

Interviewer: Go ahead and tell us your full name.

Miller: My name is Jack E Miller.

Interviewer: Where were you born and raised?

Miller: I was born in Peru Indiana. Raised in southern Michigan until I was 16 and then I enlisted in the army. I the age of entrance at that time was 18 of course but I changed my birth certificate, it was prepared in pen and ink, and I erased the 1925 I erased the 5 and put a 3 in there that made me 18 and I enlisted in the army.

Interviewer: Enlisted in the army

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: Changed your birth certificate?

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: So you really wanted to go to the army.

Miller: I definitely did. But I lived on a farm and I knew I didn't want anything to do with farming.

Interviewer: What did you have to do on the farm?

Miller: Well everything general farm hand just I was a young kid but it meant chores in the morning field work in the afternoon chores in the evening. And that was seven days a week and I just wanted some adventure and I certainly got it.

Interviewer: Did you realize okay when did you enlist?

Miller: August 8, 1942.

Interviewer: 1942

Miller: I enlisted in Kalamazoo Michigan and I then from there two days later I went to Battle Creek Fort Custard Michigan. And a couple days later then I was put on a train I was sent to Takoma Georgia up in the mountains they were building a camp there. And when I arrived there they put me in W Company, work or wash out.

Interviewer: Explain that work or wash out.

Miller: Well they were building the camp and we had to help clean up part of the camp and it was duties it was they found something for us to do every minute of the day. And you were there unless you meet the qualifications after they checked us when we went down there physically and otherwise. Then you would wash out you'd be sent to the regular infantry. I might be getting ahead of myself but Camp Takoma Camp Toombs at Takoma Georgia we were the first unit to be organized as from basic recruiting stations sent there without a bit of military training. And we had our basic there airborne training. We

had the 30 foot towers and we had the exercising and we had a mountain there the Curry Mountain that we had to run up to this mountain up to the top. We'd be given a break I mean by break we were given quick time that meant you could walk until the company turned around and then back down it was about three miles. But we were organizing as the men came in we would form different companies and everything and as it happened I was one of the first 17 men assigned to Company D 506 parachute infantry regiment.

Interviewer: Which at this time was it elite?

Miller: Oh yes well not only that other regiments we were the first I don't recall if any others did the same thing. Other regiments were organized along the lines of bringing the men who had already had their army basic, basic training, and then bringing them to a camp perhaps Tacoma might have been one of them. And then having some jump training or having basic training and then going to Fort Benning Georgia for their jump training.

Interviewer: Alright y'all had already gone through basic

Miller: We'd already had the basic all they had to do was learn to jump. I say all there's a lot to it because it wasn't that easy. But ours was the first to be organized as a group of men and we were formed in units and trained in infantry and parachute training.

Interviewer: Simultaneously

Miller: Absolutely and it was in December that we finished our training at the co-op.

Interviewer: December of 42?

Miller: Forty-two the first battalion went I think they went by train from Tacoma all the way to Fort Benning for their jump training. I was in the 2nd battalion, our battalion walked from Tacoma Georgia 115 miles in three days with lite packs. In fact the first day we walked 42 miles in that red Georgia clay. Now I and all the others were in tip top shape. But I'll tell you at the end of 42 miles that first day that was I was exhausted as were all of the others.

Interviewer: Did you have a few pass out?

Miller: Oh we had several that dropped out

Interviewer: Was that one of those wash out programs?

Miller: No no that wasn't it that was eliminated shortly after we got a full unit. That was just dropped but we did have several men drop out because of difficulties with their feet, blisters we did have some to do that. And we then got on the train in Atlanta and rode the train then from Atlanta to Fort Benning Georgia.

Interviewer: So what was it like being a 16 year old with all of these 18 year olds?

Miller: Well I just happened to be younger. I just felt good to be a part of an organization like that and I really enjoyed it. It was not easy but believe it or not I think I had it somewhat easier than some of the

men. Most of them were in the 18 to 20 bracket some of them were 20, 21 I guess. But I just enjoyed it and the age really didn't mean anything to me.

Interviewer: Right right

Miller: It just

Interviewer: Do you think you were in better physical condition at 16 then you were at 18 than you would have been?

Miller: Well yes starting that kind of exercise at age 16 I was pretty well prepared for any eventuality. I was I felt pretty good.

Interviewer: Backing up let me ask you this. When where were you and what did you think what was going through your mind when you found out that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Miller: Well on that particular day

Interviewer: You were 15 then huh?

Miller: Well this was in 1941 yeah I would have been 15. I and a couple of young men young boys of my age we were riding around in an automobile around a neighborhood and we picked up a hitch hiker outside of town. And we asked him where he was going and he was going someplace this was in Michigan of course. And he said I'll give you fifty cents if you'll take me further up the road I don't know how many miles. But at that time gas was probably twenty five cents something like that maybe twenty one to twenty five cents. And he had an old car and we enjoyed we just said well lets go and so we went. But the first of all I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was and I didn't grasp the significance of really what happened. The fact that they surprised us or the fact that we were at war.

Interviewer: Because it wasn't in the states itself on the land.

Miller: No and not only that Pearl Harbor meant I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was and I wasn't that concerned. And little did I even give it a thought about it affecting me so we had a catastrophe. But I thought you know so I didn't really grasp the severity.

Interviewer: At age 15 did you already know that you wanted to go in the army?

