And so I was gone after that and of course I got my commission and I think we got married in 43. I came back home as a Second Lieutenant she made all of the arrangements of course we had already discussed that. We knew we were going to get married it was when we were going to get married but even then in 43 as Second Lieutenant they made a great amount of money at \$125 a month. Boy we thought that was great of course then when you went air borne you got another 50 to 100 dollars a month that was the big boost. That enticed a lot of people including myself to go air borne too. I guess that's what happened at that time so we knew when they announced the attack there was no other choice but to go to war. And we did and that war it we were ready. Well I don't know if you are ever ready for war you accept it you know what you have to do regardless of the outcome or consequences.

Interviewer: This question what kind of equipment and arms did you train with and how well did they operate in combat?

Ringler: Well we didn't they didn't to be honest that we had well as an air borne division the only thing you had basically was your arms that you have on you as an individual. Because your regiment doesn't have your artillery and engineer support is at your division level. And that's assigned on a support mission. When we were in Laity the artillery couldn't they even dropped in pieces and fired mission and then put thermal grenades down too to see that the enemy couldn't use them then they were gone because you couldn't get them back out. So what we had in 1940 was antiquated as anything could be and we were not prepared in any way. It was not until we got the M1s and carboms when we got to before we left Storman California we were issued M1 riffles and carboms that we had before we stocked the carboms that was the first good weapons you might say we had. Then we had the machine guns light machine guns we didn't have heavy machine guns at that time just the light ones. And then we had the rocker launchers for the tanks defensive weapons. So with that we had come away with new weaponry for us that was the best there was but that was it. Nothing else would fit into that but that was about it. But we started out with the Carolina maneuvers there was to be honest with you a forest with those conditions. But the military we basically didn't have a military we were so depleted because nobody ever expected an attack on the United States my gosh. It showed confidence we were over confident this is what's happening now. When you get people that will sacrifice their lives just the way the Japanese if you'd seen how they sacrificed their life for their emperor you couldn't believe that human beings could do those things. In large numbers not just one or two but in large numbers jumped of cliffs and everything. So but as far as weaponry that's what we had and I thought we thought it was adequate it served our purposes there wasn't no question about it. But that was it for weaponry. That carried us all the way to Japan. That's why a lot of people I know in the United States couldn't believe the dropping of the atomic bomb. But when we were setting in Laity Luzon we said a silent prayer for dropping that bomb because we were going when we left there we lost probably three or four division of men solid. A lot of air borne we were one of the first ones that were dropped in and had we gone on that mission we never would have come out there would have been no survivors what so ever. Komokozie attacks the attacks that they the fields that we landed on moving into the island of Japan. The komokozie aircrafts the pilots were on the air field waiting to take off anytime. Of course it was a peaceful landing they had surrendered and when the emperor told his people this was it well they accepted it. And of course what MacArthur done for Japan they might have hanged the emperor or killed the emperor made Japan what it is today. And yet MacArthur never got credit for what he did or accomplished in his career time which was a shame. But those were the conditions that existed at the time. So now it's a different military.

Interviewer: Let's see you are such an easy interview to do because you have already thought about this.

Ringler: Well I've gone through several of these interviews.

Interviewer: You know just exactly what to say.

Ringler: Well it not routine but generally the same life style as what you get in your early years and gone through. Most of them say why did you go into the military. The question wasn't asked on there. That was again the times you lose all your buddies that's what you do. It wasn't the popular things to do but a lot of times I was never in popular divisions.

Interviewer: Well why don't you tell me a little bit about what life was like in a combat situation I mean just day to day life knowing that these people that are your enemy are so close. What was life like?

