

Interviewer: Okay Mr. Norris for the record would you go ahead and state your full name and where and when you were born.

Norris: Roy Floyd Norris Sr. I was born in Lagrange Georgia on the 25th day of November 1915.

Interviewer: Okay what were your parents' names and what were their occupations?

Norris: My mother's name was Mary and she was a housewife. My father's name was Floyd and he worked in a textile plant.

Interviewer: Do you have any brothers or sister?

Norris: I have let me see I've got three brothers and one sister.

Interviewer: Okay can you tell me a little about your early education as far as grade school and middle school and high school?

Norris: Well I finished grammar school in Charlotte Alabama and we moved back to Lagrange Georgia. And I was out of school on I guess about nine months because we came into the town in the middle of the semester and my father said no need for us to start now so we waited until the next semester started. Then I went through the seventh and eighth grade and left school during the ninth grade left high school during the ninth grade and went to work in the cotton mill.

Interviewer: Do you have any recollections on the great depression? What do you remember of the great depression?

Norris: Well I know it wasn't fun for us because my father didn't get to work too much sometimes the mill wasn't running. And so everything that us kids made like myself I had a paper route and I didn't get anything out of the paper route the money went to daddy because we needed it for the family during that time.

Interviewer: About what time did you start to go to work yourself?

Norris: Well when I left high school I went to work in the cotton mill. I guess that was about oh 34 somewhere during 1934, 33 or 34 I don't remember exactly when. But I worked in a mill about a year year and a quarter something like that before I joined the army.

Interviewer: You mind if I turn this down just a bit I'm just worried I ain't going to be able to hear you on the tape.

Norris: I just got tired of being working inside of four walls.

Interviewer: How much did that job pay?

Norris: I was drawing about nine dollars a week.

Interviewer: And what exactly did you do in the mill?

Norris: Well I started sweeping in the card room and that's where my father worked in the card room. And I guess I ran the sweeping job for about six or eight months and dad taught me how to run frames. So the boss give me a set of frames and I started running frames on the third shift at night. And I made a little more money than I did sweeping the floors of course. And but as I said I got tired of that pinned in deal. When I run into this friends brother who was visiting from Fort Benning we got to talking to him so a day or later I taken off to Fort Benning.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Norris: Nineteen thirty five.

Interviewer: Nineteen thirty five. Can you tell me little bit about that how that went?

Norris: Well I got to Benning and I looked up my friend's brother and he introduced me to his first sergeant and I told him I wanted to join the army. And the first sergeant said well we don't have no vacancies said we'll have one in about two weeks if you'll come back. I said well I said I'm hitchhiking back and forth I said I don't know. Well him and the other boy got to talking and the first sergeant come back and he said I'll tell you what I'll do I'll let you live here in the barracks until we get an opening. He said every day when we're out training he said you go out and walk around and watch the other units train because when you join I want to make sure this is the unit you want to be in. So this I did I even wore the uniform before I was even in the army. You had to have a uniform to go in the post theater and the troops in the barracks where I was rounded up me a uniform where I could go to the theater with them at night. First sergeant called me down one day and he says we've got an opening report over at the enlistment office. I went over there and filled out the papers and everything and he says carry this to your father and let him sign it because I wasn't 21 then. And I said okay I'll bring it back in a day or two. He said no you don't bring it back you have your daddy mail it to you. So I went home and told my father to sign the papers and he agreed to sign them and I went out and hit the road hitchhiked back to Fort Benning. About two days later the recruiting office called me that the papers had come in. I reported over there to them they finished the paperwork and I was in the army.

Interviewer: Now what unit was that that you were down there with?

Norris: 376 66th infantry light tanks it was the tanks that we had at that time were the old Mark 8 tanks form World War I. And I started out as a they taught me to be a loader one that sticks pound in that Mark 8. And I advanced from being a loader to they taught me to drive. And when they started building the jump school down at Benning they was cutting pines down to where they put the 250 foot tower. First sergeant detailed me to take my tank over to that area and pull stumps. In fact when I got discharged I had during that period (tape skipped) ____ with that Mark 8 tank building the area where they got the 250 foot towers.

Interviewer: What year was it that you were discharged first?

Norris: Thirty eight

Interviewer: That was in thirty eight. Now at that (tape skipped) I've heard of the ____ Louisiana maneuvers and Carolina maneuvers that wasn't yet that hadn't occurred until 1940 correct?

Norris: I believe it.

