

Just as a formality would you state your full name please?

**Mr. Clouser:** Wilbur Clouser.

Mr. Clouser, where were you born?

**Mr. Clouser:** I was born in Pennsylvania; Juniata, Pennsylvania, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1921.

What were your parent's names?

**Mr. Clouser:** William Jonathan and Margaret Eva.

What did they do for a living?

**Mr. Clouser:** My father was totally disabled from War I. Of course he did a lot of things. He worked in Detroit, and he worked in the Pennsylvania Railroad as a boiler maker. He could do anything. He could make blueprints, read blueprints and on very few education. I think he had probably four or five years of formal education, but he could read any blueprint there was and he could make blueprints. He was a cabinet maker and a carpenter. He built his own home. My mother has been dead for 78 years. My step-mother still lives in Pennsylvania. My father passed away in 1966 and we were stationed over in Germany at the time. I came home for his funeral. I was only home for a few days and I went back to Germany because I had already put my retirement papers in and didn't want to use too much leave. So I went back to Germany until my retirement date.

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Mr. Clouser:** I had...living I had one brother and one sister. But I only have a brother left. He lives in Idaho.

How was your early schooling as far as grade school?

**Mr. Clouser:** 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

You made it through 12<sup>th</sup> grade?

**Mr. Clouser:** Right.

How much do you remember of the Depression?

**Mr. Clouser:** Very much; very much I remember it. I remember that we were lucky that we had enough food to eat. My dad drew a \$78.00 a month pension, and there was five of us that lived on it until 1938. I left Pennsylvania and went to Detroit and went to work under direct contract with Ford Motor Company. I worked for them until 1942 and then I came in the Army. I got out after the war was over and went back to my job in Detroit. I stayed out seven months and decided to come back in because I was sick when I got out the last time I got wounded. I stayed

out seven months, reenlisted, and then went from there down to the parachute school as an instructor for three years.

Was the jump school still down at Benning?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

Was it already being called the Benning School for Boys at that time?

**Mr. Clouser:** No. I went through jump school in the spring of 1943 and went to Camp McCall, North Carolina, after that. Then I went straight overseas to the outfit I served in after the war which was Company C 506 Parachute Infantry. I served all through World War II with them and made all the campaigns. I got wounded three times.

Do you recall what your feelings were just prior to Pearl Harbor as far as when Hitler was..?

**Mr. Clouser:** I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was. I had just got off work and had just crawled in bed when a newsboy came by where I lived in Detroit and had a special edition out that said, "The Japanese Bombed Pearl Harbor!" I said, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" If they would have said Hawaii, I knew where Hawaii was. But I certainly didn't know where Pearl Harbor was.

Do you remember what was going on as far as in Europe as far as Hitler?

**Mr. Clouser:** We knew what was going on in Europe about Adolph Hitler overrunning Europe.

Did you think that the United States would become involved?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well I didn't see how we could not become involved. You know the way the feeling was that we really and truly didn't think that we needed to be involved. My grandfather, his father came from Holland. He had very, very bad feelings against the German people and Adolph Hitler. Of course my dad was gassed twice during World War I. He didn't want me to go. My kid brother went in ahead of me and I quit a job that I never had to, to go in the Army. I was an aluminum welder on an aircraft and I never even had to have gone. My dad damn near died when I quit my job to get drafted.

What was your father's perception as you were growing up though as far as World War I? I know how my father was in the military and I heard the war stories through my grandfather and my uncle that was in Vietnam. Did you ever hear the war stories as far as World War I from your father growing up or was that something he kept to himself?

**Mr. Clouser:** That is something...very little did I ever know about what dad was in. He served in several outfits during War I. In fact, the outfit that is now the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, my dad was in that the same outfit with Alvin York in World War I.

Was that the 30<sup>th</sup> Tennessee?

**Mr. Clouser:** No it was 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division which later became airborne. But he had been in 42<sup>nd</sup> Rainbow Division, and as far as I know that is the only outfit. He went through training at Camp Gordon, Georgia, with the 325<sup>th</sup> Infantry which is the same outfit Alvin York was in. Of course he stayed in the hospital from 1918 until 1927. Once a year he would get furloughed from the hospital, Hines Hospital in Chicago. There were four of us kids born while my dad was still a patient in the hospital. Up to the day he died he still was a patient from War I.

Was it all because of the gas?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes. It ate his stomach practically up. I don't know how he lived as long as he did.

You mentioned that you remember seeing in the newspaper about the Japanese bombing. Do you remember the speech that Roosevelt gave after that?

**Mr. Clouser:** Oh yes.

Did you hear that when he put that out?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

What were your feelings on Roosevelt at that time and his speech?

**Mr. Clouser:** I thought he was a great man and I do to this day. In fact, I voted for him from my foxhole in France. My family was all Republicans. I guess I was the first Clouser that ever was that voted for Democratic Party and ever since I have been a Democrat. I split my ticket but I just don't believe in this right down the line. My wife is the same way. My family was very patriotic. My brother was not. He actually belonged to the Navy but he served his entire career during the war in the Marine Corp because he was a Pharmacist. He made 14 beach assaults with the Marine Corp during World War II and probably at one time or another him and Ray Masseus were probably in the same unit and didn't know. He got out after the war. I think he first lived in Utah. He married a gal that was in the Navy. He was a chief Pharmacist mate and his wife was a chief cook in the Navy. They met at Tillamook. They were stationed at Tillamook, Oregon, and he stayed out until 1950 when the Korean War broke and enlisted in the Army and went to a refresher course down at Brooke Army Medical Center. He scored so high on all of his schooling down there that they kept him there as an instructor for four years. Then he got out again. I don't really know for sure why he got out. I guess he was tired of where he was at. He tried to go to Korea and they would never let him go down there. Him and his Colonel who was the head nurse down there couldn't get along so he decided to get out.

You mentioned that you had a wonderful job there in Detroit working on aircraft. Which aircraft were you working on?

**Mr. Clouser:** Liberator Bomber.

Liberator Bomber; now which model was that?

**Mr. Clouser:** B-24.

That was the B-24. I'm familiar with the B series.

**Mr. Clouser:** We didn't have the actual airplane in the department I worked in but we made struts for the wings and that was what my job was. The main plant was at Willow Run in Michigan. That is where the Liberator Bomber was; that was its birthplace.

That early into the years, did you see very many females working in that industry yet? I have always seen the pictures of; I don't know if it was Rivid Annie. All the women doing all of the manly, masculine industrial jobs.