Ringler: Basically it was self survival. The fighting part is one thing I mean your going to defend your position whatever. But your own personal survival of especially in Laity that's what a lot of military units couldn't understand when you tell them you know you go without food. Your units are so dispersed over mountain terrain that you may not see other units for a week or two weeks at a time your own your own to fight and carry on. And I think a lot of its personal survival was the greatest thing because if we had a man wounded it would take six to seven men to try to move in raining constant you were wet and wading streams that you had to cross. Combat was one thing sometimes you looked at combat as a realization of what you have gone through in your personal things of just fighting the weather and the terrain. The mud was we were up to mud our knees at times to try to progress and we're going up a couple of thousand foot mountain to negotiate and get hit by fire. And of course they had the snipers a lot of times they had the advantage of us. But I think they we in the same situation we were in and we were disrupting their routine. The conditions there were determination self determination and unit determination. We were a strong unit together you never leave your buddies they were as much of you as you were yourself. And I think that personal feeling carried you through when you lost one it was devastating. And in the Philippine islands in Luzon that was a different because we were on flatter land it was a different type of combat we were ground impounders as we said. And it was on level terrain and of course now your diversified now your fighting against some artillery that they had the tanks they have land minds and all of this that they can throw against you. So now you had to refer and start thinking in a different combat fashion you had to be more cautious and be ready for any attack whether they come up behind you or from flying or from the front. So you had to be prepared for any situations that may exist. That's what it basically was like as far as combat life I say it wasn't pleasant because under the conditions never knowing if the next bullet is for you. And a lot of kidding used to go around you know we'd joke about it but that was to take the pressure off of you. If you didn't have a sense of humor in combat you didn't belong there because that's when you started loosing it and you become carless and you can't afford carelessness in combat. You realize every move you make is important especially if you're a commander because it's not only your own life it's the men out there. And when you get a mission the first thing I figure is did I lose any men on this mission how can I prevent from loosing any men. And that's a strain on the commander but that's his job that's the responsibility he has and he has to accept it. Same way the NCO does it's their responsibility to take care of their men too. So I think that about sums it up of what you are faced with. Now we had some that couldn't they just said we are finished and they were sent back out of the unit some of them may have been court marshaled for failing to carry out an order. I don't know if they were or not we never kept track of them. We had we've lost many NCOs many officers that couldn't take it they were just not prepared for the conditions that existed at the time. So it wasn't pleasant.

Interviewer: Well you mentioned having a sense of humor about the whole situation what did you all do in your free time to entertain yourselves while you were out there? Because I agree with you whole heartedly if I was put in a combat situation the first thing I would rely on is my sense of humor to keep myself grounded.

Ringler: Well when you have the free time you like to relax and if you had some reading material you'd try to catch up. Believe it or not reading material was the most precious thing that existed. For the simple reason the same way the men get their mail from home they would read that letter over 50 times because it was a diversion from everything else your mind was in another place. You looked at things and said this couldn't exist or that couldn't exist and somebody would come along and say well we heard this or we read this article and you'd listen and oh no that's a little fantasy that's going into these things. But the since of jokes telling stories on somebody else fowling up or not doing things right getting away with it so that's how you would not amuse yourself but you took your time. And it becomes humorous after a while and that's what you had to maintain because if you lost it you had to get out there was no question about it. And that's why we if we noticed somebody slipping and start isolating himself why we would try to either talk to him or recommend that he got out of the air borne that is no place for him.

Interviewer: You said that you took shrap metal.

Ringler: I took shrap metal in this leg right in the side. It happened so quick an air burst and I thought a twig or something had hit me on the leg until I looked down and said my it's bleeding. And when I saw how big it was I told my men I'm going to the medics and see what they can do with it the doc over there. There was a battalion medical station there and this is in a wood area he can patch that up. They used sulfur powder at that time and

Interviewer: It sounds like it would sting.

Ringler: No well you never even thought about it but it purified cleansed the wound. And he said I've got to stitch it up and I said get to it. He said I don't have anything to numb it I said I didn't ask for that I said just stitch it up and that's it. So I guess he put about five stitches in it and I went back I didn't even know I could have got the Purple Heart until I came back and got ready to retire I started receiving decorations on it and it just the battalion medics put in for a Purple Heart. I mean that was legal and that's what they are supposed to do but I never followed up on it or anything else with decoration that wasn't my purpose of going into the service decorations. It was coming out alive that was the main effort. SO that was the only time I was injured thank goodness.

