

Boyce R. Meers

Mr. Meers: I did in the war too in the 1st Army Division

Interviewer: And can I get your full name for the record?

Mr. Meers: Boyce R Meers.

Interviewer: When were you born and where?

Mr. Meers: March 4, 1924 in Hodgenville, Kentucky near where Abraham Lincoln was born.

Interviewer: And what branch of service did you serve in?

Mr. Meers: The U.S. Army.

Interviewer: And what was your primary unit?

Mr. Meers: I enlisted in C Company of the 13th Army Regiment of the 1st Armor Division at Fort Knox, Kentucky on November 5, 1940.

Interviewer: And you enlisted?

Mr. Meers: I enlisted

Interviewer: You were not drafted?

Mr. Meers: I was not drafted. I'm not so sure the draft had even started at that time they were just still talking about it.

Interviewer: Okay and what were your parent's names?

Mr. Meers: My fathers name was John T Meers and my mother's name was Frances Meers.

Interviewer: And their occupations?

Mr. Meers: Farmers

Interviewer: How did you get along during the depression? Do you remember that?

Mr. Meers: We grew and ate off the farm we were poor folks.

Interviewer: Did you have brother and sisters?

Mr. Meers: I have two sisters and three brothers there's six of us all still alive. We're all old.

Interviewer: And did you go to school?

Mr. Meers: I went to through high school.

Interviewer: All the way through high school?

Mr. Meers: Yes and then I got my other advanced degrees after that war World War II.

Interviewer: Now before you enlisted were you able to hold a job?

Mr. Meers: Well I was going to school and I worked in the summer.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much you were paid?

Mr. Meers: Fifty cents a day.

Interviewer: Fifty cents a day.

Mr. Meers: Yeh pretty good money then.

Interviewer: Pretty good money do you remember where were you when Pearl Harbor

Mr. Meers: Well I went in the E Army November 5, 1940 and we were still at Fort Knox and I was on pass on that Sunday in Elizabeth Town, Kentucky we had an old car we bought and on the radio it came on said they had bombed Pearl Harbor and all the troops were to report back to base. We heard it on the radio that Sunday afternoon in Elizabeth Town, Kentucky. So we reported back to base and began to move.

Interviewer: Now in 1939 the war was happening overseas it really wasn't in the United States yet.

Mr. Meers: That's right

Interviewer: Did you ever think it would come to the United States?

Mr. Meers: Well I was still in high school I enlisted right out of high school. And yes we thought it might.

Interviewer: You thought it might?

Mr. Meers: Even as a kid my parents my grandfather thought it might.

Interviewer: So what was your first initial reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor what did you feel?

Mr. Meers: This is it. We were preparing for anything and then we figured that was it because they called us right immediately back to base.

Interviewer: Immediately. How long was your basic training?

Mr. Meers: Oh about three months. And it was different then they didn't have basic training units when I enlisted in the Army they gave you the basic training right in the unit you enlisted into. They would take a sergeant out and four or five of us and take basic training and he taught you everything. A little

guy named Bennett about that tall taught me everything. About the only thing I remembered he said now was never never never get in a hurry unless you have to and if you have to run like hell.

Interviewer: So what were the men you said there were just a few of you in when you were in basic training?

Mr. Meers: In that unit yeh about 10.

Interviewer: About 10 what were they like?

Mr. Meers: Oh just people enlisted like myself because the draft hadn't started. They weren't draftees.

Interviewer: So they were all there on their own choice?

Mr. Meers: Yes

Interviewer: Were they all from Kentucky?

Mr. Meers: No some from Ohio, Illinois, Tennessee mostly from Kentucky.

Interviewer: Right before Pearl Harbor you remember the programs the food drives the scrap drives all the rations well that was after.

Mr. Meers: Oh scrap iron I remember them but I wasn't part of them because I was already in the service.

Interviewer: Right you were in the service. Where did you go after you said they all called you back and then?

Mr. Meers: We moved out of the barracks we were in barracks the 1st Armor division and we moved in a tent city and we stayed there until we went to Fort Dickson to deploy to Europe in April 42.

Interviewer: Where is tent city?

Mr. Meers: Fort Knox.

Interviewer: In Fort Knox.