Interviewer: So what did you do during your limbo time when you weren't sworn in?

Norris: Well I got me a job bushing what they call a goat wagon in a textile mill. I pushed a wagon around through the mill hauled sandwiches, cokes, things like that for the people that worked in the mill. And I don't remember exactly how long I worked at that but all of a sudden I went to work in the office at one of the plants as a time keeper. I would go in the plant and read the meters on the machines see how much they had worked and all and go write it down in the books and everything. And that went on for a while then I left there and went to the head office and started running addressing graft machines which paid more than what I was making as a time keeper. I guess I must have worked about a year running the addressing graft machine in the head office there at the mill because Calloway Mills had about six mills there in the town. Then I left there and went to Atlanta Georgia and went to work at Rich's Incorporation a department store running addressing graft machines for them.

Interviewer: Now what's an addressing graft machine?

Norris: It's a type of printing machine that had names on a metal plate. There are plates stacked in a tray and you put it in a machine and they come out as you want them. You turn the machine off and the top of the plates have little slots that you can put tips of metal down in for different things. In other words say you wanted to run a roster that listed the 18 year olds in that area you put a tab in the top of one of these plates and it would kick out all of these you put the tab in and just print the ones that the tab wasn't in. Or you'd some other special roster you needed if the boss wanted a roster of a certain type thing and all you could do it by putting metal tabs in the top of the plate and running it off.

Interviewer: What point and time did you steer back towards your military career?

Norris: Well when the war broke out they called me back to active duty because I was in the active reserve. And I had several children at that time so I put in for the dependency discharge and got it. And about three or four months after I got my discharge I turned around and re-enlisted.

Interviewer: Well prior to Pearl Harbor were you, your family, your friends how seriously were you taking what was going on in Europe with Nazi and with Hitler or what Tajo was doing in Japan. How seriously did ya'll think that that rally affected the Americans?

Norris: The best I can remember we didn't pay too much attention to it until Pearl Harbor came along.

Interviewer: Can you tell me where you were and what you remember about when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Norris: No really I can't I just know that I woke up that Sunday morning and I was reading the paper and all of a sudden the telephone rang somebody called and told me that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: Did you have a radio at the time?

Norris: We had a radio but we didn't have it on that Sunday morning.

Interviewer: Did y'all listen to Roosevelt's famous speech the day after?

Norris: Yeah we listened to it.

Interviewer: What was your impression of Roosevelt at the time?

Norris: I thought he was a great man myself.

Interviewer: Did it seem like everybody pretty much approved up to that point his handling of the occurrence in the Pacific and in Europe?

Norris: To me it seemed that way or he wouldn't have stayed in office as long as he did.

Interviewer: I understand that. Okay you said that you turned around and re-enlisted did you have a preference to what you wanted to do when you re-enlisted in the army?

Norris: Yeah I re-enlisted for jump school.

Interviewer: Now did you have to go through any type of induction?

Norris: Well they first they shipped me from Atlanta Georgia to a camp in South Carolina because by the time I had gotten out until I re-enlisted the squad movements had changed and some of the trainings had changed. So they sent me up there and on the way up where I picked up my nickname was on that trip. I had about 19 people in a group and the officer gave me the record and said here you're the only ex-serviceman in the group said you're in charge. They put us on a train to go to South Carolina it wasn't a military train it was a regular civilian train. So we were stationed all over the car I had people sitting on one end all through the middle and all then we were riding along and all of a sudden one individual stuck his hand up and waved two fingers at me. I said yes son you're excused and he got up and went to the bathroom so then he says thank you pappy. And from then on all the rest of the trip everybody that talked to me called me pappy. And then we got to South Carolina and I was preparing my foot locker for an inspection on Friday night and I had pictures of all four of my boys stuck in the top of my locker. And the guys come along and said are those your brothers and I said no they're not my brothers they're my sons. No wonder they call you pappy. So there are people right today that can't tell you my first name all they know is Pappy Norris.

Interviewer: What was your wife's feeling on you going back in the military?

Norris: It didn't bother her too much she left it up to me because she was an army brat herself. Her father was a band master of the 17th infantry so she knew what she was in for when she married me.

Interviewer: Now you mentioned you went to South Carolina were you going through another basic training there in South Carolina?

Norris: Practically yes

Interviewer: Were you getting MOS qualified is that where they qualified you to be infantrymen or

Norris: Yeah we had we taking strictly infantry training.

Interviewer: Then from there what occurred?