Interviewer: You said that you eventually after Luzon went back to Japan after

Ringler: We went to Okinawa and then after Okinawa we went to Japan and the surrender took place.

Interviewer: What was yawls job while you were in Japan?

Ringler: I left we got in initially patrolling I stayed there two weeks and my regimental commander said Ringler your going to the medics. I said what did I do now and he said you've got jaundice he said your

as yellow as a Chinaman. I said sir I'm looking at you and you're just as yellow as I am. He said I didn't say that I told you to get to the medics. So I didn't go and two days later he said I thought I told you to go to the medics I said I didn't get over there. He said if you don't get over there by tonight you're going to have an MP escort over there. Know you've got a choice so I said I've got to go on because knowing Colonel he would do that so I went over I think it was doctor Hester he was our regimental surgeon. He took one look at me and said Ringler you know where you're going? I said I want to stay here and he said no your not he said I've got an airplane leaving in one hour you're heading back to Okinawa he said your going to the general hospital. He said you've got jaundice and bad as a person can have it he said this is serious. Well when he spoke I listened that was one man I listened to. So I went back to Okinawa and went to the general hospital that night they said a typhoon is hitting Okinawa we are going to put you in cave homes where the Okinawa's put their dead. Okay we went in there of course when you have jaundice you're not supposed to have beef and all the greasy foods that's all they had. And the next morning when we woke up in that cave we were safe we looked up there where the hospital was it was level to the ground. Everything was just at ground level and that destroyed all the ships in the harbor and millions and millions of dollars worth of damage. So I guess we had to stay there before they would get the air fields cleared they moved me from there to Guam and then they put me in an isolations ward for jaundice because there were 11 of us from the 11<sup>th</sup> air borne division. I said that's coincidental 11 from the 11<sup>th</sup> division and they had a nurse in there she was a big heavy set nurse and she said I'm the boss here and I want to let you know I don't care what your rank is that doesn't mean anything what I tell you to do I want you to do. She said I'm not being mean she said if you don't do it last night we had a Colonel die on the way back to the states from jaundice, we listened. She said you've got to get a shot, okay. And I stayed there for almost two months before they moved us back to the states. But I wanted to get home for Christmas I hadn't seen my first born daughter. She was born as we were departing for overseas and she was now 19 months old and I said I don't care. Okay we'll put down and air craft and fly you back to California. I said I want to get out of this cotton picking place I've had enough oh I was disgusted at that time. I was so and so I went form there to Fort Knox Kentucky that was the processing center for discharge. And I was going to get out and the young warrant officer who was processing me he said Captain what's your problem. I said I want to go home for Christmas I said I've haven't seen my wife and I haven't seen my 19 month old daughter and I said I want to get out of this cotton picking outfit that's all. And I was upset that's the first time I think I took the military side of it away from looking at wanting to get back and get my two feet on the ground from what we went through. And he talked to me for a while and he said you know on the outside it isn't so pleasant and this is in 45. So I listened to him so he made me a deal he said being that you have jaundice he said you're not going to be home for Christmas he said you have to go into the hospital and their going to keep you. You have to be there for at least 60 days before they will release you with jaundice following up on it. He said if you are interested in staying in or if you want to look around and see what the situation is on the outside he said I can give you a promise that I can give you any assignment you want air borne. He said I know your going to ask fro air borne and I said yeah and he said look things over and see what you think. He said I'll send you home now for a 15 day leave he said you've got 30 days coming there's no question but he said I'll give you another 15 if you stay in and I give you the assignment that you want. He was the first person with common sense talking to me in a man to man process. And I said that sounds good I said when do I get home? He said I'll put you on an air craft tonight I'll have a staff car here and take you to