**Mr. Clouser:** When I went into the service, the department I worked in or the plant I worked in, had no females. I guess it started sometime in late 42 and early 43 with Rosie the Riveter you are talking about. The plant I worked in hired very few people. There were only 50 people that worked in that little plant and out of those 50 people, four of them were my uncles, one was my dad, and one was myself. Before I went to the military, they went from them 50 people to they bought out the old Holly Carburetor Plant which was just about a block away. When I left to go to the Army there was only 250 people that worked in the plant. When I came home there were 25,000 and I was 5<sup>th</sup> on the seniority when I got out after the war because my time went on. But I couldn't take the smelly old factory again. So I thought well I got like this while I was in the Army, if I can get back in; I even waived my disability so I could get back in the Army in 1946 and then I stayed until 1947.

You mentioned you left job so that you could be drafted. Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do in the military?

**Mr. Clouser:** I had no idea. I just knew that my family was patriotic and I just felt that it was my job to go.

Did you go to an induction center of any kind and take a battery of test or anything?

**Mr. Clouser:** I went through an induction center at Fort Benjamin Harris, Indiana, and got fitted with uniforms. I went straight from there to the 111<sup>th</sup> Infantry which was part of the old 28<sup>th</sup> Division. I stayed with them until April of 1943. I volunteered to get out of there because we were pulling guard duty seven days a week, eight hours a day. We were in charge of all the beach between Ocean City, Maryland, and Marion City, North Carolina. We got on shrimp boats and oyster boats and went out to the small islands off the coast and we patrolled those during the night hours. I got tired of that and the first time I saw something on the boat on board volunteering for the parachute troops, that is what I did. I liked to never have got out of it because they had been removed from the 28<sup>th</sup> Division and became a separate regiment. Pulling that guard duty we had one battalion that was in place at New Bern, North Carolina, and the battalion I was in, our headquarters was in Camp Summerset, Maryland, and we would stay in one small camp; sometimes we had camps all along the coast only a platoon size. When I left to

go to parachute troops I was at a little place called Oyster Bay, Virginia, which was a camp there that was only platoon size. I went from there to parachute school at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Now I imagine they had you doing the patrolling because I have read where the German U-boats were trying to get into the harbors. They were landing saboteurs.

**Mr. Clouser:** We picked up dead bodies on some islands off the coast which most people didn't even know that our ships got sunk in the Atlantic Coast, United States. Some of them are less than three miles out. That was one of our jobs too; to police up the dead from the ships that were sunk out there.

Anybody in your outfit, or did your outfit include in that? Did any of ya'll ever come across these saboteurs that the Germans were supposedly...?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well the actual company that I was in didn't, but the battalion that I was in captured a couple of saboteurs coming across from the beach at Ocean City, Maryland, coming across the causeway. I took my basic training at Camp Pendleton, Virginia, which is at Virginia Beach. My first duty after basic training was walking beach duty on guard. When we moved to Camp Summerset, Maryland, that is when we pulled duty on the causeway at Ocean City, Maryland, and then we moved from there down to Cape Charles, Virginia, which was headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 111<sup>th</sup> Infantry. That is when I left to go to Parachute troops.

What was your feeling towards; you mentioned you had a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education. I know my grandfather, for instance, I don't think he ever made it past 1<sup>st</sup> grade; he was illiterate and couldn't read. What was your impression of the other soldiers that you were first stationed with there after basic training?

**Mr. Clouser:** Back in those days, after all these years it is hard to recall, the unit was in, I venture to say we probably didn't have over a dozen high school graduates in the whole unit. It was a National Guard unit of Pennsylvania; from Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Most of them were from around Valley Forge, where the Valley Forge Hospital is now. I doubt seriously if we had over a dozen or a very little bit over that that had a high school education. Most of them were anywhere from 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. I said 12<sup>th</sup> grade, I got my education in the Army. I got my high school education from the...a G.E.D. I got pretty much of an education while I was in the Army.

Oh, I could imagine.

**Mr. Clouser:** In fact I took a test at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. They had a program they came out with where you could take a test and get a two year college equivalency. I took that test there and I think I missed maybe four points of not getting two years of college. I never pursued it after that.

Was this the first time you were that far away from home or by yourself?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well between Pennsylvania and Detroit, Michigan, that was the furthest I had ever been.

Now you mentioned when you left from doing your patrolling with the 111<sup>th</sup>, from there you went to, not Bragg, for jump training.

**Mr. Clouser:** Fort Benning.

Fort Benning. Did ya'll participate in any of the Louisiana maneuvers, the Carolina maneuvers?

**Mr. Clouser:** The Carolina maneuvers. The Tennessee maneuvers were still going on when I was still in the 111<sup>th</sup> Infantry in Camp Forest, Tennessee. Of course we got our share of the training at Camp McCall, North Carolina. We stayed in the field. The unit I was in they took all the people from there out of parachute replacements and sent us overseas. That is when I joined the outfit I went all the way through the war with.

During that training did you feel that you were being trained adequately? I know it is hard to look back now and say that but at that time do you remember feeling like, "Okay this is the best possible training to get me ready for something that is going to be that violent?"

**Mr. Clouser:** Well it's a funny thing. What I was trained for in basic training, I never done that anymore. I was in intelligence. I was in intelligence platoon at Camp McCall, North Carolina, in the 541<sup>st</sup> Parachute Infantry, and when I went overseas I was assigned right to, well of course everybody was basically Infantry anyhow. But I never had a use for that after that. The training we took, I could actually take a photograph that had shell and hot marks in the ground and I could look at that photograph and tell you how deep that hole was and how big it was and all the intelligence training that I had. Let's see about six months of training like that as strictly intelligence and when I got overseas I never had any use for any of it because I was a grunt in the infantry. Whatever you call the grunts back then.

How good were your living conditions there at the different camps?

**Mr. Clouser:** They were terrible.

Were you in like the old World War II barracks that are out on Fort Campbell?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, just exactly. The cracks in the floor, you could sweep your floor and dirt went right through the cracks in the floor. The conditions were bad, but they weren't that bad. You can't compare it to what a soldier has today. But any old bunk in a corner was good enough for a soldier back then.

Beats being in a pup tent out in the elements.

**Mr. Clouser:** We spent less time in pup tents too. Nobody had good living conditions, especially in the infantry; living in the old type buildings built specially for the war. You know Fort Campbell as well as I do. But even the barracks out there now in the old wooden barracks

out there now, they are pretty livable. In fact, I spent three tours at Fort Campbell. I came here originally from the parachute school in 1949, stayed until 1951, went ROTC duty at Washington Jefferson College. I was there one school year and went from there to Iran for two years as an advisor for the Iranian \_\_\_\_\_ which was internal police force. When my tour was up over there I took my family over to Iran with me and they overthrew the government while I was over there and I sent my wife and kids home because they were firing 75's flat trajectory right past my quarters. When the Shaw left the country and M\_\_\_ took over they called all the, most of us were senior noncommissioned officers then and officers, they called us over to the ambassador over there and he recommended all dependents go home; especially those that were in the family way. Well my wife was in the family way at that time. In fact when she came back from Iran on September 1953, my oldest son who is a banker downtown, I don't know if you have heard of him or not. He's the second command of Old National Bank which is Heritage. He is one of the Vice Presidents down there.