Mr. Meers: Yeh it was a horrible winter to be put and they give our barracks to the new unit coming in after the draft started.

Interviewer: So you were considered the old unit and getting ready to get deployed and so they put you in the tents with pot belly stoves.

Mr. Meers: That's right, miserable.

Interviewer: Now when did you deploy?

Mr. Meer: In April of 42 we started we moved from Fort Knox to Fort Dicks our equipment I guess went on to New York some of it went Radon Arsenal in New Jersey. And we were at Fort Dickson, New Jersey we did a lot of foot drill and I was sent I was a buck sargent I think at that time my specialty I should explain to you a few things what I was interested in radios and communication and electronics. And when I went in the Army out of high school already knew the international Morris Code at a rate of about 12, 15 words a minute. So during the first year I was in the Army I went to the army school and got my speed up to 25 words and also in radio and repair and electronic theory in addition to what I already had. So while I Fort Dicks I went to Righting Arsenal and installed radios in tanks. Run them through on flat cars and I put radios in tanks at night. Until the unit went overseas and I went with them.

Interviewer: Did you feel that you were really prepared about going over?

Mr. Meers: They kept us busy oh yeh we were well trained. We'd all qualified on the weapons and all that stuff.

Interviewer: And how were you living conditions?

Mr. Meers: Good enough.

Interviewer: Good enough the food?

Mr. Meers: Fine the food was good.

Interviewer: Then you left and you went over where once you deployed?

Mr. Meers: We went to New Jersey and loaded on I did and our group did on a ship called the Aquitania which belonged to the British an old treasure an old passenger ship. And some of our units went on I think the Queen Mary from the 1st Armor Division. We got on a train black out drawn on a train so people wouldn't see us. Went to New York got on a ship and sailed out of the harbor before day light. And as soon as we got out along beside, if you want to hear this story, near North of Long Island New York we got attacked by German submarines. And they we had our first casualty in the regiment at that time at that time. We had a guy you know in charge of the depth chargers and all that stuff and well it was a guy who was the regimental bugler, ya'll don't have those anymore, named Willey Right. And he blew his lid and never did recover lost his mind. Then we had to go into Nova Scotia behind a submarine that while the Navy took care of the submarine then went on to England and Ireland. And if you want to hear we went were tried to put that we were headed for North Ireland put that Aquitania in the harbor of Bell Fast Ireland the water wasn't deep enough. So they turned around and took us to Scotland, Glasgow they took us off the sip put us on small ships and took us over to Ireland. Then we were there for several months.

Interviewer: What were you doing in Ireland?

Mr. Meers: Well we trained and did post shore patrol even though we was tankers tankers did shore patrol. Walked up and down the beaches at night be sure no Germans came in.

Interviewer: What kind of training did you do?

Mr. Meers: We had maneuvers in the field we would go out sometime with the tanks and maneuver. A lot of foot drill, a lot of gun drill, a lot of shooting all that sort of thing. Nothing nobody sitting around on their tail we was always busy.

Interviewer: And after you said you were there for a few months in Ireland then where did you go?

Mr. Meers: Well I think, of course none of us knew that at the time, they had already planned this North Africa thing so we were loaded on various ships in Belfast and moved to Liverpool, England. We went from Liverpool, England back to Glasgow, Scotland. Then from there we got on other ships some of them were ores which had been modified to be landing ship tanks and went to North Africa. We went to North Africa on got there on got there in November I think 1942.

Interviewer: So what were you thinking with moving back and forth?

Mr. Meers: I thought they was nuts. It all had to do with the transportation they had. They just didn't have the right ships.

Interviewer: They didn't have the right ships. Anybody get sea sick?

Mr. Meers: Many many many of them. When we went from Scotland on this ole British tanker that had been converted from a landing ship tank supposable we hit a storm before we through the stretch in Dubrova and the ship started to break up the waver went clear over the top of the ship. Everybody on the ship got sick it started splitting down the middle and we was taking on water and we went through the stretch o f Dubrova and calm see and when we to where we were going to land they ran upon the ground and as far as I know it's still sitting there. They never used it again I don't know maybe somebody pulled it off. We got off and did our job.