the airport and you'll be home by midnight. I said oh boy this gets better all the time so I took him up on it and I went home. Of course the wife met me at the airport and I will always remember this one thing all these years my daughter right when I was speaking and my daughter came over and said you get away from my mother. I said is this the greeting I have to come home after being gone all of this time. And I kid her about that today I still remember. But when I saw what the situation was at that time the unions had taken over everything in the plant that I was working in. The person that was the Stuart of the union he was gold breaker when I was up there hiding in the closet he would catch us up there sleeping in the closet end everything I said this is not for me. So I called the warrant officer he said okay I'll have orders at your home for Fort Benning Georgia for Warrant School and that changed my whole thinking from getting out of the service at that time to staying in. Because somebody sat down and spoke to me and made me realize to get off of that undecided horse that I was on and belligerent attitude and you know I didn't like this or that and just settle down and reason. So I never have been able to find him I tried to locate him again after that to thank him for what he did. It shows how a person can change your life around I was surprised myself that he was able to do it. But I think primarily it was the man who spoke to me and the decision I made but even then I was still a reserve officer basically a reserve officer had to get out in 20 years. And I had to fight for that because when I came back from the tour I was on they sent me to the Pentagon in Washington D.C. and I said I'm going to have to retire I don't have any choice in 20 years. I said so my wife is already living in my home community give me an assigned unit there with a training or not National Guard but reserve units that we had. So after about three letters they finally approved an assignment there. My 19<sup>th</sup> year almost 19 and half years I had prepared to retire at 20. I got a letter from the Department of the Army offering me an opportunity to carry on to 30 years and review a record. So by that time I was a Lieutenant Colonel my wife and I talked it over she didn't care for it but she said that's a decision you've got to make. So we decided to stay on and we did. Of course I lost her in 81 of a heart attack. I never realized that genetically in her family heart attacks are prevalent her dad died form a heart attack she had a younger brother he was in his late 30s passed away in his sleep. She had another brother that passed away the same way and we never thought about that until after she had hers. And she died she passed away in the ICU at Fort Brag hospital so you know your in the best care in the world. But when it happened that ended everything that changes your whole life that's a different situation. But that's how your life can change you never know what's going to happen. We had several children five boys two girls one son born in Japan and one son and daughter was born in Porto Rico. Then I was on my assignments after I got on staff the upper level of command I was in staff assignments and always dealing with material and traveling a lot at that time. Which was a disadvantage for the specialized job I had in Vietnam and the Pacific. But she took it in stride but I know she always said I don't have to be part of the military she said I don't want any command responsibility. I'm not getting up there and general's wives telling me what I can do and not do. I said tell them you can't do it you've got children and you take care of the children. Well that worked up to a point it all depends on who the commander is and who the wives are. So that's kind of what happened it's a lifestyle. But loosing her I lost all desire for a few years. I loved hiking and I could do that for a couple of weeks at a time. So the children of course their all grown up we have grand children and great grand children. So now I travel visiting them family reunions I've had two and another one coming up next year. I take care of keeping the family together that's the one thing I do because all seven children are in six different states. From California to Virginia to Florida to Missouri but they've all

got good lifestyles and they've all made out they've all got a college education. That was the wife's primary concern because she wasn't able to go to college. So it makes a difference what you want for your children their nurses, teachers our son has a Masters in Nuclear Physics and he's gold prospecting.

Interviewer: I bet

Ringler: He said dad I'm going to do something like that. He said I've got time to work labor but right now I'm going to do something. I said you do what you want that's your advantage. I was off to visit with him this year and I went to visit my other son in Albaurky and their families. It's a lot of fun when I go to the west coast I fly out there. The east coast, south and north I'll drive I still drive maybe up to 20,000 miles a year. And travel I do that all the time so it's a lot of traveling so that's what keeps me going. Still visiting with the old timers and the stories get better every year.

Interviewer: Well I have to ask how did you end up in Clarksville you've been everywhere how did you end up here?