Miller: No

Interviewer: It wasn't until

Miller: I wanted to travel but I didn't how it would ever happen I just but I don't regret a single day of my career. Incidentally I did stay in the army a total of 26 years and I retired from the army on July 31, 1969 at Fort Bragg North Carolina. But there's a long history between preparing to talk about going in the military and retirement.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: In fact I'd like to mention on thing about the jump training.

Interviewer: We're gonna get back to it.

Miller: Oh okay and the only thing I want to mention is the fact that I got a certificate that says, and I didn't remember this, but it's a certificate that I graduated from the jump school. And at that time we had to pack our own parachutes they didn't do that. We had to pack our own parachutes we made our five jumps and this we got we graduated on December the 26th 1942 December the 26th. So

Interviewer: The day after Christmas.

Miller: Yeah but as far as I know we didn't have Christmas off. At least I know the 26th we graduated so.

Interviewer: December the 26th in 42 and you went into the training in what?

Miller: August of 42.

Interviewer: Okay so you went in in August and were out in December. Do you think that was extensive enough training?

Miller: Well for jumping and all?

Interviewer: Right

Miller: Oh yeah we had to make five jumps I think one of them had to be a night jump or something like that. We made four I think that's the way it was now we made four daylight jumps and my first jump I'd never been in an airplane. And it wasn't that difficult but the next four I was up tight I don't know the first time I hadn't been up in an airplane it was all new. And we'd been hustled because the plane just took off and it went over the drop zone and you get the signal and you jump. And I was not that worried about it but after making that first jump you get to thinking about oh another one tomorrow so now I'm uptight.

Interviewer: How about your night jump? That had to be frightening.

Miller: No that jump was the easiest. The night jump there's just something about it you still have that apprehensiveness but it's you couldn't see and so you didn't look down and say oh look how small that looks and you didn't have that feeling. It was just, me personally, now it affects everybody different.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: But in my case the first jump was the easiest daylight jump and the night jump was probably the easiest of any one of the five.

Interviewer: You didn't land in trees did you?

Miller: No nope sure didn't.

Interviewer: You know a lot men they said night jumps and you really didn't know where you were going and you'd see that tree and that tree would be there before you could I mean these was they said these wasn't the parachutes that you could guide. You just dropped you were going down.

Miller: Well there was some control but very little they were a T5 or T7 parachutes. And you know you could if you wanted to slip to the right you'd reach to the right and pull the right risers down and you'd slip or to the left or if you wanted to make a body turn you'd reach one hand in front of you here grasp this over here and turn yourself around so that you could come in. Because if the wind was blowing on you you didn't want to come in backwards you wanted to make a body turn of you could and come in you know frontwards. And then as soon as you'd land you wanted to claps the bottom of your shoot and spin all the air out of it.

Interviewer: Because if it caught air you were in trouble.

Miller: And you had no control. I don't care what kind of physical condition you were in when that wind is working against that shoot it will drag you and it didn't do any good to put your to try to hold it. Because the only sure way and the way we were taught is to wrap those bottom risers and spill the air out of the parachute and so it just stopped and you could find air control.

Interviewer: So after jump school where you sent to then after graduation.

Miller: We went to yeah after graduation we got our first leave 10 day leaves. Then we came back and we went to we stayed in the Alabama area they called it Alabama area at Fort Benning Georgia after that. We had some training then they moved us to we were on maneuvers up in Kentucky I think around Sturgis Kentucky Camp Breckenridge area. And from there we went to Camp McCall I believe that's the sequence. We went to Camp McCall which is on the end of Fort Brag reservation Fort Brag North Carolina. And we were there several months then we moved to Fort Brag to make preparations for our shipment overseas. And then in September we left Fort Brag and we went to I can't think of the name some camp in New York and was there just 52 hours overnight or something. Then we boarded the ship I think it was the SS Sinatra it was a British ship and we went to we landed in Liverpool England. And from Liverpool we went on trains and

Interviewer: Did you zig zag across the ocean? Did they take a zig zag course?

Miller: Yes but they didn't have the problem with the convoys that they had had perhaps the year before where so many of them were being checked out. And to the best of my knowledge we did zig zag. I might add while we were aboard ship we learned that Italy had capitulated. And talk about being naive I was disappointed from a personal standpoint. I said damn it I said the wars going to be over with before I get over there. And I really felt that way but later during the war after going into Normandy and all I said what a foolish thing to say you know I just I was still looking for that adventure.

Interviewer: Well that was a 16 year old.

Miller: Well yes but at that time I was 17.

Interviewer: Seventeen

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: Still a young.

Miller: Oh yes and naïve.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: So you went to Liverpool?

Miller: Went to Liverpool and from there we went to different parts of England. And my particular company and headquarters I was in D Company and I think F Company headquarters I think that's the only ones I can recall. We moved into some barracks that had been prepared for us in a little town in England by the name of Allaborm. And we trained constantly there and we made parachute jumps there and we had a lot of field training a lot of field training. And we stayed there then until we moved to the Marshton area well prior to that we made among those training jumps we made one for Eisenhower and Winston Churchill to observe they watched us.

Interviewer: So you were in those jumps they had observed right?

Miller: Oh yeah. In fact there's a name by the name of Jack Sandvich who is still alive today in fact I talked to him a few minutes ago. And he his parachute didn't fully inflate and he bumped into me and hung onto my chute and came down. Well the word was that I reached out and grabbed him that's not true. I didn't even see him or anything else.

Interviewer: He grabbed you.

