

Interviewer: This is Mr. Ervin J Hollis.

Hollis: I'm Ervin J Hollis yeh.

Interviewer: Yes sir would you mind telling us your full name and when and where you were born sir?

Hollis: Ervin J Hollis born here in Montgomery County of course we say Clarksville.

Interviewer: Now I remember you telling me you were born right here on this farm.

Hollis: Oh on this farm.

Interviewer: On Hinton Road here.

Hollis: On Hinton Road.

Interviewer: What year were you born sir?

Hollis: 1922

Interviewer: Do you remember your what were your parents names?

Hollis: Ervin Hollis I was a junior.

Interviewer: I remember you telling me earlier your father farmed tobacco here.

Hollis: Yeh tobacco

Interviewer: About how many acres did he happen to have?

Hollis: Well back then when he was farming the last few years they had tractors but most of it was done by mules and all back then we usually had about 8, 10 to 12 acres.

Interviewer: You were since you were born in 1922 you probably remember the depression quite well. Can you tell me how the depression affected your family?

Hollis: Yeh I can we raised just about everything that we eat it was raised on the farm just about it up here at Henrietta where you turned off up there, there used to be a store up there you could get everything that you wanted from clothes to food they even buried people. A blacksmith shop and everything my daddy most of the time would run an account at that grocery store up there for the whole year cause he sold his tobacco onced a year. And I would say it would be anywhere from 40 to 50, 60 dollars like that for a whole year. The rest of it we raised.

Interviewer: So lots of existence farming.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: To get by.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: Now did you said your dad and his brother both owned farm steads near each other.

Hollis: They joined each other yeh.

Interviewer: And did notice like any family dependency on each other?

Hollis: Oh yeh back when we start cutting tobacco you may not know what that is but start harvesting tobacco out of the field and getting it all ready to go to the barn.

Interviewer: Yes sir.

Hollis: Most of the time they'd go together they would and work and get it all in the barn just help each other. Of course you had to have more than two or three to get it into the barn that way they would go from one barn to this field and their field and clean them all up like that.

Interviewer: Now I've never done this but I understand that tobacco is a very labor intensive crop.

Hollis: It was

Interviewer: Do you, you obviously helped your father.

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: What do you kind of what do you remember from helping your father and your uncle?

Hollis: Well I got big enough of course you had to plow it and work it like that and do hand work in it everything all like that I done a little bit of all of it all the way through.

Interviewer: What did your mom do what kind of chores did she do?

Hollis: Mostly to the house and because she would get lunch and everything like that we'd most of the time quit about 11 o'clock and go home to eat and then you'd rest a little while then at 1 o'clock everybody would go back to the field. And back then when I'd go to school in the fall of the year when I'd go to school and all like that when I got home you had to get your work clothes on and go to the field.

Interviewer: There's no rest. What branch of service did you serve in?

Hollis: 100 Division the 397<sup>th</sup> infantry division.

Interviewer: When did you were you drafted?

Hollis: I was drafted.

Interviewer: What year

Hollis: In 1942 I went in fact in November 1942.

Interviewer: Do you recall where you took basic training?

Hollis: Took basic training? Fort Jackson South Carolina down in Columbia South Carolina is where it's at Fort Jackson was.

Interviewer: I've actually been to South Carolina it's hot hot hot.

Hollis: It was hot most of the time when we was there they never really had a they didn't have winters where the ground would be froze and all like it is here at different times.

Interviewer: Did you what kind of training did they have you guys do?

Hollis: For the first three months and all like that was with the riffle and walking everything like that. Getting in shape really is what it was we four or five mile hike and everything like that and then as we went along you went from different places. We had to take riffle training and everything like that we went out to a camp where we camped in Fort Jackson right there and you'd be out there shooting riffles for a week or two going through everybody and all like that.

Interviewer: Now you shot the M1?

Hollis: M1

Interviewer: Did you like that riffle?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Was it fairly accurate?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: How far did they have you guys shoot that thing?

Hollis: Most of the time it was only about 500 feet was what it was but we've shot as high as a 1,000 foot target.

Interviewer: How big does a target look at that distance?

Hollis: About the size of an ordinary man of course the target would be but the shape was just of a man standing on all of the targets that we had it was about that shape.