What's his first name?

**Mr. Clouser:** Randy.

Randy Clouser. Yes sir, I do know him. I used to work at First American for awhile and I also worked across the street at.... I can't even remember the name of the bank. It was a bank that I went to after \_\_\_\_\_. But I do remember Mr. Clouser. It's a small world.

**Mr. Clouser:** He's done very well with the bank. He's a graduate from Austin Peay. My oldest son is also a graduate from Austin Peay. Both of their wives are graduates of Austin Peay.

If I'm not mistaken Randy is a fraternity guy isn't he?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yeah.

That is the way I have known him then. I'm a member of his fraternity.

**Mr. Clouser:** In fact his wife, she was an executive of Joslen's yearbook. I forget how many years she was out there; 17 or 19 years. The pressure got so great that she took a year's leave of absence and then quit. In fact she is in Austin Peay right now. Now she is student teaching. She is going to become a teacher. I think she graduates in May, I believe. She is taking finals right now at Austin Peay. My oldest son, he spent four years on his tour of the Army went to Vietnam in 1966 I guess. I was stationed in Germany at that time so when his tour in Vietnam was up he put in for an inner-theater transfer and came to Germany. I retired in 1967 and I think then he still had a year left to go of service. So he got out and went back to Austin Peay and got his degree. He stayed out four years and then went back in; no reserves, no nothing. He went back in as a Spec 5. He stayed four more years and then got out and that killed me the last time he got out so 15 years of his life, he just left it. His wife is a nurse at Gateway. He has been working out at the Zinc plant ever since he got out of the military the last time. They live right across from Swan Lake. I forget what the name of the street is they live on. So anyway, he works at the Zinc plant. He has been out there since 1968 I guess.

You mentioned that you were transferred as a replacement when you went to Europe. Did you go over on boats?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

What were those conditions like?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well, they weren't very good. It was a brand new ship we went over on. They had just put it in water in San Pedro, California. A British crew picked it up in California and came through the Panama Canal to Newport News, Virginia, and they put us on board that ship there. I forget exactly how many people were on it but I don't expect it was over 400 people on it. They starved us to death. We were on the water 37 days just going to Europe. We lost our convoy twice and instead of going straight across we went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and dropped off a couple of soldiers that were deadlly ill and we went back out and we picked up another convoy and we lost it before we got to Greenland. We got to Greenland and we lost our convoy again and all they left with us in the North Atlantic; the North Atlantic is so rough that you didn't have to worry too much about submarines. The ship I was on, the Blue Ridge Victor was the name of it, the waters was so rough and the swells were so high that even that baby aircraft carrier that was our escort and we had two British Corvettes and most of the time they were not even in sight. That is how rough the water was.

The corvettes, were those the light cruisers?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yeah. Anyhow, we were on the water for 37 days and that British crew, they starved us to death. We had fish for breakfast every morning; stewed fish every morning for breakfast. All they had for weaponry was 20 mm \_\_\_\_\_ was all that was on there. The aircraft carrier only had one plane that could take off and it was a catapult. So myself and I believe it was seven other people besides myself pulled gun crew through in the North Atlantic during that period of time in eight hour shifts. You know there wasn't no such thing as having enough clothes to keep warm back then.

I was fixing to ask you, what was your cold weather gear like?

**Mr. Clouser:** There was no....we had those World War II field jackets where they only came to there and they were kind of a kaki colored. We didn't get any warm weather gear until.....

Were ya'll hot cotting?

**Mr. Clouser:** Pardon?

Were ya'll hot cotton? Were ya'll having to rotate out on who got the cot? Did ya'll have shifts?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, there were enough bunks for everybody.

So this was a military transport ship. This wasn't one of the converted cruise liners?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, this was a Liberty ship which was, well, quite small. I really don't know for sure how big of a crew they had. I know that when we left Camp McCall, North Carolina, and went to Fort Meade, Maryland, and from there down to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, there were 400 of us left. All 400 of us got on that ship and there were no other troops on there except us; except the British crew. So it was quite a small ship.

Where did you land at in England?

**Mr. Clouser:** We landed, first of all we went to Belfast; Northern Ireland. We got off the ship there in Belfast and went to a place that you probably never heard of. But it was Newtownards, Northern Ireland. It was famous for an old story, Evan's Tower. It used to be taught in English years and years and years ago. We stayed there and I guess we were there about six or seven days and they took us from there over to a Scottish Army Camp at Largs, Scotland. Then they scattered out and went to all the different outfits; some went to the 82<sup>nd</sup>, some went to the 101<sup>st</sup> and I went to Company C 506<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry and I stayed with them all through the war. We were in a little town called Ramsbury, England, which was about 40 miles southeast of London. Redding was close by and the little town I was in was Ramsbury, England. Just my company alone was in that little town. Just outside of it, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of our outfit was at Ramsbury but they were up on a hill in a separate army camp. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was at Ogborn which was probably ten or so km from where we were. Our regimental headquarters was at Hungerford. We did nothing but train.

That is what my next question will be. How far away from your camps did you train? Were you pretty much all over England?

**Mr. Clouser:** All over that part of England.

That is in Wells, isn't it? Were you in Wells?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, that was in, I forget what they called that part of England. One time I was in the hospital when I got wounded, that is where I ended was in the hospital at Wells.

What was the training like that ya'll were doing?

**Mr. Clouser:** We trained on everything; all the weapons that an ordinary infantry outfit had. I was a B.A.R man, a bazooka man, a machine gunner.

Did you mess with the mortars? What size mortars did ya'll use?

**Mr. Clouser:** 60 mm mortars; and I had been a mortar-man for awhile too. When we jumped in Normandy, I jumped with my regular gear plus a leg pack with part of a machine in it and jumped with a bazooka strapped around my arm. In that leg pack we had, I think, six rounds of mortar ammunition, a belt of machine gun ammunition, and part of a machine gun was in that leg pack. That leg pack weighed as much as I did.

How did you feel about having that pack on you though before you jumped?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well it was so heavy you just had to scoot along on the floor. In fact it was so heavy and I was such a small guy; much smaller than I am right now. My company commander who I talk to on the phone periodically; in fact, we are really good friends today.