Miller: He grabbed me and you know even if I would have said let loose he still wouldn't have let loose you know see. But it was not unusual during parachute jumps mass jumps to bump into each other or flip right over top and land you know as you're coming down and land right on top of one another's parachute. But you had to get off you didn't have to worry if you was down below and he was on your shoot. But you had to worry if you were the one on top because your parachute could deflate you didn't have any air.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: So you had to keep moving and get off.

Interviewer: I wouldn't have even thought about that.

Miller: Oh I know but you'll only find that in mass parachute jumps.

Interviewer: Was that near the presentation that that incident happened?

Miller: Yes that was and in fact I wrote home about it and they had it in the Pathway news and the local theatre got in touch with them and they finally got that film but they were not able to in that short a period of time to show that because it was a mass jump. And there were so many chutes and everything it was not it just wasn't observable.

Interviewer: Hard to pick out.

Miller: Oh yeah well I guess it was shown I've seen it.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Miller: Yes I saw it and I don't remember when shortly after the war I saw it. And I wasn't able to identify an incident where there's two people hanging together. There's just too many people.

Interviewer: What part of the chute did he grab?

Miller: Well it was suspension lines and kind of pulled my chute you know down a little bit I think he slid down a little bit. But and then perhaps in course near me but bearing in mind see your only up there about 45 seconds in the first place before you drop. So you know I just don't remember.

Interviewer: It's was so quick anyway.

Miller: Oh yeah yep

Interviewer: So where did Company D you were in Company D.

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: So what did Company D do after the presentations?

Miller: Well other than training that's about what we did and we made some jumps and went through training all the time.

Interviewer: And this is still in 43?

Miller: Yes oh yes

Interviewer: Forty-three

Miller: And well now that jump might have been in 44 early I just don't recall. And then of course that day when we were ready to go to the marching area for the Normandy jump. We weren't told hey this is it or anything we were just told that we were going to the marching area and when we got there we found ourselves enclosed in barbed wire and being guarded from the guards so that once you go in you didn't get out.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that experience.

Miller: Well during that period we had sand tables prepared showing us where we would be jumping and you know different obstacles on the ground such as trees and it was an ideal sand table. We were all briefed and given you know told what we was going to be doing.

Interviewer: Still not knowing the magnitude of the operation.

Miller: No and then after that we were given we were given I believe they were called a script at that time money to spend. It was military pay certificated I believe they were called MPCs. And we had our we had our we had OD uniforms we dressed in OD uniforms that was impregnated in the event of gas warfare we had gas masks of course. And I had ten pounds of TNT and some none electric caps strapped to my legs I was _____. And I had an M1 riffle broke that down in three parts.

Interviewer: Now was that the Noon M1 riffle?

Miller: No this is the

Interviewer: Was it the semi-automatic?

Miller: No this was single shot.

Interviewer: Okay single shot.

Miller: Yeah it was.

Interviewer: So you still had the pump you still had to pump it?

Miller: Well yes but it was clip fed it think there was about 8 rounds in there you put that in and you could fire rapidly but it wasn't automatic fire.

Interviewer: Right but it was semi semi-automatic.

Miller: Yes Gurand

Interviewer: Durand that's what I meant to say I'm sorry.

Miller: Gurand

Interviewer: G Gurand

Miller: Yeah M1 riffle. And on top of our clothing of course we wore a jump suit. It had pockets on the side and pockets up here then we had a little place a little zipper here and we were issued little clips little clicker box clickers. That was the kind that was used but it was issued to us for the purpose of during the night when we jumped like that if you was someone you would push that one time that was the challenge and their counter sign and their recognition was to push it twice then we knew you were somebody for the Airborne. If you didn't get anything but gun fire back you knew you had made a mistake. But I landed well maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll answer the questions that you ask and not

Interviewer: No go ahead but you went in _____

Miller: We loaded aboard C47 aircraft the DC3. And I think we loaded at 10:30 in the evening or something. But we were all heavily loaded down heavily loaded down with gear and extra ammunition things like that. And usually took one man inside the airplane to help pull you up the steps and with your effort to get up besides someone behind you pushing you up that's how loaded we were. And prior to us

boarding they gave us a tablet it was something on the lines of Dramamine so we supposable for air sickness.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: And it didn't put us out but in my case I just kind of you know I wasn't really worried about anything at that point. I just didn't worry about you know just.

Interviewer: Like here's what you're to do.

Miller: Yeah and with that Dramamine you know I wasn't uptight or anything nobody was biting their fingernails or anything. It was I'm kind of glad they give it to us. We then of course we left England formed up and we went to the Normandy coastline. I remember I have seen the route on maps since then I didn't know at the time. But we went near the Jersingern Islands and then they went inland the Normandy peninsula zig zagged a couple times. And then we started catching a lot of flak a lot of enemy tracers and flak. Some of the planes were hit ours was not hit. Incidentally the inside of the aircraft the windows were all blacked off and blocked off so there's be no light because they didn't have any lights on an aircraft. And they didn't want anybody to be seen from someplace lighting a cigarette or something.

Interviewer: Getting ready to smoke.