Interviewer: What other weapon systems did they have you guys use?

Hollis: Well where I was at in the infantry regiment of the 100<sup>th</sup> division that's really the only thing that we actually had. Of course they had the artillery and everything in different divisions of the 100<sup>th</sup> division.

Interviewer: Did they train you guys possibly on like a machine gun?

Hollis: Oh yeh we had machine guns.

Interviewer: Was it the 30 caliber?

Hollis: 30 caliber

Interviewer: Did you ever have to use that in your training?

Hollis: In the training?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: Yeh they used it in training all of the time.

Interviewer: Carrying it and

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: What were your drill Sargents like?

Hollis: Well they was back then you didn't whatever they said that was it, it may still be that way. Everything was just like they said they was tight on us and I guess they had to be and all like that.

Did you have recruits like fellow friends that were in the 100<sup>th</sup> division that were going through basic training with you? Did you develop friendships with them?

Hollis: Oh yeh oh yeh.

Interviewer: Do you recall any of their names?

Hollis: Of the names that we went?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: I had one guy that lived right up here at Henrietta we went together and we weren't in the same company nothing like that but was in the same 397<sup>th</sup> infantry division and stayed the whole time and all like that.

Interviewer: And went overseas together?

Hollis: Went overseas together come back together.

Interviewer: Wow that's awesome.

Hollis: Logan Dugan lives in Ohio and he just now moved to Florida and I talk to him every week just about it.

Interviewer: You were saying that your company has reunions till to this day.

Hollis: We had it up to two years ago it getting just the company I was in a service company of the 397<sup>th</sup> infantry and there was only about a hundred and ten of us in it and the 100<sup>th</sup> division they still have it but we usually went to the one near home most of the time just that company. And we've been in contact ever since we come out of war.

Interviewer: Now you were telling me that you didn't go like it wasn't like a quick training and then at Fort Jackson and then they send you straight overseas.

Hollis: No we went to took a train to Fort Jackson and we started in November and it was about January I guess before we really got into training because everybody was coming in to that division up there. And then we stayed in Fort we trained in Fort Jackson up till let's see that was in 42 in that would be 43 we come to Nashville, Tennessee up here. There was a big bid wake area there in December, January and February we stayed outside. Just like you was in combat we wasn't even allowed to get in buildings or do nothing we really spent it outside.

Interviewer: So their trying to toughen y'all up

Hollis: Yeh I was in a service company and I drove a truck all the time of course the truck I drove it wasn't infantry that it wasn't hauling stuff nothing more than taking care of the boys. You know what I'm talking about

Interviewer: Right

Hollis: Just like overseas I was in a service company and ABC and all of them the riffle companies and all like that we had to take care of them but I was in service company one of the lucky ones. And most of the time we was a least four or five hundred feet back you know from the lines where they were at.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: Had to take care of them.

Interviewer: That's interesting so you spent three months outside at Nashville.

Hollis: That's right.

Interviewer: That's longer than ranger school. And was it a cold winter?

Hollis: Cold winter December, January and February yeh.

Interviewer: You guys obviously got snowed on.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: That's even before you went overseas.

Hollis: Before we went there.

What when did you get on the George Washington and go overseas?

Hollis: In we landed over there in September of 44. And we landed in Marsa France I might be off on this a little bit but I'd say about September the 8<sup>th</sup> we landed in Marsa France. From the United States that was after they landed the 101<sup>st</sup> you know you've heard so much about

Interviewer: Right D-Day

Hollis: Shortly after just shortly after that we were where they come in we went directly from here to France and landed which is along about the first troops when they left. Most of them come from England.

Interviewer: I want to back up a little bit. Now the 100<sup>th</sup> division the 396<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment did they take soldiers from that basic training unit and make them Sargents?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: So

Hollis: Well the ones that we had when we went right into training it was the others we didn't then they had all been in a long time.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Hollis: When we was training like that but yeh before it was all over with there was a whole lot of them well pretty well after the training was over there was a whole lot of them they went on somewhere else and it was left like that.

Interviewer: Now did you gain rank quickly?

Hollis: I did not too much rank which would have been driving a truck was a T5 at that time that's just about as low as you get and then I retired as a buck sargent.