What was his name?

**Mr. Clouser:** Al Hassenthall. He was my assistant platoon leader when we jumped in Normandy. I jumped right behind him on the second man out. The guy later that became my 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant, he moved me up in his place because I had that leg pack on. That leg pack; I really don't know for sure how much that leg pack weighed plus the parachute, plus all the other stuff we had too. For a man that weighed 160 lb, I probably weighed over 200 with all of that equipment and everything.

Did everybody have these leg packs?

**Mr. Clouser:** Oh no.

Was it just a certain specialty?

**Mr. Clouser:** Certain people had them and I happened to be one of the unlucky ones.

What was your rank at the time?

**Mr. Clouser:** I went all the way through the war as a private. I got out as a private first class. I reenlisted as a private first class in 1946 and went to the parachute school at Fort Benning, Georgia. I got down there in late July 1946. In August I made Corporal and in September I made Sergeant. I stayed a Sergeant for three years until I came to Fort Campbell in 1949. From 1946 to 1950, I went from PFC to Master Sergeant.

Fast track!

**Mr. Clouser:** But I found a job that was opened that I was qualified for and I went looking for it.

When I see the pictures of the 101<sup>st</sup>, you know prior to the jump and Eisenhower coming down and talking to everybody, do you remember that? Did you see him?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yeah I did. In fact I have some photographs of a jump we made for Eisenhower and Winston Churchill just prior to the invasion. My particular company, we didn't jump that day but we were all out on the parade field when jumpers came over. In fact I was as close to Eisenhower as you are when they trooped the line.

Were you one of the ones with a shaved head and a Mohawk?

**Mr. Clouser:** Oh yes.

Is that something pretty much along the line?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well yes it was; all very short hair and in fact if the truth were known for 25 years my hair was as short as yours is right now. I could have combed it with a wash rag every day.

Well do you remember much, I have read different counts and I have seen the *Band of Brothers* movie.

**Mr. Clouser:** That was my outfit.

Yes sir. Did you have that anxiety as far as, “Okay, it’s on? Okay we are cancelling the jump!” Do you remember that as far as one minute they are saying, “You are on?”

**Mr. Clouser:** I can remember being in a marshalling area and we were supposed to go and didn’t go and never knew until years after that that they cancelled the invasion. I can’t recall just exactly. I don’t remember. My unit, I believe that we were on the ground at 20 minutes after midnight on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June. Like everybody else in our outfit I was 17 miles from where I was supposed to be. I didn’t get back to my company until D+3.

How many people were with you? Were you by yourself or were you with your 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant?

**Mr. Clouser:** We had, I think, D Day morning it seems to be that we got about 15 people from different...502, 506 and even some people from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division which were supposed to be miles and miles and miles from where we were. The highest grade person that was with that group for three days was a corporal, and he was my assistant squad leader. We were on a causeway where the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was coming in at. But I got to my company on D+3 early in the morning. We fought every minute of every day for those three days.

Was it Carentan; the name of that first town there on the causeway?

**Mr. Clouser:** That’s right. Well the first town was actually...Carentan was where the swamps were, yeah. Sarrebourg is way up next to the English Channel. But Carentan and a little town of the first place we came to was a little village called Ravenille and that is when the 12 of us were together. We fought for a day and a half trying to get out of that little village.

Did the Germans have you encircled or everybody was just scattered?

**Mr. Clouser:** In every direction; they were all scattered out. In fact one of my best buddies lives up in East Tennessee and I was staying right beside him and he was the first man I saw. I saw some dead ones before then. But I’ll swear I seen that bullet hit him. It hit him in the shoulder in this little town of Ravenille, France. In fact we of course one regular in my unit we have a reunion every year. But now out of the original bunch that went into Normandy, I think there are only 12 of us left. Of course they didn’t all get killed during the war. Everybody in my company but one had been wounded, and he never got wounded at all. I will never understand why because he was a good soldier and right in the middle of the thick of it. The guy \_\_\_ and my

company commander at the end of the war that lives up in Temperance, Michigan, he got wounded six times. Most people that was in my unit, the old timers, had at least three purple hearts; at least three. Not severe. A lot of them were not severe enough to even be evacuated but they were maintained by the company medics. I got wounded on D-Day and three days later I got wounded again. Then I didn't get wounded no more until Battle of the Bulge.

Now you said you were wounded there at Ravens Wood?

**Mr. Clouser:** No I got wounded in a little town, I don't know if you heard of it or not, but it was just outside of Carentan where Colonel Cole got the Congressional Medal of Honor. That was the first time I was wounded. Shortly thereafter I was on the way to the aid station to get my hand taken care of when I caught a bullet in the hip. During the Battle of the Bulge I was hospitalized for a long time over that. I got wounded on Christmas Day in 1944 and stayed in the hospital until the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, I think. That was when I was in the hospital in Wales.

You mentioned that you were wounded in the hip there with the actual D-Day invasion. Where did they send you as far as medical for that?

**Mr. Clouser:** They took us and patched us up the best that they could and then they put us on LSTs at the beach and went to England. The first time I was in the hospital was in the 111<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Cirencester, England. The next time I was at Melbourne, South Wales. They patched you up and sent you back up to the front.

I always heard there was a thing with the replacements though. Sometimes you will start off with somebody but if you got wounded and once you got healthy again you know some guys had a hard time; especially with the *Band of Brothers* movie you seen that they kind of had to walk out of the hospital and go temporary AWOL to get back to the unit.

**Mr. Clouser:** I went AWOL to get back to my unit.

What was your reasoning for that? Did you like the guys?

**Mr. Clouser:** I just knew that I didn't have a trip home and if I was going to be over there, I wanted to be where the action was. Actually I was supposed to be released from the unit and they took us down to a staging area in Le Havre, France. That is when I left that unit and bummed a ride on a train back to my unit.

Now did you jump into ....

**Mr. Clouser:** Holland and Operation Market Garden also; Bastogne. I was at Hitler's hideout when we got the word that the war was over from Berchtesgaden. In fact my company of all the other things you might here, my company was the first company into Hitler's hideout.

Now see that is something that I want to go into. After reading the book, *Band of Brothers*, and seeing the movie and then hearing the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID talk, because you know how they are, they keep talking about how they are the first ones. It was your company?

**Mr. Clouser:** It was my company and the 506<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry with the first people up the mountain. In fact I was sitting in the conference room of Hitler's hideout when the news came over the radio that the war was over.

I have read it in Market Garden, they talked about it was the most serene best jump. Is that your feeling on it? That the ground was just soft and the weather was beautiful?