Interviewer: What was your I mean your what was your philosophy your thinking at the time you know moving back and forth did you think you were going to go to main land Germany?

Mr. Meers: We began to doubt that we were we thought we would be going to Africa.

Interviewer: So you already knew.

Mr. Meers: They didn't tell us the kind of training and the shots and everything we was getting we thought we would be going to Africa.

Interviewer: Since you were the conel guy did you try to pick up or did you pick up the signals from the main land?

Mr. Meers: We picked up the signals from our headquarters. I was the radio operator for the company commander, the battalion commander and regimental commander. And at that time the only radios we had were AM radios FM had not yet come along. Everything was ditty dumb dumb ditty da da da da and all that sort of thing da da dit dit dit SOS.

Interviewer: Because now a days the most informed people are the people that run the radio because that's.

Mr. Meers: Well I'll tell you a story about that a little bit later on.

Interviewer: So once you arrived in North Africa?

Mr. Meers: We it was a task force under Colonel lieutenant Colonel Todd we consisted of an infantry company and couple of tank companies and all of that. And our objective was to take Laconia Airport outside of Oran. Then we invaded, I don't know the number of miles, about 40 miles west of Oran and moved forward to accomplish our mission. That first day in the tank that I was in it died wouldn't run. So I got in the company commanders tank incidentally is half track and we went about five miles in land and of course you still had Vishay French people then and we come around a corner and this half track command half track Captain Jake Shapiro and First Sargent Edmondson and company clerk and myself was in there communication sargent and the French took a French 75 and it took the undercarriage right out of that thing it didn't hurt any of us so the vehicle was disabled. So they jumped out and got in jeeps and other tanks and went on and there was a 50 caliber machine gun on that half track and I got the French gun crew and two guys got on a motorcycle and started to take off and I got those two. But it has always bothered me because my great-great grandfather came from France I just wonder if it was one of my cousins.

Interviewer: Who else were you dealing with just the French and then?

Mr. Meers: Well at that time it was the Vishay French we continued on overnight and got into near Laconia Airport and secured it. And then we went on we did another thing too went down to City Bell Inlets and took surrender of the French Foreign Legion there. They surrendered to us and it was another airport there, I don't remember the name of it, but our main objective was to get Laconia Airport which was about five miles south of Oran. And we captured that and Doolittle and his air force was supposed to come and land on there and we had communication signals to those people frequencies single operating instruction panel signals we put out to tell them that we how the airport was secured that we were around it they didn't tell the pilots what the signals were. So they came in and they saw some shooting some of them land there most of them landed all over the desert. A big fawpaw you probably never read about in the paper. Very few of them were killed because they were able to land those kinds of planes on the desert and get out of them.

Interviewer: Did you feel like your tank unit was more superior than the French that you were dealing with?

Mr. Meers: Oh yeh the French didn't have much to fight with. Our equipment was old but theirs was older the Germans didn't have let them have very much.

Interviewer: Were there any British soldiers that were with you guys?

Mr. Meers: Brave soldiers?

Interviewer: British

Mr. Meers: British not at that time no.

Interviewer: Not at that time?

Mr. Meers: No we had the U.S Infantry I think the 6th Infantry 1st Armor Division and that was all that was with us at that time the 6th Infantry and units from the 1st Armor Division. We captured Laconia Airport and the French Foreign Legion City Val Abyss. We invaded at a place called Marsa Bursajar west of Oran.

Interviewer: So once you took the airport how long did you stay securing it?

Mr. Meers: Well then we moved into Oran and took the surrender of all of the Vishay French forces in North Africa. I was operating the radio with a colonel when that happened. I sat in the half track and they did the talking.

Interviewer: You were just listening.

Mr. Meers: I was just a I think that's what they call a staff sargent or something at that time.

Interviewer: And then after that where did you

Mr. Meers: After we secured those places we stayed around there a while and loaded up and went to Algiers to confront the Germans and the French there.

Interviewer: So being from Kentucky what did Africa seem like to you?

Mr. Meers: Along the cost of Africa northern coast the fields are rained on and they grow wheat and vegetables and fruit and all that sort of things but that's just about 25 miles inland I don't know exactly it varies from place to place but they farm it so there are a lot of wheat fields.