Miller: Yeah so there was no light. And we were given the green light to get up and or the red light to get up and get ready move up to the door and all. And when the green light went off why we were out the door. But the first thing that I observed was here we are in the flooded area and that wasn't in the picture I didn't even know about the flood area. So I didn't know where I was and but three was not just our plane though there was a lot of us landed in a flooded area. We were probably two or three miles from where we were supposed to be. And we landed in all that water and the first thing I did was try and get out of my parachute you know. At that time I don't think I think we had I don't think we had a quick release I'm not sure. But I did get out of the parachute and I got rid of this I had a container that had this TNT canteen. And I took that laid it down I didn't have any intentions of carrying that any further because I didn't know where I was or where I was going. But I got rid of the caps between my legs and then there would be we were being fired out the men were being fired at by the Germans. And there was machine gun fire across the top of us and I learned later that the Germans were using a lot of tracers that looked like they were firing above us. And they were with the machine guns and everything with the tracers where you could see where the rounds were going. But they also they also had machine guns much lower and you thought you could walk underneath that fire. And they had machine guns there that would cut you off at the knees didn't happen to me but it happened to some of the people. Then just about daylight six or somewhere near that time we had we had bombers come over bomb along the coast. I think they were A26s or A25s they were a small bomb and there was about 40 of us got together and then we got out we got a little more oriented and we finally got out of water. Oh we were froze it was cold being in there all night and struggling. You'd go in over your head when because it was a flooded area we couldn't see where the road was or anything. It was rather uncomfortable but we got out of there and got on dry land and then moved in and met up with some of the members of the company and my company commander platoon later other men and slowly but surely.

Interviewer: Did you find everybody?

Miller: Pretty much so pretty much so yes.

Interviewer: There were some though that staggered behind?

Miller: Yeah probably and some were probably killed I don't recall right now. I never did see all of them but most of them.

Interviewer: So what was your job what was your mission then?

Miller: Well our mission there were some causeways leading from the beach inland or fork leading from the inland out to the beach you know. And our primary mission was for that and my mission with for carrying the TNT was I guess to blow up anything should we have to do it. I was gonna be the one to do it but that never happened not only that I didn't get to any of the causeways and I didn't have any demolition then anyway.

Interviewer: Right you left it at the site the jump site.

Miller: Yes I knew

Interviewer: That was heavy weight.

Miller: Well yeah

Interviewer: And you were already weighted down.

Miller: I was already being weighted down.

Interviewer: Being in water and

Miller: I didn't want anything more to do with it.

Interviewer: Right it was time to survive then.

Miller: Well it was to me yes.

Interviewer: Absolutely the military might have had a mission but so did the soldiers.

Miller: So did I yeah exactly.

Interviewer: Tell me more.

Miller: Well it's we on the 8th or 9th I was wounded we were at an intersection at this little town there near the beach. And there was a knocked out tank American tanks were coming ashore and they had helped us. And I climbed on top of this tank to I don't know why it was an American tank but I was curious. And in the meantime Germans down to our left started firing at us there was a house there and we had an aid station in the back of it. And they brought a flag around in front we had several prisoners that had been captured we had them right there. And when I climbed up on that tank just to see I don't know why I did my company commander told to me to get down off the tank and help them search

those prisoners. So I did and while we were searching them it was up an incline like this they fired a round a tank or artillery or something tank fire or something I don't think it was tank fire. And hit that already knocked out tank and the shrap metal flew and we were lying down at the time. And all of a sudden I felt a real hot burning sensation near my buttocks and I said oh what bad news this is. And the medic I called for medic and he came over there creeping over there and he took his knife and cut my trousers and examined me. He said well you've got a lot of shrap metal he says you weren't badly injured, I was concerned.

Interviewer: I would imagine.

Miller: Yeah and so they tagged me and in a few minutes in the meantime we would put they put a German soldier in front of this house wave this Red Cross flag.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: And they'd shoot him down they got two to go up there and they shot them both. So didn't ask couldn't get anyone else to get up there and that's about the time I was hit. And shortly thereafter I don't know what happened they just didn't bother us they might have moved on or something.

Interviewer: Do you think that was some of the SS?

Miller: I have no idea.

Interviewer: Because to shoot their own men like that the prisoners the SS were known to

Miller: I'm not even sure that they knew from the distance they were firing

Interviewer: Oh okay

Miller: That they were German.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Miller: But then the next thing I know they had a jeep in the back where the Red Cross was actually or the aid station rather and I remember getting on a being put on a stretcher on the hood of the jeep. And I was evacuated then to the beach at that point was put aboard LSTs or something. And I was sent back to England then I spent 30 days in a hospital in England at that time.

Interviewer: So after your hospital stay the 30 day were you sent back to the same company?

Miller: Well my company was still in Normandy they didn't come back until July.

Interviewer: Okay

Miller: I was on a training with a First Sargent from the 82nd and some replacements some other people from the hospital. We were being sent to I think the name of the town was Litchfield England. They had a huge stockade there and we were being sent up there for replacement center. But this First Sargent said to me he said I was a PFC. Let's get off the train in Coventry he said I'll give these records to some of

these guys you and I'll just get off. I said it's alright with me and we got off and we spent a day or two there and then he said I'll see you and he went to wherever he was based and I hitch hiked a ride back to Auburn where some of the rear instrument people were still there. And got there and all I did then was get a series of three day passes to go to London. The only bad part about it is the lack of money but it wasn't that difficult to get the money by train and that's what I did then until my unit came back and right back to the same area.

Interviewer: So you regrouped?