Norris: We went from South Carolina they shipped us to Georgia to jump school. We arrived down there in December they gave us a Christmas leave and we reported back in January and started our jump school training.

Interviewer: This was January of 43?

Norris: Yes I graduated in February from jump school.

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little about the early jump school? I've heard it's changed a whole lot.

Norris: Well we had to make five jumps back then before we qualified and of course you had to pack your own shoots. Like the first night we went down to pack a shoot for the first jump I guess we went to the packing shed about six o'clock and we got out of there about eleven or twelve. We were supposed to pack everyone's shoot. Be the time we were making our fifth jump we reported to the packing shed at six o'clock and we was out by seven. And it just worked that way and we made the five jumps there at Fort Benning. Then after we made the five jumps I got picked to go to ranger school and when we got out of ranger school like I said they must have had more rangers than they needed because a bunch of us shipped over to the Alabama area to start forming the 13th airborne. I guess we was over there about maybe a month or something like that.

Interviewer: In Alabama?

Norris: Yeah and one day we got called up trucked back over to the main post put us in a vehicle and started calling our names out. Had different groups out different doors of the theatre. We couldn't get no information nobody would tell us anything then after they got them all grouped up and everything they took our bags and everything and carried us down to the railroad station and put us on a train. And the car that I was in they must have gotten out of the graveyard or something because it wasn't air conditioned the seats were worn like twigs what do you call it the stuff they weave a seat?

Interviewer: Kind of like a burlap?

Norris: No it's a looked like you split bamboo and made strips and the hitching train car was four or five cars up ahead we had to walk through we looked back here and we had to walk through all of those cars come back with our plate of food and eat in the car where we were. We wound up in Orange New Jersey at a post up there on the way up there they made us take our ___ our boots take our patches off of the caps and take our wings off. When we got into Orange the officer in charge reported to the headquarters and somebody out of there just an off statement remark said what kind of duds did you bring in last night he says you be on the street in the morning and I'll show you what kind of duds I brought in. So he come down to the barracks there was two or three barracks of us. He says strip down to your waist says we're gonna start double timing around this post in the morning. About 8 o'clock we got out and we double timed around that post until about 11 o'clock singing chatting and singing songs. We got back the old man came down and says polish your boots, put your wings on, sew your patches on.

Interviewer: Now who was your'e you talking about was this your battalion commander when you said the old man?

Norris: The officer that was in charge I don't know his name because I only met him there when we got on the train and I didn't see him anymore after we left Orange. But that night we got a little rowdy. And they had a PX had a little small PX down at the end of each strip each company street there was a small PX there. And by the time they closed them PXs we just about tore them up because all of us got to drinking beer and everything. And the next morning he come down again and said okay take unpolished your boots, take your wings off, take your patches off. We had to do it again.

Interviewer: Did he ring y'all again for three hours?

Norris: We didn't run no more.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the barracks there? What was the living conditions like?

Norris: They were these two story barracks like they used to have out at Fort Campbell wooden barracks two story.

Interviewer: What's your take on those? I was told those were built to only last six months and here they are 60 years later still standing.

Norris: Those buildings those barracks were built out of some of the best lumber that they could find it is good hard lumber. And that is the reason they lasted as long as they did they wasn't just throwed up with anything they could get their hands on. They were built out of good lumber.

Interviewer: Now during your basic training there in South Carolina did you train on just one certain weapon system or were you pretty much a jack of all trades? Did you work on the BAR did you work on the

Norris: I didn't do much training because of the old man had me pulling CQ the previous service man. He said I don't know what you're doing here in the first place you spent three years in the army. And so I run jobs for him CQ in charge of KP detail things like that. I really didn't do too much training.

Interviewer: When you went back in were you a corporal at the time?

Norris: I was a still a private.

Interviewer: Private?

Norris: Yeah

Interviewer: What happened after you left New Jersey?

Norris: After we left Orange?

Interviewer: Yes sir.

Norris: They shipped us to Casa Blanca. We went over in the same convoy that the 82nd airborne division was in but we were on a different ship. We were considered the 82nd airborne divisions combat over

strength 25 percent over strength. And we were not assigned a unit until we arrived at the replacement center at Casa Blanca. When we arrive at Casa Blanca then we were assigned to different units

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about the transport ships that you were on?

Norris: Well it wasn't nothing to brag about.

Interviewer: Were they packed because I've heard about hot cotton did you have to do that where you had to take shifts on who got the bunk and?