Interviewer: So after you had captures and taken over the airfield and you said you moved on what was your daily job when you guys stayed there?

Mr. Meers: I was communication Sargent. Communication Sargent for the battalion commander then up in Tunisia it was JaunTaug they called it JaunTaug.

Interviewer: So where you controlling helped control the units or

Mr. Meers: We sent the messages out that he told me to send out and I the message come in I wrote them down and give them to him.

Interviewer: Did you after this did you cross over and go into Sicily and later on into Italy?

Mr. Meers: No not until after we secured Tunisia. See went to Algiers first then we went to Tunisia and fought Germans like everything. We fought Germans while Germans fought Germans there.

Interviewer: Were the Germans really different than the French?

Mr. Meers: Oh they had better equipment than we had and they had better guns than we had but I don't know I don't think they had as much spirit as we did. We still wore those ole flat hats that I went to war the flat stele helmet like they used in WWI that's what we had we didn't get those regular helmets until nearly after the campaign was over.

Interviewer: What do you mean by your spirit they were better equipped and better but they didn't have the spirits?

Mr. Meers: I think our leadership was good.

Interviewer: Leadership was better than the Germans?

Mr. Meers: Yeh our leadership was better. They weren't very flexible.

Interviewer: Where did you move from there from Algiers?

Mr. Meers: Well after we secured well of course that wasn't just the first armor division we had third infantry division first I believe and thrity forty I don't remember exactly but anyway they were all part of it. We went all the way back from Tunisia to Robock in Arocko on a train that is a long ride with all of our tanks and things. And we went out there in the cork force and trains and regrouped and then we moved back to Uren then a few several months got on a ship and went to Italy. Then we landed in Naples.

Interviewer: What do you think was worse traveling by ship or traveling by train?

Mr. Meers: Ship

Interviewer: Ship was worse?

Mr. Meers: Oh yeh on the way over from Uren to Italy there was a German plane that had a first guided bomb that I ever experienced or hear about hit a tanker off to our port side and it just made one big puff of smoke no survivors small tanker fuel tanker ship.

Interviewer: Now you said you landed in Italy how did you land I mean was it

Mr. Meers: We well they had already made the landing the 45th infantry had we went in and unloaded in Naples under bombs form the Germans they bombed us every night they didn't come over in the daytime they bombed us at night. We all got off we had a few casualties.

Interviewer: How was the terrain?

Mr. Meers: In Italy? Miserable rough mountainous some of it's flat.

Interviewer: Really tuff for the tanks to maneuver?

Mr. Meers: Yeh

Interviewer: Now up to that point did you ever encounter tiger the German tiger tank?

Mr. Meers: We had encountered tiger tanks I think some in Africa but yes we encountered several of them in Italy.

Interviewer: What did you did you get reports before telling about the German tank divisions?

Mr. Meers: We had Piper Cub airplanes for observers the wind came out of the north and they could just go up there and sit just behind their lines behind their range of antiaircraft fire and look forward and tell us what was going on as long as the weather permitted so we had the 1st Armor Division and the Artillery people and the other divisions had that ability and of course we had the photos of the air force the U.S. Army Air Force they called them then. And so we could tell when the tanks were coming most of the time. I remember one occasion we were down in the valley and there was hay stacks all down in this valley it was south of south of Rome and here comes a bunch of tiger tanks down the road I don't know five or six of them. So we've got all of these 75 milometer guns that we had on our tanks at that time and when that tank got a certain place the battalion commander issued an order to fire and they all hit him at the same time knock him out one tank couldn't take him out but all of those tanks together did take the German tanks out.

Interviewer: So that was the tactic was to hit them with everything that you had?

Mr. Meers: We did at that moment did at that moment. But later we got some better guns 76 milometer guns 105 and the tank destroyer people got better guns and took care of them.

Interviewer: How as moral during this point was it still high?

Mr. Meers: I don't ever recall moral ever being low in the unit. It was very good although you'd get kind of tired of it sometime just attack attack attack attack attack attack attack and it just goes on and on but then after a while you felt like you wished you'd get killed so you didn't have to do the next one.

Interviewer: Were there any of them that wanted the million dollar wound to be sent home?

Mr. Meers: I don't understand the question.