Miller: Yeah then we then we had training of course and regrouped and went to the marching area again for a mission we were briefed on a mission in Belgium someplace. And that was called off Patton's tanks had already arrived there before we got there. Then we went to we went to marching area and had a we were briefed on our jump in Holland. And then on September the 27th we flew from England to Holland. Our division most of us jumped near a little town by the name of Son S.O.N. That was south east of Eindhoven about six mile seven between the two. And we jumped at Son and it was during on a Sunday beautiful weather and I remember seeing some P47s or P51s fly in and firing at a tank just off our drop zone and it knocked that out of course. And I was in the lead platoon lead squad and probably a little more than two or three people in front of us and we had flight security. And we had a mission to get into Son it was only maybe a mile maybe not even that far and secure a bridge where the British were coming up in tanks from Belgium. And I didn't know it at the time but the bridge had already they might have blown it beforehand but I don't think so I think they blew it up as soon as they saw us jump. And on the way into Son General or Colonel Sink our regimental commander called the flight security in because they were holding us up. On the flanks you were out there by yourself and taking your time and making sure that you don't run into some enemy from off the planes. But we weren't moving that fast so he called the planes in and we moved fast and we went into Son. And on the left hand side of the road that's as far left as our company went and we came to a I didn't remember it being the first building but we went through the buildings as we was going. And we came to a café and I myself and a couple of others went inside. And there was all these partially filled glasses and empty glasses and everything and you have to remember this was a beautiful Sunday. And the German troops were sitting there drinking beer until they looked out and saw us then they split at least from there. And myself and a couple of others went inside and we heard a tapping on a door we told them to come up and it turned out to be a man and his wife and two small children later to learn one of them was only 18 months. I remember that and that was it we left and kept on going then the bridge was we couldn't get across the bridge and we stayed there that night. But I never

Interviewer: Did they send an engineering crew in to

Miller: No I think the British I think the British came in I believe the British I'm not sure now. But I don't recall who repaired that bridge in Son. And then I never thought about that café or anything until and I never went back in fact later I spent I had my wife and children with me in a tour in Germany and then Paris France. And we went to Normandy to show them but I failed to take them to Holland and show them and to Bastogne I could have done all of that I don't to this day I don't know why I didn't. But anyway I went in 1994 for the 50th anniversary I went to Son and I stayed in Eindhoven the 101st was having or the Dutch airborne was having a convention and the 101st were a part of that. So I went there and it was raining when I got there and it rained nearly every day there and I have difficulty with my lungs the way it is from heavy smoking. And we drove through there and I didn't recognize anything but I got to talking to a journalist of the local paper and I was telling him and he said well I'll try to find it. IN the meantime I came back of course as all of the rest of us didn't and I didn't get back I wasn't back but

a week or two until I got a letter from him saying he had found that café but he what happened is he sent me a copy of the café at the time that I had seen it first and then sent me a copy of today. And two different looking cafes that's one of the reasons I couldn't find it when I was there in 94. And he sent me the names of the people and I identified that as being that particular café so we started he and I started corresponding you know. So when they had the 55th anniversary in September 99 the 50th was in 94 and the 55th was in 99 I went over. This time beautiful weather and I went out he took me out to this café in the meantime I made a plaque had it made and brought it a plaque with the names of the people that lived there owned the café at that time still living there and I made some comments on there. And I also furnished them a copy of a picture of me when I was it was actually taken in 1947 three years after the war but I sent that I was in uniform had my parachute on and or I took that with me. And I presented that to them and that was in the papers and in the meantime the father who had been in the café at the time when I first found him first found the place he had died and the mother was dying of cancer she might have since died now. But the 18 month old baby she was a huge woman when I was here in 1999 but they were very friendly and we had

Interviewer: That's very very rare and interesting.

Miller: Yeah that by the way that plaque and my photograph are on the back bar in the café Osicop in Son Holland to this very day yep.

Interviewer: Now did the same did the same family that was there then were they still running it or?

Miller: Still had the café and the mother lived in one part of the building I think that had been added and she still lived there and they still run the business. And the 18 month old girl

Interviewer: That you had seen

Miller: That I had seen she worked there as a bartender.

Interviewer: That's a family tradition.

Miller: Yes yeah but that was

Interviewer: Now how old was the 18 in 99 how old would she be?

Miller: Well 18 months that was 50 years later so she'd be about 51, 52 close to 52. She was I don't know what kind of family she had even if she had a family.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: In fact one of them spoke English at all and of course I don't speak Dutch.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: So everything was through the

Interviewer: Translator

Miller: Yeah yeah and of course when I visited the newspaper the journalist he and his wife both spoke English very clearly so I was able to ask a lot of questions.

Interviewer: You had to translate through them.

Miller: Oh yeah certainly yeah.

Interviewer: After going back to the café the first time that you entered the café. Where did you go after you left the café you said that you left?

Miller: Well we left there the next morning in the meantime that bridge had been repaired enough for us to

Interviewer: Cross

Miller: Cross and we went into Eindhoven. And that was our objective to get into Son first of all secure that bridge because the British were coming up and that's when we had the first contact was to be with the 101st at Eindhoven at Son rather. And then go on up to Eindhoven and go

Interviewer: So that's why flight was to meet with the British and then go.

Miller: No the flight

Interviewer: Were the flights secured?