Norris: No we all had a bunk but you were eating standing up with tables a little over waist high and all. It wasn't fun but I've seen worse.

Interviewer: You remember how long it took you to get from North America to

Norris: Not really I don't. I actually don't remember just how long it takes.

Interviewer: Was this on a converted cruise liner or was this on an actual what were they liberty ships?

Norris: It was a I imagine it was a converted cruise liner because it at that time I didn't know too much about ships anyway. I couldn't have told you exactly what it was. And we got to Casa Blanca they broke us up and assigned us to different units there Africa.

Interviewer: Do you recall how you were feeling on the trip over there were you anxious, excited, a little reluctant?

Norris: Not really it was exciting to the fact that we were going to war but the group that I was with I'd say I was one of the few ex-personnel on there. The rest of them was plan recruits that had never been in the service at all. And it wasn't a bad trip but it wasn't a good one either. Of course we hit a lot of poker games and things like that to pass the time.

Interviewer: Tell me about Casa Blanca when you got there.

Norris: Didn't see too much of Casa Blanca. We spent two days in Casa Blanca and that was in the replacement center. And then we went out we shipped out in our units which was out in dessert which was away from Casa Blanca. So I really didn't get to see too much of Casa Blanca. In fact the two nights that I was there I didn't go off base you wasn't supposed to but a lot of them did of course. But I didn't get off base either night.

Interviewer: What were the quarters like there?

Norris: Tents

Interviewer: Were they pup tents or?

Norris: No big ramble tents about as long as my house two or three rows of folding cots.

Interviewer: Casa Blanca is where the actual replacement CP was?

Norris: Well just on the outside of Casa Blanca.

Interviewer: And then from there they did disperse you?

Norris: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay where did they disperse you to?

Norris: I went up to _____.

Interviewer: And what unit did you

Norris: 376 parachute field.

Interviewer: And what was going on there with that unit at the time?

Norris: They were getting ready for combat. I was assigned to the message center they were teaching me to be a code clerk at that time. And then when we got ready to go into jump into Sicily I wasn't on jump roster when the old man posted it. So I got permission from the first sergeant to talk to him I just told him sir I didn't come all the way over here to stay back here and watch y'all go off I said I want to go. So he finally fooled around and finally put me on a roster.

Interviewer: You mentioned you jumped into Sicily?

Norris: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Now that was Operation Husky right?

Norris: I don't remember what that was but I do know that we almost got shot out of the sky by our own people.

Interviewer: That was my next question I've read that a couple of planes did get shot by the navy that was sitting off the coast.

Norris: Well there was several air force made a couple mistakes. Air force is not supposed to fly in over a landing field. This bunch went right in over an American landing field. I had a brother-in-law that was on the LST behind a fifty caliber machine gun shooting at us. And I didn't know it though until several days later after we got in. I found him and he told me where he was at that night. But we were scattered all over Sicily.

Interviewer: Now did you jump into what was it Point Olivio there on the southwest coast? Is that where you jumped into or?

Norris: No I don't know it's in the write up there. There's a lot of things I don't remember as far as names go.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about the flight over other than being shot at. Was it at night or?

Norris: It was at night in fact it was the first night jump I had made. I didn't make any at Benning it was the first night jump I had made. And when I landed I was by myself my parachute spread out over an olive tree and when I actually stopped falling I was about a foot from the ground my feet was. I got out of my harness about 30 minutes I was by myself. And there was shooting going on all over they were still shooting at planes that were coming over. And the first man I run into he was a darn medic he didn't have a gun but we I guess it was 20 or 30 minutes later we began to pick up different ones and all. By morning we was pretty well my unit was pretty well consolidated.

Interviewer: What did y'all do after y'all got consolidated?

Norris: We started forming up for combat and about that time the Germans began to fall back. But the first thing they did the morning after we jumped they sent groups of us six and seven men to every unit around Sicily. And they'd call these people in they're not German desert troops they are American paratroopers because we had on that new jump jacket jumpsuit the airborne was using. And so then we started following infantry across Sicily.

Interviewer: What infantry was it the 3rd ID?

Norris: 504th

Interviewer: No who were you attacked to what infantry?

Norris: 504th the 376th was part of the 504th combat team.

Interviewer: Okay and y'all were headed to Palermo did y'all follow around the west coast?

Norris: We didn't get all the way up there before they pulled us out and sent us back to Africa. And we was in Africa a while and then they sent us back over to Sicily. Then once again we went into Sicily then we went into Italy Salerno.