Ringler: When we heard that in Japan in 51 in Korea I had spent four years and then when we reached Korea I was involved in Korea and they said you're going home you've got enough time in Japan. So in 51 I was sent back to Fort Campbell and the 11<sup>th</sup> air borne divisor was here so I stayed from the time I got home I had several different assignments' I was division staff and then the commander in the 503<sup>rd</sup> wanted me to come down there. I was sent down there and on the last maneuvers in 52 we went up there the regimental commander says I want you to jump with your battalion in the Arctic they said it can't be done. So I'm giving you that mission well we did it and set new records. Said we couldn't jump on the Tundra said we couldn't navigate off the road and I took my battalion and we navigated two to three miles off the road and we maneuvered. We changed the whole defense system of Alaska because of what we were capable of doing. The maneuver for us was very successful and the colonel regimental commander at that time he said I'm not going to ask you why you did the things you did he said since they were as successful as they were that's all that counts. Well you gave me responsibility and I took it and that was primarily that I wasn't afraid of responsibility. And even though we had lost bodies which I had not idea what we would do my first thought was my God what are we going to do on this mission. So then later at that time I was designated to go to General Staff College up in Kansas so I moved out of there I think the first of January and went to Command General Staff College. I was there for four months or six months and I went from there to Porto Rico for an assignment there. And so that's why I am familiar with Fort Campbell but when I retired the wife said we're not going back to Taiwan she said I don't want to see any more snow. I had no arguments I would go along with that so we decided in favor of North Carolina and I stayed there well from I guess we got there at Fort Brag in 65 and we stayed there until I retired and then we bought a place in North Carolina and I stayed well when she passed on I stayed until 89. It got to crowded I like the open spaces I'm a country boy and before I could walk about three miles away no problem. The traffic got so heavy the community went from about 40 to 50 thousand to about 110,000. To get to the mall I could walk to the mall quicker than I could drive my car which was only three miles because of the way everything went. It was beyond imagination I said I've got to get out of here I thought I was ready until the moving guy got up there and the reason I came to Fort Campbell I knew several people. I knew a lot of the officers who retired here too from the 11<sup>th</sup> air

borne. And the Command Sargent Major I know real well. I looked around South Carolina, Florida none of the other areas attracted me. Then I found this place out in Dover I said that's away from everything no harassment no nothing I can do what I want. And that's how I wound up here.

Interviewer: You have had an interesting life.

Ringler: I think I have I have had yeah and I've enjoyed it very much the hardest part was when I lost my wife. I think that was the hardest part I didn't know what I wanted to do then. I was completely lost without her. And then I said well pull yourself up by the bootstraps. And the children wanted me to do this I said if you think I am going to live with any of you your wrong. That's out today at least I will visit and then I limit my visits to maybe three or four days. My daughter talks me into staying longer than I want to and she did it Thanksgiving I spent Thanksgiving with them down there. Because they've got the great grand children so it's whether I move again at this time in life you get to be 83 you look at life from a different perspective. What you will do and not do and there are indications what I used to do in 30 minutes to an hour now takes me three days to do the same project especially cutting three acres of grass I've got three acres of woods. So I have just about everything that I could desire. I know a lot of people that have said why haven't you got married. I said I never have found somebody to take the place of my wife and I said that would be an insult. So I said I just stay alone. With the children it's hard at times but like everything else you adjust. It's what you want and what you expect out of life and if I want to travel I just pack up and go. No argument from the children because they know better than to do that. But we are very close and that's why the family reunions it's mostly to get the grand children and great grand children to know one another other wise they would never see one another. So I try to keep the family together. But and we all get together that's the proudest thing they stay in constant contact and now with the computer if I could ever learn how to operate one. I get so discussed with it when it talks back to me I really get mad at it. Do this your making improper moves. So that's basically it but yeah as I say I think going to the military reunion and enjoying because I'm with people it's always interesting to hear their side of things. And of course you always get the wise crackers that like to rib you, we know what you did and we know this and we know that. I said you people don't know anything the stories I hear you tell now I wasn't even with the unit it couldn't have been. But that's their enjoyment that's what you look at its enjoyable. Well I'm sorry I've taken so much of your time.

Interviewer: Not this has been wonderful I'm so glad that I got to talk to you I really enjoyed it.

Ringler: Well I didn't know just because of different types of interviews but you have a good list of questions there what you probably should have done was go done one at a time. But in a round about way I probably covered everything.

Interviewer: You covered everything. I think you really covered everything.

Ringler: If something comes up you could call me I could try to explain.

Interviewer: Okay before you go I need to get you to sing this piece of paper and I would like to get your mailing address so I can mail this back to you.