Miller: Oh yeah flight security as far as I know I don't know think anybody had flank security. We had one highway we jumped in Son for the purpose of securing Eindhoven for the British. The 82nd jumped a few miles north of there to secure some bridges at Nijmegen and the British jumped still further north the British and Polish to jump at Arnhem. And that's what they called Hells' Highway from Eindhoven to Nijmegen and Arnhem.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: Now the object was and there's Germans all around but the highway was the only means of communication they didn't have side roads and we had no protection all through the flank. And the object of Montgomery, we were attached to the British army, was to was to secure this area the 82nd to secure this area the British army to secure that area. Now Arnhem is just west of the north part of Germany and Montgomery wanted us to leapfrog. We was in here we'd secure this the British tanks would come up there and secure Arnhem. And then we would jump into Northern Germany and just leapfrog in. I think his real intention was to beat anyone into Berlin and we would have been part of that. But bad weather set in and the Germans from the British were late getting up to Eindhoven and they had a lot of difficulty between Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Harnon and the Germans were attacking from the flanks and bad weather set in. And the British up here had no tank support because the tanks couldn't get through nor could the fighter planes assist those people. And they were either nearly all were captured or killed and later we were on the island up here and the many of them escaped to the island where our unit assisted in getting them across the river back to us.

Interviewer: Were there any close encounters that you experienced during this? Or maybe that your unit experienced?

Miller: Well yes my platoon didn't my platoon well there was this Vechel in route between Eindhoven and Nijmegen. The British were parked there at that time they were having tea. We had just went across the bridge started across the bridge we caught a lot of fire from the left flank. And they off loaded us and sent us down a two lane trail and a little shallow ditches on both sides. And it turned out there was about 30, 35 Germans down there with a truck and tank. And we had a little fire fight and the Germans surrendered the German troops surrendered. And among these 35 men was the tank incidentally it came in our direction then it turned off on a trail and went someplace else, that's the only thing we had no protection. But the German troops surrendered about 35 of them and they had with them an American pilot. He had been an artillery spotter in a small L5 aircraft looking for artillery. He'd been shot down someplace and they had captured him and they had him with them. So we got him back he was glad to see us.

Interviewer: I would imagine.

Miller: Yeah we got him back and the truck was loaded with chocolate things that the Germans had looted. And we kept the truck and the load and there were some parachutes on it that they had used from where they had picked up from where we had jumped. And they used them to sleep in because they would keep you pretty warm. That's about the only thing in Holland we, we had a long period of time on the dikes we were on guard on the dikes. We weren't supposed to be there but we did. And that's probably the most significant thing that I can recall about that.

Interviewer: One other question did you along the way did you get any souvenirs?

Miller: Yes yeah I collected a German sword with a swastika on it. And I collected a luger and P38 Walter I brought all three home.

Interviewer: Did you?

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: A P38 a nice gun.

Miller: Yeah well this was near the end of the war I got that and the luger. Near the end of the war we were down at Berchtesgaden near to enter Berchtesgaden. I think the war was either ending it might have even ended before we got there. But Berchtesgaden down in southern Germany was an area they identified as being the well I can't think of the name now rigged out area. Because the word was a lot of SS troops were down there and they were going to make a last stand there. Well anyway on one of these one of these villages we stayed at on the way down there we were on the interstate we were walking and in German vehicles ride and everything. We had we were put on guard of the factory that manufactured weapons. And we went inside there and there was an assembly line for lugers Walters any kind of pistol that you could think of. So we loaded our new zip bags down rather heavily with brand new weapons. It got to the point where you just threw them away because it was too heavy to carry them.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: And beside you had your own things to carry you get a bag full of pistols revolvers just too heavy to carry. So I just I ended up bringing a new luger and a new Walker and a German sword home.

Interviewer: The German sword were you leery? I mean when did you pick this up?

Miller: I don't know

Interviewer: Did you pick it up sometime during the war?

Miller: Oh yes sure

Interviewer: Okay were you leery of any Germans finding you with things?

Miller: No but I tell you what I would not have wanted to be captured with it. I wouldn't have even wanted to be captured with the luger or the Walter. I just I had I guess it's kind of strange to explain but I had more fear throughout the war of being captured than I did of being killed. I recognized that it could happen any time being killed but I didn't have a fear of death I certainly didn't want to be maimed or lose my eye sight or a limb, mobility. But I had a morbid fear almost of being captured I don't know why and I just I felt that way later in my career when I went to Korea. I was on several patrols behind the lines and every time I'd get ready to go I'd pack my bag and everything so if I didn't get back all someone would have to do is pick that bag up and take it and inventory it and process it and send the stuff home.

Interviewer: Did this experience in WWII help you out in the Korean War?

Miller: Well it might have but it didn't help me in the respect I was at the end of the war I got out and I was out a year.

Interviewer: At the end of WWII you

Miller: Yes yes I got out I was out a year and then I re-enlisted. But I the 101st was not an active division at that time so I re-enlisted and I went to the 82nd airborne in November of 46. And I was there until 1951 and I got a commission I went before the board and in the meantime I had gone to military police and the army criminal investigation school. And when I got my commission I had visions of becoming a military police officer I didn't want any more infantry but I got my commission in infantry Second Lieutenant. And I was transfer from the 82nd airborne to Fort Campbell Kentucky here to the 11th airborne and I was here a few months and I went to Korea. And I was assigned to the infantry there and I became an I & R platoon leader I was a machine gun platoon leader and later became company commander of E Company 35th infantry regiment 25th infantry division. And then

Interviewer: a lot of responsibility.