Interviewer: The million you've heard of the million dollar wound that wound would get you sent home.

Mr. Meers: I've never heard of that.

Interviewer: Never heard of that okay maybe that was later on.

Mr. Meers: I never heard anyone talk about that.

Interviewer: How was communication up to this point did you get letters?

Mr. Meers: Well by that time we had gotten FM radios and it became very good. We had installed FM radios in the tanks and all that sort of thing and still used for long haul AM radios the ditty dumb dumb

ditty. The Germans would jam it sometimes and we would just go to another frequency. So communication was pretty good can't complain too much.

Interviewer: What about snail mail did you get letters from home?

Mr. Meers: Yeh it wasn't too bad they come in every once and a while.

Interviewer: Like it is today probably. So how long at that point have you been away from the United States?

When I went to Italy? I don't know exactly but all together I stayed in combat zone about 34 months.

Interviewer: So you're not doing the typical soldier thing and marking off everyday that you

Mr. Meers: No I stayed busy I stayed busy. We went up north up from Naples north the 1st Armor Division did and we did some action up there and got so far and they pulled a bunch of us back and sent us around to the Amigo Beachhead. And I went with the group to Amigo Beachhead and we sat up there in fox holes until we got ready to attack and then came out of there and then took Rome.

Interviewer: So because you were so busy you didn't get homesick?

Mr. Meers: I never thought about it much.

Interviewer: Never thought about it much just thought about doing your job and your mission.

Mr. Meers: And al the guys I did think about all the guys friends I lost you know and that sort of thing that got killed and well am I next sometimes you hoped you would be.

Interviewer: Now were you part of the force that helped take Rome?

Mr. Meers: Yes one of the first vehicles into Rome.

Interviewer: Now that was on

Mr. Meers: June 5th we were in the suburbs before but actually we went into Rome on the same day they invaded on the west coast June 6, 1944.

Interviewer: June 6, 1944 D-Day yes. What was your feeling about going into Rome I mean?

Mr. Meers: Well it was an open city we didn't shoot anybody in there we were just moving in and driving through and not shooting anybody we saw some Germans they were going the other way and they just got away because we wouldn't shoot them inside the city.

Interviewer: Inside the city was declared a safe zone basically?

Mr. Meers: Something like that I don't know what it was. Anyway while we was in the city we weren't supposed to shoot anybody in Rome and we didn't.

Interviewer: How did the people the citizens in Italy react to you being there?

Mr. Meers: Oh wonderful they were hungry but no problems they weren't hostile towards us none at all anywhere in Italy.

Interviewer: Now did you know what was going on and why you guys were in Italy did you?

Mr. Meers: Absolutely

Interviewer: So you knew

Mr. Meers: We were briefed on why we were there and all that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Do you remember the term used of Churchill's soft underbelly?

Mr. Meers: No we was too low level to get that sort of thing I was just a sargent. By that time I was what you they called a Tech Sargent that might be interesting to you because of my ability to communication my knowledge of electronics I was the youngest Tech Sargent of 7 million people in the United States Army at that time. They needed those kinds of people and I worked for colonels I operated one radio for a general but I worked for colonels and lieutenant colonels all the time.

Interviewer: When did you hear about the build up for the invasion into Normandy?

Mr. Meers: I don't know we had some ideas coming about two months three months before it happened.

Interviewer: Now after Rome you just occupied the city?

Mr. Meers: No we moved north.

Interviewer: You kept moving north?

Mr. Meers: What was the name after we moved north and pushed the Germans up north to I wish I had a map I can't remember some of these names I believe it was a lake up there called Lake Gratiano or something like that and we the 1st Armor Division stopped there and regrouped, remaintanced, retrained and moved on north up towards Bo Valley later.

Interviewer: How were the tanks handling about that time you were saying at the beginning some were breaking down I mean

Mr. Meers: We had received better tanks with bigger guns. The things we started out with wasn't fit for WWI.

Interviewer: So they kept on resupplying you?

Mr. Meers: We kept getting better vehicles and better guns they had better tanks better communication thicker armor better engine and all that stuff buy the time we was that was before north. We

reorganized the division was organized into regiments and they organized them into combat commands somewhere in Italy where they put three or four battalions under one full colonel.