**Mr. Clouser:** Oh that was the one in Holland?

Yes sir.

**Mr. Clouser:** Normandy was an easy jump. We jumped at night and I don't know whether the ground is a little softer at night or not, I don't know, but to me that was an easy jump. I jumped for many years. I was on parachute status for 25 years. I left Fort Benning for parachute school in 1949 and came to the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, and stayed there until 1951. I went to ROTC in Pennsylvania, from there to Iran and then came back to Fort Campbell and stayed there until 1956. We gyroed from Fort Campbell to Germany. We came back from Germany in 1958 and back to Fort Campbell to the 101<sup>st</sup> at that time. I stayed there until 1961 and I went to Korea for 16 months. When I came back from Korea I couldn't get reassigned to Fort Campbell although I owned this home right here. I couldn't get reassigned here so I went to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division at Fort Bragg and I stayed there for three years. I said, "No, I am not staying here no longer than this" so I volunteered to go to Europe. I went to Europe for 17 months which was the biggest mistake I ever made.

Really?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes sir. That was the worst job I had in 26 years.

What was your job over there?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well I was in the finance department at that time. My Colonel didn't want me. Of course he wanted to promote the man that I replaced. The way at that time, if you had a man promoted to Sergeant Major they sent you to a job, but that job they sent you to.....well it went in a two part message to the Department of the Army, "Do not fill this job!" "I have a man I want to promote." In my case, I was on a wave so I stayed there and USAREUR regulation at that time said, "If you..." and it was a crazy situation. There was only two jobs in all of Germany that had the same MOS I did. One of them was in Munich, Germany, and one was in Landstuhl, Germany, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital is. Not only was I the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant of the unit, I was also the Sergeant Major and there was no other place in Europe. They said, "You have a man there..." although they downgraded the position back the 28<sup>th</sup>, that man would remain on that job until his tour was up because there was no place else in Europe to go, or in Germany. I had some real good friends that were in; my headquarters was actually in Heidelberg, Germany, but my duty station was at Landstuhl, Germany, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital was in USAREUR med lab and everything. So I stayed there and I took my family with me. I had to stay there 17 months before I could retire. Just as soon as that 17 months was up I told my Colonel, I said,

“Colonel...” Well I told my clerk, I said, “When the Colonel comes in, you tell him where I am at. I am over at the hospital” which was right across the road from where I was at, taking my retirement physical. When I finished my physical that day I came back to the office and the Colonel, we didn’t get along at all, and when I reported in I knew what the situation was. When I reported in the headquarters they told me, “Sergeant Major, that Colonel is not going to want you.” I said, “I don’t care what that Colonel wants, I’m not here by choice!” I headquarters there and I had food in my refrigerator and the next day I went in to Kaiserslautern, Germany, and I signed for my quarters and took the rest of that day to get my business straightened out. The next day I went over to my place of duty. I got over there and I woke up the CQ and went in and gave him a copy of my orders and told them, “I don’t know what you are doing in the meantime, but whatever you normally do when you pull duty all night, you do it. I am going to be here. Of course I left a copy of my orders. The first person that came in was one of the civilians. I introduced myself and talked a few minutes. The next one that came in was a young Captain we had. I talked to him for awhile and then another couple of enlisted people came in. When the Colonel finally did come in, he came and he looked right straight at me and never spoke, never nothing. I stood up and told him who I was and gave him a chance to take off his blouse and hang it on the tree and get situated at his desk, then I walked in and gave him the finest airborne highball he ever seen in his life because he never saw an airborne soldier. Anyhow, the first words out of his mouth, and I knew it was coming but if you struck a dry match to my ear it would have caught on fire. I leaned up against his desk and put my finger about that far from his nose and I said, “Colonel, I’m here and I don’t know of a thing that you can do about it and if you are worried about me knowing my job, I know my job and I know your god-damned job better than you do!” That’s the way we got along for 17 months. I don’t mean it came to fist to cuffs or anything like that but he was always trying to get to do something that wasn’t my job to do. In fact I had already put my retirement papers in because I didn’t know if he was going to approve them or not because the Vietnam War was going on. A lot of people were going from Germany straight to Vietnam. Well I wasn’t worried about that if he would have sent me to Vietnam; just to get out of there I would have been happy. They sat on my retirement papers in Heidelberg, Germany, and I was within 20 days of my retirement date. I had to move out of my quarters and get my furniture shipped to the states and get my car to the port. Then I moved into a German hotel. I got tired of this messing around so I called my headquarters up in Heidelberg, USAREUR headquarters and asked the Sergeant Major up there who was a good friend of mine, I said, “Blair, have you seen anything about my retirement papers?” He says, “Yes, they came across my desk 30 days ago. But down in my headquarters, they didn’t get them. So I had them 20 days to clear my quarters, get my car to the port, and move into a German hotel. I worked on my job until the day that I left to go to Frankfurt, Germany, to come home to retire. I tried to come straight to Fort Campbell to retire, but they had already had me scheduled to retire to go to Fort Hamlin, New York. I actually retired there and of course I already had my home here. Byers and Harvey maintained my quarters; keeping it rented and what have you. I was one of the lucky people that I only had two families in it in 5 ½ years. All the damage that was done to this house and of course if I would have lived here 5 ½ years, I would have had to paint the walls. The only thing I had to do was replace one cracked window and two of those things that goes around your light switches. That is all the damage that was done to this house. So before my furniture and everything got here, I went to Fort Campbell and got Army cots and set them up in the living room. Me and Erin, we lived out of an electric skillet until my furniture got here. You got to do what you got to do.

After Market Garden, Normandy Invasion, what was your first impression of combat?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well you just knew that you had to do your job that you were trained for. That is all. You knew that, well many a times I thought that I would never get home. Never! I never thought that in this world I would never make it home. In fact the times that I was wounded, the first time I was wounded, my wife got a telegram saying that I was seriously wounded in action.

That was your hand?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, that was my hand. I got out of the hospital and got back to the front and got wounded again before she got the notification.

How did you wound your hand?

**Mr. Clouser:** It's a funny story. I saw a German raise up from behind a hedgerow and I was back on the other hedgerow and I had laid my rifle up like that and was getting ready that the next time that he stuck his head up, he was gone. Well he probably thought the same thing I did because that bullet hit me and went right through that finger there, cut a ring off that finger, went through that finger, went through my rifle stock, went inside my helmet and all it done was break the skin on the back of my head. My rifle stock lay in two pieces on the ground. The next time I got wounded, in the meantime she is getting letters from me in the hospital and her letters to me were being returned with KIA and MIA. My company carried me Missing in Action for 3 ½ months. The hospital never notified my unit that I was in the hospital back there. In fact there are still some of those letters around here that has MIA and KIA on them.