Interviewer: Can you describe what the fighting was like there on Sicily what was the terrain like and?

Norris: Well the main thing

Interviewer: German positions

Norris: The main thing I remember was a lot of big cactus. In fact we had some of our boys landed in those cactus.

Interviewer: So Sicily is dessert like?

Norris: In areas but not as bad as Africa ____ it was where we jumped at it was plenty of vegetation. Olive trees and things and I wouldn't consider it dessert not by a long shot. But it was something else and the main thing about it was see when the paratrooper jumped back in them days we didn't jump in no beddings. All we had was our ammo our food and our pack shaving material. In fact nobody in my unit even had a blanket when they jumped in. We liked to froze to death at night I remember one night I pulled out a gas protected jacket and I got crawled into that jacket put it around my neck where I could

keep warm and I sweated so bad when I got out I almost did freeze. But we started picking up German blankets we wasn't equipped with none of that stuff.

Interviewer: What was your first impression of the Germans?

Norris: Oh I really don't know I knew that I was supposed to shoot them. But a lot of times you wondered if you really wanted to.

Interviewer: Were they pretty good fighters?

Norris: Fair

Interviewer: Did you come across any of the Italians?

Norris: Oh yeah run into more Italians than I did Germans.

Interviewer: What was your impression of the Italians?

Norris: They are out of this world. They are kind of like the little boy said "we'll be on the side just winning."

Interviewer: So did you a lot of POWs did a lot of Italians surrender to you or?

Norris: Well a lot of them came through our area. The infantry would pick them up and send them back to the artillery area back in the rear. So we really didn't have too much picking up as far as that goes. The infantry did the picking up.

Interviewer: So now were you more along the lines of an artillery man?

Norris: I didn't understand.

Interviewer: Were you an artillery?

Norris: No I was like I said I was in the message center.

Interviewer: You are still in the message center even though they've got you on jump status okay.

Norris: Yeah everybody in fact everybody in the unit was a jumper. We had no legs in that unit. But when we jumped into Sicily we lost so many men in the wire section I got transferred out of the message center to the wire section.

Interviewer: So you went back to Africa and from there you went to Sicily then you jumped into Salerno. Was the Salerno jump any better than

Norris: My unit didn't jump in Salerno the artillery unit didn't the infantry jumped in Salerno.

Interviewer: So y'all landed?

Norris: We landed by boat on Salerno.

Interviewer: What was the landing like?

Norris: Well it was no trouble at all because the infantry had it all cleared out.

Interviewer: They had already taken care of business.

Norris: Yeah

Interviewer: How long did it take you all to breach the landing and kind of bust out and get off of the beach?

Norris: Well like I said we didn't have any of that it was all taken care of when we got there. The infantry cleared out that area.

Interviewer: So where did you go from the beaches then?

Norris: Well we went up the boot of Italy into Naples. And we stayed in Naples I guess about three or four weeks my unit particular unit did and then they infantry of course was out of us and all. And then we started going up into the mountains north of Naples. And we was attached to the 3rd army 3rd infantry I think and we fought the mountains there with the artillery and all. We got pulled out of the mountain area back to Naples and then my combat team got sent to Anzio. And of course we had no trouble landing at Anzio because the infantry had cleared the beaches and everything when we got there. And we stayed on Anzio I guess about 72 days while we was on Anzio the rest of the 82nd airborne division went to England. And then so after we got pulled out of Anzio we came back then we were shipped to England. We got to England too late to refit to make the jump into Normandy. We didn't my combat team didn't go into Normandy the rest of the division did but our combat team didn't. And then when they came back we refitted and we all jumped into Holland. After we stayed in Holland they pulled us out of Holland after Patton and all of them got up there with the tanks and everything. They pulled us out of Holland back down to Reims France. And I guess we was at Reims there our French artillery base camp and all pretty nice barracks and everything. And while there during those two or three weeks they came out with this business of men going home on 30 days TDY. They were picking one man out of every unit I was lucky enough to get picked from the 376th to come home on that 30 days TDY. I left then went into Paris with my orders and everything to ship back to the states. Well while we was in Paris the weather closed in and they couldn't fly us to England. There was only supposed to stay in Paris a couple days and then they were gonna fly us to England. Weather closed in and they couldn't fly us to England so actually we spend nine days nine nights doing nothing but reporting to the hotel every morning to see if we were going to ship out. While there they started the MPs started stopping us on the street wanting to see our pass and everything and I also went up to the hotel where my fist sergeant said he was coming in Paris for a three day pass and we'd have a party you know before I came home. And I went to the hotel and there wasn't no troops at the hotel well the clerks couldn't tell us anything. And then when the MPs started stopping us and looking at our pass said go on about your business but then we'd see them stop other troops and put them on a truck. That was when the Bulge broke out and they were pulling the troops out of Paris that were in there for three day pass and all pulling them out and all sending carrying them back to the unit. So we really didn't know the Bulge had broke out until we finally flew back to England and we was in England about two days then we got on the boat and started home. And we were about two days our on the boat before we knew anything about the Bulge. And it kindly