Interviewer: So how were the supply lines running were they going from the United States to Brittan to Africa to getting them up to you?

Mr. Meers: The supply lines weren't much of my worry because I always had something to eat and enough to ware and we seemed to always have enough ammunition.

Interviewer: But how were you getting these new tanks?

Mr. Meers: Oh they would be shipped in all up there on flat beds or drove up. In Africa we eat British rations for a long time they'd give you ox tail stew ox tail stew ox tail stew and they the British officers eat the other part of the cow. Have you ever hear of that?

Interviewer: I've had some British rations and I'm not very fond of them so.

Mr. Meers: They when I was coming over on a British ship we ate the fish heads and they ate the fish I'm not kidding you.

Interviewer: So what did you feel were you ready to get American rations again?

Mr. Meers: You bet you, we did.

Interviewer: You finally did?

Mr. Meers: Yeh

Interviewer: Now was the German resistance weakening up to this point and time?

Mr. Meers: We captured a bunch of Germans in North Africa and they were good soldiers Germans were good soldiers. I remember one time we captured all these Germans up near Bizerte in North Africa we had one of the last cities to surrender. We had them all lined up there oh we'd just hold them until somebody come and got them take them away see. So I took this the German Colonel was standing there and I cut the swastika off of his uniform and got his iron cross and he spoke to me in very clear English he says I earned those you should not take them they are mine and I said well I'm going to take them any way. I've still got them in there in a box in all my years I wished I had never taken them because I did wrong. It was his he should have kept them I don't care if he was a prisoner of war I still have them. An iron cross and swastika I cut off his uniform.

Interviewer: And what was your reason for taking it?

Mr. Meers: Souvenir I kept his pistol too a P38 somebody stole that from me.

Interviewer: So you were concerned you got reckless in doing that?

Mr. Meers: No

Interviewer: Well you said looking back through the years

Mr. Meers: Because he was a soldier see I have a different view about it now. It wasn't the right thing to do.

Interviewer: Now because of the new tanks and the new weapons would you say that is the main reason why your unit was so successful?

Mr. Meers: Partly yes partly the other is leadership we had good leaders we had terrific lieutenant colonels and colonels and company commanders most of them.

Interviewer: So they were staying alive?

Mr. Meers: If they weren't good they weren't there long they got somebody else. You see my battalion commander was only about 28 years old we started out with older ones, they couldn't hold up. We had some of them maybe 30 and full colonels 153.

Interviewer: None of the guys had a problem with like younger leadership or you know.

Mr. Meers: They did alright. We had good leadership the 1st Armor Division really if they weren't good somebody would kick them out put somebody in try somebody else. And that didn't happen very often not very often. Our division commander was changed out General Word was given a thing to go home he was an old mad he's a god guy he just wasn't with what was going on he was too old. We started out with a battalion commander he was about 38 years old and he couldn't hold up. You know you fight for two weeks and sleep wherever you can when you can a 38 year old man can't handle it so they sent him back and put a 28 year old man in.

Interviewer: They couldn't keep up?

Mr. Meers: Yeh couldn't get by with little sleep you'd go two weeks maybe sleep two hours a night four hours night then attack attack attack attack attack you couldn't let up once you started putting the pressure on these dudes you don't want to let up because they would dig in if you did. Now I'm getting off subject go ahead.

Interviewer: No, growing up on the farm working you worked the farm so you had to get up early in the morning did that help out?

Mr. Meers: Well the biggest things about being raised on a farm you had machinery we had all kinds of machinery tractors and mowers and all that sort of thing so I knew how to drive a vehicle when I went in knew how to drive a tractor run a boring machine and repair things and all that. And these guys that come out of the city couldn't put a screen door hook on. I'm not exaggerating so it took a lot more training for those people to become participant than farm boys that come off the farm that had been driving a tractor running hay baler or something understood machinery we had machinery.

Interviewer: So what were you finding yourself fixing equipment all the time?

Mr. Meers: Oh yeh all the time. I fixed radios almost constantly put a new antenna on them put a new tube in them see there were still tubes in them and that sort of thing and operate them at the same time.

Interviewer: So you think is that why you progressed?