Did you find all this out that your wife was getting this after the war or did she send you the letter?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, after the war. She didn't inform me of any of that stuff until the war was over.

You mentioned the second time you were wounded was when you were headed to the aid station when you got shot in the hip?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

Was it just a German ambush?

**Mr. Clouser:** I was going along the hedgerow and the Germans had cut an opening in the hedgerow where they could, instead of climbing over it they could run through it. Well when I went past that opening there a ricochet off the ground hit me in the hip. But at Bastogne the German artillery knocked the top of a building off. I had been helping carry wounded into the makeshift hospital and the top of that building came down on top of me and killed six. They left me for dead for 18 hours. I crawled out from under the rubble with one hand and one leg. I had my shoulder blade broke, all the ribs on my left side, my left arm broke in two places, and my leg broke in two places.

Were you carried back to the center of town from the perimeter? Were you out on the perimeter?

**Mr. Clouser:** I happened to be in town at that time.

Right.

**Mr. Clouser:** The encirclement hadn't actually started yet. We were withdrawing from a little town, Noville, Belgium. We got to the outskirts of Bastogne and I don't really know what we were doing but evidently I must have been on detail to do something. We were removing wounded people into this aid station. That was on Christmas Day, 1944.

What was your chow like there at Bastogne because I have heard of nothing but cold, horror stories just in the living conditions? Was it as cold as when you came across on the transporter?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, colder! Well you know back in those days a soldier didn't have anything to keep warm with. We had that old sorry overcoat that was like a horse blanket and if it got wet it weighed like a ton and a half. Now we didn't get the field gear and stuff, they call it TA-21 or they called it something else back then. Field trousers and liners for in that, field jackets; we didn't get them until after Bastogne. When we de-trucked before we got into Bastogne, no we were through Bastogne, they de-trucked there and we were going to this little town of Noville, Belgium. Our tanks were withdrawing because they didn't have any ammunition to fight with. They were withdrawing and we were attacking through our own tanks were withdrawing, and when we left M\_\_\_\_, France, we had no equipment; we just came out of 70 something days in combat and Market Garden and we were lowest on priority list for new equipment. When we de-trucked half of the people had no helmets, no cold weather gear for their feet, no overshoes, no nothing, just old jump boots which were the coldest things in this world anyhow, and an overcoat. Some people didn't even have overcoats. We were making attacks through our own tanks and the tankers and what have you that had any small arms ammunition left, they were just flipping at us as we were going on down the road.

Was it Germany infantry advancing on the armor or was it German Panzer units coming at the armor.

**Mr. Clouser:** No, that first day, infantry units were withdrawing away from the units. That night is the first tanks we had come in contact with. I have no way of knowing really and truly but it seems to me like we had 23 men wounded that first night. Then we went through another little town and I can't recall what the name of it was now. Foy was one of them. But we were fighting all this time. It was a terrible situation. I can't even talk about it right now. (Tape was turned off)

.....that is when we first came to one of those death camps. They had a baby factory there too; a place where the German women had babies to the German soldiers.

That is the whole area in blonde hair blue eyed future of the SS.

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes and we stayed there until, I can't recall what the date was now, and then we started making that dash across Germany; across Southern Germany. I caught detail for some reason or another and we had to go into Dachau.

Dachau is just north of Munich isn't it?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, I forget exactly how many km.

It's just right there on the outskirts now; back in the suburbs of Munich now.

**Mr. Clouser:** Yeah. But it was no easy times. We had some good times during the war. If you was a paratrooper, unless you lost an arm or a leg you didn't get a trip home.

Well seeing Dachau, did it kind of reinforce a sense of pride in what your mission was in the war?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well, yes it did.

To kind of see what you were there for?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes. Of course, I am of German descent myself. The ordinary German soldiers you really didn't have any, not to be getting \_\_\_\_\_, but the principle of the thing. In fact, there are some places in Germany that has the same name as I do on the Rheine River. I got to name the ship and everything that my family came over back in 1600 something out of Rotterdam, Holland. My grandfather's family actually came from the Platinek district which is around the Kaiserslautern area around the Rheine River.

While you were there at Dachau and then you went down to Munich, was that where the 101<sup>st</sup> kind of started shifting down towards....

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, and we went toward Memmingen, and then came in through....I fished and hunted all in that area in 1956. From 1956 to 1958 I hunted and fished all in that area.

Did ya'll start heading toward Garmisch then?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, and I forget what the other name of the place was but we went around Garmisch to Berchtesgaden. In fact after the war was over my company moved back to a little town called Bruck, Austria. Right outside of Zell am See, which was our regimental headquarters.

Its right there across the border isn't it?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes. There was a German airfield between this little town of Bruck and Zell am See, Austria. But we stayed there until, I don't remember exactly when, but the outfit moved back to Yonne, France. All the people who had enough points to come home were sent home and the rest of them moved back to France. Well I had enough points to come home originally but my records were in England in a hospital. They wouldn't make a temporary record on me to send

me home. I had five other guys that survived the war like myself that the records were over there and they wouldn't make a temporary record on you to put you on a ship to send you home. You knew what your name, rank and horsepower was so they could have done that. We moved back to Yonne, France, and got ready to start another period of training because the Japanese war was still going on and we thought we was going to end up going over there. When we moved from Austria back to France, there were only five originals left in my company. We got ready to start this period of training and I went down to Nice, France, on leave and went over to Switzerland, got back to my outfit and still no records. So they put us on leave again. My guy ended up a full Colonel. He is dead now. The officers and enlisted people used the same latrine in France. All it was, was a hole in the floor where you had two footprints that you stood on to do your business. He said, "Clouser, are you still here?" I said, "Yes sir!" He said, "Well you know they are getting ready to start another period of training. You are not going to take that training. What kind of job you want?" I said, "Make me assistant baker in the mess hall." So for the next few weeks that is what I done, I helped the baker. Of course they didn't go to work until at night. That is when they done all of their baking and everything. I helped them prepare food and cut up chickens and whatever needed doing. But it seems like every time it came up time for a promotion I would be wounded in a hospital and of course you didn't get promoted in.... For the most part I had a very good Army career. I only had one assignment and that was the last assignment that should have been the best one that was the worst one.

You mentioned about the German soldiers. There wasn't a lot of resent between the Americans or the allied forces and the Germans. I have read that there was almost like a rules of war almost with the Germans. You know there was a proper almost etiquette to some degree to the latter part of the invasion. Up until that point there was kind of a mutual respect. I have heard that both sides' medics could come out and get their wounded without worrying about being shot at. Did you see that first hand?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, I never saw them come out and get their wounded. But I know that our medics, for the most part, were permitted to go out and pick up their wounded.