shook us up a bit because we figured there was 1700 combat troops on the ship coming home for a leave. We figured they'd turn that boat around and carry us back but they didn't. They brought us on home.

Interviewer: How did that go did you come straight to your family or?

Norris: Yeah I reported we landed on the east coast they put us on trains by groups that were going to different locations. And I was in a group that was going to Atlanta Georgia because my family lived in Jonesborough Georgia at that time. And I got there by train and I spent 30 days running around the country visiting my relatives and all. I reported back to Fort McPherson on the day I was supposed to report back and the officer lined us up give us a lot of instructions and everything. And I asked him a question I said when do we get a physical? He said sergeant you're going back to Europe. Okay well before I left Europe my battery commander told me right in front of the first sergeant he said Pappy when you get home before you come back over here you have yourself fixed. I said what do you mean fixed sir he said you're in rough shape and I know it. I said who told you? He said the doctor told me. SO he said before you come back you have yourself fixed. So that day when this captain said you're not getting a physical okay all you people pick up your bags and all and report back here at one o'clock to get on the train. I went over to my car told my wife said drive me up to the dispensary. I went to the dispensary walked in and the first lieutenant from the 17th airborne sitting behind the desk he was back home for some kind of leave or something. He asked my problem I told him he checked me out says come on go with me. Went down the hall to a major's office he told the major my story the major says you check him? The lieutenant said yes sir said he's ruptured. Okay said I'll take care of it lieutenant so he carried me down to the colonel's office. The colonel wasn't in the lady there in the office said have a seat he'll be back in a few minutes. So he come walking back in the major told the colonel the story he said you want to have yourself fixed sergeant? I said yes sir my battery commander told me to get myself fixed before I came back over there. Said he didn't want to have to pull me off of a drop zone sometime because of strangulation. He says okay picked up the telephone and called this replacement center and talked to that captain. He said go down to the replacement center and get your records. My wife carried me back down to the replacement center walked in and this captain said give that damn sergeant his records. Well this sergeant there give me my records and we walked out well he walked out with us got on the outside he was just dying laughing. I said what's so funny? He said I don't who was on the other end of that telephone a while ago but said all the captain done was said but sir but sir. So I reported then to the hospital. They got me ready for an operation and I was lying in the bed by the window when my buddies marched by to get on the train the group that I was with. So they operated on me double hernia.

Interviewer: Was it in your vertebra?

Norris: No, pointing down to his groin.

Interviewer: Oh where did that happen was it on one of the jumps?

Norris: Jump school

Interviewer: Happened at jump school and you went the whole time.

Norris: I knew something was wrong because some of the buckles that was on the harness had caught me when I was going through the training. But I wasn't about to fool around with it I just went on ahead.

It wasn't hurting me but I was ruptured and the doctor that examined me over there when I had a fall over there one night he found it. He told my commander I didn't know what it was until I got ready to come home. The company commander said you have yourself fixed. So I spent at that time I had 30 days in bed and then they sent me to the convalescent ward. They would let me out during the day and I had to report back to the convalescent ward to sleep every night. And I spent 30 days in convalescent ward and I was there when the war ended in Europe. I got discharged on points got out of the army went home. Went to work at the railroad there in Atlanta they switched me I worked with them a while. It got to the point where these railroad men were coming back from the army after the war was over in Europe. They had more sonority then I do so I would report to work at night and wouldn't get wouldn't have a job supposable. They'd bump me and I told Momma said I can't make a living off of this. So I worked around Atlanta for a while checking different places hunting a job. After about three weeks I got tired of that turned around and re-enlisted.

Interviewer: What rank were you when you were discharged after the war?

Norris: Staff sergeant

Interviewer: You were a staff sergeant. At what point in time did you actually go up to that rank? Were you still in Europe when you were promoted to a

Norris: Yeah

Interviewer: Staff sergeant

Norris: I was promoted shortly after I'd taken over the wire section I was promoted to corporal then I was promoted to staff sergeant.