Mr. Meers: That's why I was promoted so fast I had this knowledge very young. They had this course in high school where I went to high school called manual training and you had to take this and that or that so I selected to take electronics.

Interviewer: So that really helped out in engineering.

Mr. Meers: It did in the Army because they needed them so bad the only reason I promotion so fast is because they needed it so bad. I wasn't that good but I was able to do the job.

Interviewer: You were able to work. Were you ever wounded?

Mr. Meers: Yeh but I didn't get a Purple Heart. I was walking around with my helmet off over in North Africa and a piece of shrap metal hit me in the head. Instead of getting a Purple Heart I got reprimanded for not having my helmet on.

Interviewer: How was the medical treatment for it?

Mr. Meers: We had some of the finest medical people you could ever imagine very brave they were good. Of course each battalion had its own medical section. And I can't remember that guy's name he was great we had great medical people they were good they would go get it the guy if they had to. They lost some they got hurt too. A guy was wounded out there they'd go get him.

Interviewer: So once you moved from Rome and your heading up north

Mr. Meers: We were headed towards Pole Valley up in the mountains cold snow I slept in snow in a pup tent that deep on a tank and that deep up on the pup tent it keeps s you warm keeps the wind out.

Interviewer: So how was the tanks handling the winter weather?

Mr. Meers: We didn't move them much.

Interviewer: Didn't move them much.

Mr. Meers: We used them in fixed firing position sometimes in artillery.

Interviewer: Like anti air?

Mr. Meers: Mostly artillery. And then when we attacked they moved out in maneuver then. We kept them in a position when they couldn't fire on an area that might be attacks coming our way counter attacks or whatever.

Interviewer: Now you kept moving north I mean you guys were planning on going all the way to Germany is that correct I mean was that actually the plan?

Mr. Meers: No I don't think our plan was ever to go all the way to Germany but just to get rid of all the Germans in Italy. I left them in the Pole Valley the 1st Armor Division that was in the fall of 1945 and they came down on my the Company Commander first Sargent came down to me he said Sargent Meers get your stuff together your going home. They had a program where one half of one percent of the people had been in combat for so long and had been with the unit so long could be rotated. So I had been in combat then for about 34 months and I made that one percent one half of one percent of the division and I came back to Italy and back to the United States.

Interviewer: Now did that surprise you?

Mr. Meers: Yeh I was totally surprised.

Interviewer: Did you want were you ready to go or did you kind of want to stay?

Mr. Meers: I went they didn't give me any choice. They was orders.

Interviewer: If you had a choice though?

Mr. Meers: I'd have took it and come home. I'd had enough.

Interviewer: You'd had enough that winter was

Mr. Meers: It was cold and you know you tired of it after awhile.

Interviewer: What year was this that you came home?

Mr. Meers: It was late when I arrived in New York it was Christmas time December 45.

Interviewer: Did you make it home for Christmas?

Mr. Meers: No they sent me to Camp Atterbury, New York and someplace in Indiana and finally to Fort Know and finally I got to go home a little after Christmas.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Mr. Meers: Well I was down to about 135 pounds and all I could do was eat and sleep. It was great. It was great to see people again.

Interviewer: How was the welcome home?

Mr. Meers: Great that's about the only way I can describe it. They was all glad to see me I guess.

Interviewer: Was your family waiting for you or

Mr. Meers: They were waiting for me because gasoline was rationed and all that sort of thing. I had to get a Greyhound bus from Louisville. I got to Louisville and I got a Greyhound bus going home they met me in Hodgenville. You couldn't get gasoline.

Interviewer: Yeh everything was rationed sure.

Mr. Meers: Weren't going to drive to Louisville to get me there wasn't that much gasoline.

Interviewer: So did you get to experience some of the rationing when you got home I mean you kind of had it or was it settling down?

Mr. Meers: What gasoline?

Interviewer: The rationing, rationing of gasoline and sugar and all of that?

Mr. Meers: Well it didn't bother me too much cause I was still in the Army I just went on leave and then went back to Fort Knox. And assigned I was the Communications Sargent of school troops at Fort Knox the Army school.

Interviewer: Did you ever thought that they were going to send you back over?

Mr. Meers: They would have if the war hadn't ended yes.

Interviewer: So you were gearing up to get sent back?