Miller: Well yes yeah and when I came back to they shipped me back to Fort Campbell Kentucky. At that point I told them when I reported that I was either assign me to the military police or I'm getting out. And they didn't think that would be possible but they asked me to come in the next morning and he said well you lucked out we're going to send you to a military police company. I reported to the Provo Marshal and he said I don't know what the hell I'm gonna do with you I've got too many officers the way it is. But he had no choice so I was assigned to assist now I was a First Lieutenant by this time. But he told me to assist a Second Lieutenant who was the division safety officer. And I did that for a couple of

months then I became the company executive officer of the 11th airborne MP Company here at Fort Campbell. And then in 1954 the we were the 11th airborne was getting ready to move to Oxford Germany and infantry officers like myself who were military police were told we were going back to the infantry. And other officer detail the quarter master, ordinance everything they were going back to the infantry because they needed them. And Again I said no not me and I reverted from First Lieutenant to Tech Sargent and I was assigned then to 510th CIAD at Fort Campbell Kentucky. I stayed there then until 59 that's when I was sent to Europe and I took my wife and four children with me. I'd like to say this my wife and I went to school together when we was like this. She was in I think the seventh or eighth grade and I was a freshman in high school and I guess we were always referred to as Jack and Frances, Frances and Jack kind of sweethearts that type thing. And of course then when I came back in 1940 November 1945 was discharged we started dating then and the next thing you know were married and four kids.

Interviewer: Did were you dating or courting before?

Miller: Yes but

Interviewer: Did she send you any mail?

Miller: No no I don't think we ever corresponded or just

Interviewer: You never corresponded?

Miller: No

Interviewer: How did you receive mail?

Miller: Yes I did I received

Interviewer: A lot of it?

Miller: Well

Interviewer: It's kind of hard to get to you.

Well no mail we didn't have much of a problem. But when we wrote we'd write just a little I think it was a single page and they would female yeah and send it home. And I read one not too long ago that I had sent home I said Mom and Dad been busy and sure miss the family and see ya Jack. I wasn't much of a letter writer.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: Wasn't much of a letter writer.

Interviewer: You couldn't write much either I mean they would always

Miller: Oh it was what's the word they used? The officers had the responsibility to censor our mail and they'd cut out things. But I don't recall that I had any cut out that I'm aware of because I simply didn't right anything.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: I didn't even write a decent letter let alone something that would

Interviewer: Something that would tell the position where you were.

Miller: No no no

Interviewer: Because even though you didn't know it at the time or realize it at the time which none of the men did really but you were a part of a couple of the most important operations you know that were kept until the end of the war.

Miller: Yeah well we like to think that yeah we like to think that.

Interviewer: That's it really. Really and truly especially during the European War.

Miller: Yes yeah yeah yep

Interviewer: When did you realize that the war was over?

Miller: Well I didn't get I've thought about it a lot since. I think it was well I this shouldn't make I think the war was the Germans surrendered in May if I'm not mistaken May 3rd or someplace along in there. But I didn't get out of at that time at the end of the war I was in I was in near Zel am See Austria we were moved in that area. And we moved from Austria then to France some camp in France but in answer to your question when did I realize the war was over? I think probably in Berchtesgaden. When I was in Berchtesgaden they we had one incident they put us our platoon and maybe another platoon they put us on trucks. And we were going to a PW camp several miles from Berchtesgaden and they had two vehicles in front with Germans in them German vehicles.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: And they had white flags and we were our we were in two trucks and we were checked to make sure we had no ammunition. And we were told we'd go down through this so called reed out area because the PW camp down here the guards had walked away and the prisoners were going all over heck. So we walked we were put in vehicles and we drove down through that area this is where all the SS were. And we'd come into a village there were troops along the road troops on the road walking with me and the Germans would tell us keep on going. And when we got we'd get to little towns and there's all these SS troops sitting on their tanks. And here's German sentries you know we saw in the movies the little stand there and the German soldier standing there with his little helmet on and weapon and he's standing there. Nobody waves nobody there was certainly no comments between us because we'd been annihilated if that would have happened I guess. And we head down to the camp and there were prisoner all over and in the town and some of them on the road. One car we met was full of British troops and they told us they had been captured at Crete years before and they were on their way to Ole Blighty meaning England.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: But we recovered some prisoners in that camp and till this day I can't remember where that camp was that PW camp was I never remembered it. But anyway we recovered two or three men from our own company that had been captured in Bastogne. And one of them was telling us there was a couple on outpost and they fell asleep and the next thing they knew some big ole German reached down and grabbed them and jerked them out of the foxhole and covered their mouth and everything. And they walked they said they walked half the night in the snow until they got wherever.

Interviewer: Did they let them keep their boots on?

Miller: Oh yeah but it was so cold it was miserable. We didn't have cold weather gear and it was extremely cold.

Interviewer: You saw all of this all of those you know just were they not counter attacking at all?

Miller: Oh no

Interviewer: So they knew.

Miller: That to me when we went down to that reed out area.

Interviewer: You said it's over.

Miller: It was over when those SS troops just let us through it was over.

Interviewer: You had to be a little nervous though.

Miller: Yes we I don't think there was anybody because anything could have happened. They might have been a unit that was still for their fore you know.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: And anything could happen despite the fact that we had emissaries of some type. I don't recall we were probably never told leading us.

Interviewer: Were you concerned that you might be going to the Pacific Theatre? Or had you even heard anything about it?

Miller: Well I at that time no but later we heard about it. But I don't know I never really gave it that much thought because the war was over in August and I didn't get home till November. So I was still over there and the thought of going to Europe.

Interviewer: You were home you got home pretty quick.