The Germans wouldn't shoot at them?

**Mr. Clouser:** No, but that wasn't true in all cases. Our medics were not supposed to be armed. Until late in the war, you never saw a medic with a weapon. Nobody has a greater feeling about the medics than I do.

I could imagine.

**Mr. Clouser:** We had actually three medics in my company that were killed in action. In fact one of the people that was with us in that first group that got together on D-Day when it was daylight, was a medic and he later got killed at Noville, Belgium.

What was your opinion of the German soldiers? Were they good as far as fighters?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, good fighters. It's a funny thing to say but I just, I really don't know how we won the war; I really don't.

Really? Why is that?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well, you know, we had better equipment for the most part. We were better trained as far as an individual soldier. The individual German soldier, he could only do what his superiors told him. He wasn't trained to take over a Sergeant's job or what have you. We didn't have a man in my company that was not able to replace a squad leader or platoon sergeant. I had replaced a couple of them as a PFC until we did get somebody promoted or somebody came in. My company was reformed four times for refills for replacements. When the war was over, like I say, there was seven originals left in the company. That is how many people we had wounded and killed. I have the figures around here somewhere and the names of the people who were actually killed. We lost one complete plane load to include our executive officer when the plane went down in the English Channel. Nobody got out of the plane. So there were 17 men, one officer, and the crew of the aircraft was in there. Nobody survived. In Holland we had another one that went down the same way. I think there were four or five of them that survived and were taken prisoner during Operation Market Garden.

Did they get knocked out of the air by German flak?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes. Of course this one in Holland, the plane was intact but it crashed. Of course I think a lot of them were wounded on the way down or on the way in. but I think there was only five survivors of that plane crash and they were all taken prisoner.

Do you remember ever running up against the SS troops?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes, first Adolph Hitler SS parachutists we fought against at Saint-Come-du-Mont. That was a first German elite unit that we fought against. We fought against several times during the war. A funny thing happened in 19, let's see we went back to Germany in 1956 with the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, and the snack bar was right next to the building that I worked in. One day I walked in there to get a cup of coffee because we didn't have any in the office. I walked in there and I no sooner got in the door and a friend of mine who was with the parachute school in Germany, in \_\_\_\_\_, Germany, hollered at me to come over there. He was sitting there with three German soldiers. Of course the war was over and these German soldiers were there to attend our jump school and to learn how to operate a parachute. So I went through the line I said that I would be there in a minute. I went through there and came down the way and he introduced me to these German soldiers by name. This one German soldier looked up at me and he just gazed at me for a few minutes and he said, "I don't know what your name was, but you took me prisoner at Saint-Come-du-Mont." Now this was years and years and years after the war was over; well from 1945 to 1956 or 1057 when they established that jump school there. He remembered my face that I took him prisoner at Saint-Come-du-Mont. He was a German paratrooper.

How were they because I have heard different stories of where they were elitist or very structured militant Spartan-like. Were they arrogant? Did they obey what you had to say?

**Mr. Clouser:** I would say so.

No more than what an American paratrooper would be.

**Mr. Clouser:** That's exactly; that's exactly. But they were elite.

Tenacious fighters?

**Mr. Clouser:** The only other time that Adolph Hitler's SS Calvary unit we fought against as we were going into Austria which was a fine outfit too. They were people that actually; most of them had come from the Russian front. They were outstanding soldiers. First Adolph Hitler's Calvary unit surrendered to us up in Austria and we formed a Calvary platoon to patrol the mountains around there. So me being a farm boy, I got in a horse Calvary and we patrolled on them horses to route out any German people that was hiding and robbing the Austrians of what food they did have which wasn't much. So I stayed in that until the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1945. We had the birthday celebration of the 506<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry in Zell am See, Austria. We had a parade with those horses and the troops too. Those German horses weren't used to an American band. We came past where that band was playing and those horses went wild because they weren't tunes that the Germany Army played. Those horses went in every direction. I didn't care how good of a rider you was, you probably were going to leave that horse.

Tell me a little bit about the Zugspitze. You mentioned that your company was the first ones in Hitler's nest up there at the Zugspitze. Was it beautiful?

**Mr. Clouser:** The inside was absolutely fabulous. We didn't actually stay there. I don't remember and I don't believe that we had a man in my company that was wounded on that trek up the mountain. To my recollection we did have a man wounded.

Ya'll walked up that?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

I didn't get to go up to it but I have been there and I saw the one lane thing that takes you up to the top.

**Mr. Clouser:** We walked up the side of that mountain. Of course we got into some pretty good stuff up there. I personally didn't get any of it myself and some of the booze. We had a man in my company that, I don't know how much American cash he got out of that building. In fact he was from up here in Cincinnati. He passed away awhile back but there is no telling how much cash money he got. As a general rule, the enlisted men didn't get too much of the good stuff, except the whiskey.

You got the booze. After the war, you mentioned being an officer, how much leave did ya'll have to just kind of go off and blow off steam; go down to the \_\_\_\_\_ and have a beer? Was there much interaction between you and the Austrians?

**Mr. Clouser:** Each unit had your own bar. We would collect so much booze and beer and what have you. In Bruck, Austria, where we were at there was five big warehouses the best that I can

recall; either four or five. It was loaded with \_\_\_\_ that Germans took from people in France or Holland and what have you were in these warehouses. They had vats and vats are tremendous barrels and the barrels were as big as this room is right here, full of beer and liquor. When we moved from there to \_\_\_\_\_ which was up on top of the mountain. Those mountains over there were so high you actually went through the clouds. When you got through the clouds up there, it was just as clear as it could be in this little town of Rauris, Austria. Part of our company was in Worth and part of the company that I was in was around where the company headquarters was and that was the last man we had killed in our company and it was his carelessness. He was one of the replacements that came to us just, well the war was already over when we got some replacements in. He was a nice little guy; a little ole Jewish fellow. He was pulling guard duty between Worth and Rauris. We had a guard out post there. He was standing there at that guard house and of course American soldiers were good to kids; I never ate a candy bar during the war. I saved it for the kiddies; English, German, French or whatever. But anyhow, he was standing there in the guard shack with his weapon leaning up against his leg and the safety wasn't on. One of them little German kids, he was reading a comic book, and one of those little German kids, a little bitty kid, got in there and pulled the trigger on it. The bullet went in here and went out the top of his head. For years after the war was over; now this guy's a good friend of mine. He ended my company commander. He is the one that lives up in Temperance, Michigan. In fact, I got a whole tape where he was interviewed for the TV about my company. I'd hate to get it out but if someday you would like to see that; they interviewed the guy that was my company commander at the war end and he took it from the time that we were in England all the through the war telling about the number of casualties we had, and where they were and what have you. When they interviewed him for TV, he...three years ago we had the reunion and of course I had seen parts of it on TV to begin with along with Stephen Ambrose, that thing he made. They made a tape of this whole thing just of him. I have it right down under my TV right there. I've got the book *Band of Brothers* around here somewhere and I've got some other books about the 101<sup>st</sup> here too. But I have the whole thing from the time we started at overseas all the way through the war where they interviewed him about this and telling how many casualties we had and how many days we were in combat in Holland. I asked him, I said, "Al, is it possible for me to get a copy of that tape?" He said, "Yeah." So he went back to Temperance, Michigan, and had a tape made of the whole thing and he sent it to me. I didn't see him then until, well I talked to him on the phone, and I tried to pay him for it and he said, "Bill, you know better than that." Of course that was 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, that *Band of Brothers*. Ours was C Company which was 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Ira Nunley who is our ex Chief of Police downtown, you probably know Ira Nunley.