Mr. Meers: I thought they might send me to the Pacific but they didn't no. I stayed with the what happened to me was that I got out of the Army, this may not have anything to do with what you're looking for, if I get off track just say hold it.

Interviewer: No your fine.

Mr. Meers: I got out of the Army and went to work for Southern Indiana for a couple of months and of course by that time all of your rank was temporary in the war everybody's rank was temporary. No reason to reenlist because they could bust you down to a private if they wanted to. So the Recruiting Sargent came along and said we need you communicators if you will reenlist we will make your rank permanent and give you a reenlistment bonus. So I reenlisted and I reported back in to Fort Knox again they sent me to Fort Knox school troops and I reported in to a Colonel Curtis who had been my Battalion Commander in Northern Italy for awhile. And he said well he said glad to see you and all that sort of thing, said your going to OCS and I said oh no I got my rank permanent now that's good enough Master Sargent that's good enough for me. I said I'm good the way I am he said no you're going to OCS he said I would have given you field commission except I was afraid I would lose you. So I said okay so he put me in for OCS went before the board and went to OCS in Fort Benning and then on up.

Interviewer: So you lived on the field commission when you were over in Italy but he was afraid of losing you

Mr. Meers: He would have yeh I would have got transferred to another place there was no position for a Single Core Lieutenant or Communications Officer at a battalion level at a regimental level yes.

Interviewer: So he was he wanted to keep you?

Mr. Meers: That's what he said I just laughed about it because he probably did me a favor or else I would have got killed. But I never did find him to thank him for it. I went back to find him but I don't know what ever happened to him I lost contact with him he would be long sense dead now. But he did me a big favor go after I went to Officers Candidate School and while I was going to Officers Candidate I went to school I went to school I went to school I went to school I got correspondence course I went to every kind of school every which way I could until I got my first degree then I got another degree in electronic engineering technology and I finally got a masters degree in strategic studies.

Interviewer: The military was paying for all of this?

Mr. Meers: They didn't pay for it.

Interviewer: They didn't pay for it?

Mr. Meers: No there was some I should qualify that there was some of those they paid a portion of a portion of but basically I paid for it. So my advise to any young people is never never stop going to school I don't care if your 40 years old your not to old to get a masters degree or doctorate degree.

Interviewer: So you were finally commissioned you had a master's degree when you were commissioned?

Mr. Meers: No no no I just had when I was commissioned I had two years college by that time and I went on and finished that it took me seven years going to school at night. They sent some people to school they wouldn't send me and going to school at night and the Pentagon wherever I was stationed the correspondents supposed to get the first degree and it took me two more to get the electronic degree and several more to get the master's degree.

Interviewer: What did you think about the generation of WWII?

Mr. Meers: The who?

Interviewer: The generation those that served in WWII and those that were left behind. Different than today?

Mr. Meers: Well I think the soldiers today are better educated than then. We had a lot of people that didn't even have a high school education. Very few had college and we had a lot officers that didn't even have college at that time but they were able to do the job. Today most all of them that go in the army have a high school education. That gives them the ability to understand what they are doing. But that's not enough everything is too high tech they are going to have to keep going to school.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Mr. Meers: Leave that on for just a minute I want to tell you something else.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Meers: Don't ever ever ever ever stop going to school. I don't care what your specialty is go to seminars go to conferences take correspondence codes take short courses if your going to be a doctor or a nurse or a an accountant keep on that is the only way you rise to the top. Now what it did for me I had two below the zone promotions one to Colonel and one to Lieutenant Colonel one to Lieutenant Colonel and one to Colonel. It works and keep your nose clean and keep your shoes shined and be neat and shaven. That's all you have to do. The other things you need to do if you want to get ahead in any kind of thing don't wait for somebody to tell you what to do if you see something that needs to be done do it. Show initiative and that was the biggest difference in the guy coming off the farm into the army then those that came out of they city. They would stand there and wait for somebody to tell them to do something where a farm guy knew to boy knew what to do he would pick it up and get it done.

Interviewer: It's still like that today.

Mr. Meers: It is?

Interviewer: Yeh

Mr. Meers: I don't know if I've given you anything any good or not.

Interviewer: You did thank you.