Interviewer: I'm not real familiar with that wire section I mean what exactly did you do?

Norris: We laid wire from the artillery to the infantry for communication.

Interviewer: Is this so that they could call the fire in or?

Norris: Yeah we also we laid wire to our OPs.

Interviewer: Pretty stressful job?

Norris: It was if you didn't watch yourself.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any problems with enemy sabotegers getting in and trying to cut those lines to isolate the infantry or?

Norris: We had our lines cut a lot but basically when we didn't have anything that was German because we caught a couple of Italian civilians cutting our lines. And they would cut the wire and roll it up we caught one one night or one afternoon the line went out and we started check it back and all of a sudden it ended. And here comes an Italian on a bicycle and he's got a basket on the back of his bicycle with some stuff in it. We stopped him and pulled off this cloth there was a roll of wire of ours that he had took out of line. Things like that we run into.

Interviewer: What were they trying to mess y'all up or was there a purpose they could use the wire for?

Norris: I don't really know I personally once we turned them over to the proper authorities we didn't fool with them. But I think they were just civilians that wanted something.

Interviewer: I didn't know if there was another purpose for that wire.

Norris: Well after all copper you know and they could find a use for it.

Interviewer: What was the Italian civilians what were they like?

Norris: Oh basically I got along with them fine the ones that I run into that I had dealings with. Of course we didn't familiarize ourselves with too many of them. But the ones that I had dealings with I got along with them fine. And usually that amounted to some of them that could talk English if they couldn't talk English I wouldn't fool with them because I couldn't get nowhere.

Interviewer: What were your living quarters like while you were there in Italy? Were you still in pup tents were you in big tents?

Norris: Oh no basically when we were in Naples by the time we got in Naples we would sleep out on the ground otherwise but when we got in Naples we occupied buildings. We slept in buildings in fact my battery was in a museum there in Naples.

Interviewer: What was the chow like c-rations or did y'all actually get ___?

Norris: Yeah we had good chow ten and one things like that. Of course after we got in Naples they started buying local food and vegetables and things to fix for us. But mostly while the combat was going on after we got coordinated and everything when we landed we started to get what they called ten and one rations. Which was a pretty good ration and of course when we jumped we carried in k-rations in our pockets.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what was in the ten and one rations?

Norris: Of it had bacon, beans I don't remember now just what all. It was good than what we had been having.

Interviewer: Now cigarettes came in the old rations didn't they?

Norris: Oh yeah the ten and one the cigarettes was in whole packs where the k-rations the cigarettes was in a pack about as wide as my two fingers and there was three or four cigarettes just in one roll. Of course I didn't smoke at the time but no the ten and one rations was good rations compared to what we had been. Of course going across country we scrounged a lot of food too. I had two boys in my wire section that they would pick up vegetables out of gardens as we were going through the countryside. When we'd stop at night they'd cut up a stew we managed.

Interviewer: What was your overall impression of your fellow soldiers? Education, moral did you see a lot of you know I've read a lot of the thousand yard stare I mean did you see a lot of these things?

Norris: Well most of the troops that I had in my unit were high school in my section and all. I couldn't tell you about other sections but the troops in my section most of them were high school students. That were either just about to graduate or just had graduated some of them got drafted. They applied to airborne training.

Interviewer: What was the moral like?

Norris: Wasn't bad at all wasn't bad at all. And it was old fellow says they fought for each other and they looked out for each other. The only trouble the only thing that I ran into was most of the troops in my section except four or five of them were from up north. So I had to get used to those Yankees.

Interviewer: You being from Georgia I imagine that's a

Norris: Yeah

Interviewer: Well were the officers and NCOs in your unit were they recent recruits or were they prewar career army or?

Norris: Truthfully I couldn't say all I knew when I met them they were officers. Now we would get in second lieutenants a lot that had just been shipped from the states that had just come into the service. And I never did go into the background or ask anything about my battery commander or my battalion commander. He was an officer in the United States Army and I was there to do what he said do.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded?