Yes sir. I seen the picture and I remember seeing the history book.

**Mr. Clouser:** Ira Nunley was in the next company to me. He was in D Company.

Does he still live around here?

**Mr. Clouser:** He still lives here in the city, but he doesn't participate in anything. All the years I have been around here, I have only....I used to play golf with him all the time while he was Chief of Police. I run into him once in awhile now. We got invited for the filming of the *Band of Brothers* that they showed right here at Fort Campbell. He didn't even come out for the viewing of that film. He is a nice guy but he don't want to... I don't know whether it was a result of being

in replacement or what have you. After the war was over he was a \_\_\_\_\_ in Germany for I don't know how long and he was an MP here at Fort Campbell for the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. We have been friends ever since the war; ever since 1949.

What did you think of the movie?

**Mr. Clouser:** I thought it came as near to the actuality of any war movie I have ever seen, and I watch the movies. I just watched *The Longest Day* again on TV.

That was my next question. How did it compare with *The Longest Day*?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well the first thing you see in being an ex paratrooper all my life is General Gavin had a set of wings on and there was no such thing at that time.

Now was that Senior Jumpmaster?

**Mr. Clouser:** Senior jump wings and there was no such thing. They didn't even come out until, I think they actually came out with senior and master jumper in 19 and I'm going to guess; either late 56 or 57 because I became a master parachutist immediately. Of course you had to account for all those jumps you made. Of course it is all different now. You can become a master jumper a whole lot easier than you could back then. That was the first phony thing I seen about it. Now it may be true about what John Wayne's part was in it; whether that actually happened I don't know. They throw a lot of bull in these movies too but the *Band of Brothers* comes as close to being actual as anything I have ever seen. I've seen a lot of war movies too. *The Battle of the Bulge* for one of them and *Battleground*; there was a little bit phony in it but it was pretty actual. I guess in order to sell it you have got to put phony stuff in it civilians don't know nothing about. Nothing against civilian because I am a civilian myself. But that is the movie business. As far as *The Longest Day*, it was a very good movie. *Battleground* was another very good one and the movie *Battle of the Bulge*. Have you ever seen it? It was mostly about the German tank corp.

I used to watch them all the time as a child with my grandfather. I have seen so many on TBS when I was in elementary school. I can't even remember all of them.

**Mr. Clouser:** It was an outstanding movie too. Henry Fonda was in it.

Was Gregory Peck in that?

**Mr. Clouser:** No he wasn't in it. The first movie I recall; the war movie that had Gregory Peck in was *Pork chop Hill*. Have you ever seen it?

No sir.

**Mr. Clouser:** It was an outstanding movie too. I have some very good friends here in town; in fact they just had *Hamburger Hill* on TV within the past week. I have got some very good friends, in fact the advisor for that *Hamburger Hill* and Vietnam was a very good friend of mine that lives here in town. He got the Distinguished Service Cross. I know two others and one of

them lives in Nashville. The other one did live here. He was in the 506<sup>th</sup> during Vietnam. He also got DSC at Hamburger Hill. Pork Chop Hill was about the Korean War and it was an outstanding movie too.

You went back to German in the 50's correct?

**Mr. Clouser:** Yes.

How much of a difference; how much of a rebuilding had occurred between the time you left and the time you went back over?

**Mr. Clouser:** Well, considerable. Where I noted mostly, when we were back in Germany for those three years from 56 to 58, we always took our vacations and went to Holland because you could go anywhere in Germany on a three day pass. But we had been to Garmisch and Berchtesgaden I don't know how many times. On our furloughs we always went to the Netherlands because those people up there love us; especially the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. In fact, my wife and I and probably I don't know for sure but it seemed to me like there were a dozen of us to include Father Sampson. I'm sure you have heard of Father Sampson. He was Chief of Chaplain of United States Army but he was in the 501 in World War II. I served with him at three or four different times. Of course we were pretty good friends. He was a Colonel and I was a Sergeant. He was our spokesman for that trip to the Netherlands. We were guest of \_\_\_ government for eight days. We had a banquet every day for eight days, at Daff Manufacturing Company which was the Daff Automobile. We had a big dinner at their plant. We went to Amsterdam and had a great big dinner on a ship out in the water. I don't remember, it was probably the English Channel or what have you. But we had a banquet every day for eight days and never spent a penny in eight days. You couldn't buy haircuts; you couldn't do nothing if you wore that screaming eagle patch. It was nothing. Back in 1958-1959 I flew back over from Fort Campbell to the Netherlands on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September for the anniversary date of the jump. That was in 1959. I went back over in 60 and went back in 61. When we went to Germany for my last tour we took two leaves and went to Holland.

Is that the Silver Star right there, or the Bronze Star?

**Mr. Clouser:** That is the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart and the Good Conduct Medal. I don't understand how I got that but I did. That is the American Theater here and that is the European Theater. The last one on the first row with the arrowhead for the invasion and four battle stars. This is a World War II Victory Medal and the Army Occupation of Germany and the World War II Victory Medal.

Where did you get your Bronze Star?

**Mr. Clouser:** Where? For the entire period.

You got your glider wings.

**Mr. Clouser:** Yeah. My novice, my senior, and my master wings and my combat infantry badge on top. Of course you can see this stuff here; I am a lifetime member of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Association and a lifetime member of our local chapter here. A guy I served with during the war in the 506<sup>th</sup>, he is the one that joined for the lifetime for me.

(End of Interview)