Miller: Well no

Interviewer: It was over in August and

Miller: No no no

Interviewer: Okay

Miller: The war was over for me in Germany in May.

Interviewer: Okay

Miller: And it was in August the war was over in the Pacific. But I didn't get to come home until November. So see I was still from May until November I was still in Europe.

Interviewer: Okay

Miller: See and in the meantime the war in August was over with so the time I spent from May until I came home in November the Pacific War was over. So I knew that I wasn't going to the Pacific

Interviewer: Right

Miller: Because it was already over.

Interviewer: So you come home in November.

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: What did you come home over on?

Miller: I came home on a huge ship I don't know the name of it. But it was identified on the side with a big flag 75th infantry division. I did come home on a troop ship that was entirely of 101st men.

Interviewer: Right a lot of the aircraft carriers they converted to

Miller: Yeah I didn't I come home on a ship that I just simply don't recall the name of it.

Interviewer: When you got home your family was there waiting?

Miller: No no

Interviewer: You had to stay a little while?

Miller: Well at Camp Attaberry Indiana is where I was discharged. And I met a man who had been in the army he got discharged earlier. And lived in Detroit and he was there with his car and he charged us \$20 each to go from Camp Attaberry to Detroit. And from there I caught a bus and I went to Van Dairy Michigan then I got off and walked right into a bar, there were only two in town, but I walked in one and I stayed there then for two or three hours drinking beer and talking to people. And the owner of that bar when he closed he drove me down to my parents who lived in Edinburg Michigan. They didn't have a telephone so I couldn't call so I got home late in the evening or early the next morning and I met the family there and knocked on the door and went in and that was it. That was my return.

Interviewer: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: Younger?

Miller: They were all younger I was the oldest one. I had two brothers and one of them might have been in the army at that time and another one younger I don't know who _____. And I had two brothers and four sisters.

Interviewer: Large family

Miller: Oh yeah but I've had a good life. I've been very fortunate I had a good family and I'm proud of not only my wife but the four children. They are doing good and life has just been really pleasant for me. I've been extremely lucky and fortunately except for some my lungs are not the best they should be but that's my fault that was 47 years of smoking. I do have chronic bronchitis but so do many others. And but I'm 74 I'll be 75 in November and I'm in good health good shape.

Interviewer: You are

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: As far as your outward physical appearance.

Miller: I think probably a lot had to do with my life is a fact that I had a good attitude. And when I retired I went to work for the Department of Agriculture as a criminal investigator for 18 months and then I was hired as a chief of an it's a new development program that was developed it's an end the high jack program. And I was hired and was sent to Tampa Florida and I opened an office there in May of 71. And I stayed there with that office until I retired in January 1996. I went on sick leave for a year prior to that.

Interviewer: Right

Miller: So I had a total of 26 years in the army exactly no months no days. Then I had 26 years and four months in the civil service. So when I retired I was in a pretty good position. I was JS4T and that's a pretty good grade for retirement. So I it's just difficult to many people had much more and I was been glad to have more but I've had plenty in life. And I'm living not a wealthy man but I'm in a comfortable position pretty much. And I have a good outlook on life.

Interviewer: Do you think that's some of the things that helped you get through the war and things like that?

Miller: Yes

Interviewer: You were optimistic and that you had a

Miller: Yeah I was never a hero. I was afraid at times I was apprehensive at times I was but fortunately I didn't lose control. I don't know why I just didn't I felt pretty good.

Interviewer: Do you _____?

Miller: Yes and right now I get up in the morning I make it a point to get up take my shower, shave, out on clean clothes and I go up and join some friends of mine at McDonalds. And they are all veterans nearly all veterans the marine core the air force the navy, coast guard, and one of them was a reserve officer he is a retired school teacher. But not all of them are retired they were WWII in those branches but they telephone, electrical salesman all kinds of trades. And we sit and discuss wine, women, song, the military services, politics, and that keeps me going. It gets me up I have to get up in the morning I have to get moving I don't sit around and just lay around all day I don't do that. When I come home after dinner after lunchtime I come home and I find something to do. I work on the lawn

Interviewer: You stay busy.

Miller: I stay bust yep sure do sure do. And here I am on the 8th day of June the year 2000 and I'm up here with my friends.

Interviewer: And you're glad to see some of these friends.

Miller: Yeah well my friend Joe Chew and Estelle Williamson and some others and I'm having a good time.

Interviewer: That's great and I want you to know that people like me want you to know we respect you for what you for what you did.

Miller: Sure

Interviewer: We respect all of these men. Not only the ones who served in WWII but the ones who served in all of the wars.

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: Whether it be Vietnam or the Revolutionary.

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: And we respect you for what you did and we understand that yes it was your job.

Miller: Yeah

Interviewer: And it was your job but it took a brave person to also do it and I respect that and I'm proud of you and thank you

Miller: Sure

Interviewer: Because it would be no way that we would have what we have today if it weren't for men like you.

Miller: Well there's millions of us there was millions of us that did that. And many many men were not recognized for awards that deserved them. I wasn't one of them incidentally but I knew several that should have been they didn't they earned the metals but

Interviewer: But the army didn't see to it that they received them.

Miller: They didn't. Well they probably weren't turned in for it. You don't award a metal you earn a metal yeah.

Interviewer: Well I appreciate your time.

Miller: Okay

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Miller: You bet you.

Interviewer: And it was real good I appreciate it. Thank you.

Miller: You bet cha