Norris: Not actually wounded. I got jerked off the back of a jeep on Anzio laying wire one night. And went to the hospital I guess for about 10 days I couldn't walk. And the doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me either but I still couldn't walk. And every morning I'd get up and pick up my legs and lay them off the side of the bed try to walk. After I guess around eight or ten days I picked them up one morning set them off the side of the bed and walked away from the bed. This old man hollered at the doctor said Norris is walking. So they give me a pass to go to Naples. I went into Naples walking around Naples and all of a sudden an MP stopped me. I said what have I done he said nothing you report back to the hospital right now. Okay I reported back to the hospital I got there and they had a table sitting out in front of the hospital with two officers sitting behind it. You walk up to that table and report they ask you a question and get in that group or get in that group. I walked up there and he said what's your trouble? I said I've got no trouble sir. He said get over there. An hour later we was on a truck heading back down to port got on a boat heading to Anzio back to Anzio. They never could find nothing wrong with me but I just couldn't walk.

Interviewer: What do you think that could have been?

Norris: Well since then the doctors said it was a nerve reaction. I after later on when I got back oh I guess about ten years ago I had to have a disk taken out of my back. And I think that was causing all of that but then arthritis set in after they took that disk out so now I can't hardly walk with all of the arthritis.

Interviewer: With you being attached to an artillery unit did y'all suffer much from counter artillery fire or?

Norris: The only time that my unit ran into that was one night. And that particular night I wasn't in the battery area. I had went out with one of my wire teams to run some lines one night and we stayed we was out all night laying that line. While we was gone my battery was shelled German artillery. And that's the only time I remember it happening with my battery.

Interviewer: What kind of artillery pieces was your battery equipped with?

Norris: Pack Howitzers.

Interviewer: Was that a 105 or?

Norris: 75

Interviewer: 75 what did you think about the German 88s?

Norris: They said they were dangerous. I never really came in contact with one until after it had been knocked out or something. But by the time we got to it with our artillery units I didn't see any. I've been in places and herd them fired but they weren't firing at us they were firing at somebody else.

Interviewer: Did they really have that distinct of a sound of their own? I've heard that people can tell you if they heard an 88 they would know. It's a sound all of their own.

Norris: Oh yeah and also they had some artillery it was train artillery on tracks when they fired them you heard it too. Screaming Mimi's you could hear that shell coming a long ways off.

Interviewer: They just blind all the way there. How big of a round were they?

Norris: I don't know really couldn't say.

Interviewer: Well what was American field artillery likened to in the war has it changed that much?

Norris: Well I'll tell you an instance. I was basic maybe with a 75 pack Howitzer because that was just what we had. We moved into an area in the mountains of Italy just back this side of I don't know what the name of that darn place Monastery. They got we were up there we were just a hair back from that but we were right at the bottom of the mountain. On night we woke up with all hell breaking lose. We didn't know what it was but a battery of 105s had moved in behind us during the night. And when they fired our officers might have knew it but the majority of us didn't know that they were back there. And they were firing over the mountains they were firing at that monastery. Where our pack Howitzers and all were firing at the mountain troops up in the mountain.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a sense of the big picture the strategy that was going on over the war Operation Husky?

Norris: Not to the point that I could explain anything to you. I knew what the overall picture was because the officers had explained it to us what was happening and all. And of course we got radio messages and everything about how they were doing and all. But actually basically I couldn't tell you what was going on too far away.

Interviewer: Now to jump forward were you in the Korean War?

Norris: No

Interviewer: Did you do anytime in Vietnam?

Norris: No

Interviewer: You mentioned you did 30 plus years in the military. How much did the army change between the time World War II was over and the time you retired?

Norris: Well when I went in the army if a PFC told a private mop the floor you mopped the floor and didn't ask why. By the time I got out you couldn't hardly give an order unless somebody would say why.

Interviewer: What year did you retire?

Norris: I retired out here at Fort Campbell.

Interviewer: What year?

Norris: Actually when I retired I was assigned to the headquarters. I had been in a unit down on post they knew I had put in for my retirement so they ordered requested another sergeant major and he came in early. And he the colonel said what am I going to do with two sergeant majors? I said I've got an idea sir and he said what? I said turn me a loos I said I can find me a job until I retire let the sergeant major take over. Fine so I moved out went up to division headquarters and went to work for the division sergeant major.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Norris: 70

Interviewer: What was your impression of the army from ____ draft army to the all volunteer? Do you think it was a good change or?

Norris: Well basically I always looked at the army this way the people above me supposable know more about what's going on than I do. And I'm in there to take orders and that's the way I worked the army. If anybody's got rank above me to give orders I take them. Anybody below me they take them from me and I worked that away all the way through the army. And got along with it fine.

Interviewer: Well sergeant major I believe that will conclude our interview. I appreciate it very much.