Interviewer: What was life like on the George Washington the ship going over and how long did it take for you to get across the Atlantic?

Hollis: It took we was on it 21 days and we landed up and we never seen land we seen land in North Africa on the 17<sup>th</sup> day. I can remember pretty well because everybody was seeing land wanting to get to one side and they had to make everybody get back get back and then we went on in for about three or four days getting us in there. The ship of course the enemy was right in close in there they had never got very far to get us unloaded and get us up in there took about three or four days.

Interviewer: So you guys had to take like a sort or out of the way route to get to France.

Hollis: To get to France that's right.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any encounters with u-boats German u-boats?

Hollis: U-boats?

Interviewer: Yeh submarines?

Hollis: Oh no

Interviewer: So you didn't have any problem with them?

Hollis: No just on the boat going over and coming back is all I ever had. We pulled into Marsa France and it was the first time I really ever thought I wasn't going to make it we was going to get off and the German planes was sighted and all like that and they covered the whole ship up with whatever they use you probably know just like smoke and all like that. Just like me and you we couldn't see each other I thought well gosh I'm not even going to get off the ship.

Interviewer: Really so they were already attacking you?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Wow

Hollis: What would you

Interviewer: Of course everything on land was gone that was just planes coming in hunting those ships and all.

Hollis: What did you what went through you mind what did you feel or how did you were you scared?

Interviewer: At that time yeh I was scared cause I was a 20 year old and had never been in nothing like that.

Interviewer: Did you have any good guys that helped you pull through? Any fellows that you remember specifically?

Hollis: That helped me pull through?

Interviewer: Yeh like you guys helped each other.

Hollis: Oh yeh on different things like that yeh.

Interviewer: Once you got off the boat and you what did they start having you guys do from there?

Hollis: Off the boat?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: They took us we went up into a big field of course we had no equipment or nothing except for what we carried with us on our backs. We had our guns of course like that and our riffles and everything like that and we camped out in a big field right around Marsa France right there and was there for about three weeks or something like that and then we began to get our trucks in and all of our equipment and all and everything like that. And then about another month like that we actually went into combat then.

Interviewer: Do you recall your first experience in combat?

Hollis: Not really cause I was kind of back from the line like that and we were more or less just following them like that. I can one time when we was taking stuff and taking food getting it on the line like that and we got hemmed we got hemmed in getting back then I didn't know what was going to happen. But on the road the Germans had a had a big gun that would shoot I forgot how many times now I guess it was labor loaded they'd throw seven in there in a section and then there would be a little while and they'd quit then there'd be seven more and they'd quit and we run three trucks through it and that's the way we come out.

Interviewer: So you timed the German guns.

Hollis: Do what?

Interviewer: You timed them to get through.

Hollis: Yeh when that time come we'd get about three trucks under it.

Interviewer: Wow what was the first major battle that your unit participated in?

Hollis: The first one if you want to read them right here they are.

Interviewer: Okay sir

Hollis: You can see every one of them right there.

Interviewer: Okay you've been in the Ardennes, Ryman, Central Europe wow. Now the Ardennes Force Campaign there's been movies made about that.

Hollis: You might not want me getting up (rising from his chair).

Interviewer: No that's fine, you're fine.

Hollis: That right there will show you where we started in France and where we ended up everything the whole thing when it was over with.

Interviewer: Here let's put this in front of the, would you mind holding that up in front of the camera (Mr. Hollis holds up a map). Let me see if I can zoom in here get it focused. So let's see here you landed that's where you landed.

Hollis: In Arsay that's where we landed. The Shelby where we actually after we got into France where we got up into France and actually started in battle.

Interviewer: So went all the way across France Northern France through the Northern part of Germany?

Hollis: Right

Interviewer: You crossed over looks like the Rhine.

Hollis: We did cross over the Rhine.

Interviewer: Then all the way down.

Hollis: We left I guess we left France right at Bitche France that's where the Battle of the Bulge.

Interviewer: Did you participate in that?

Hollis: Sure did our division was part of it.

Interviewer: What do you recall from that was that a hair raiser?

Hollis: That was about the biggest that we ever had right there at the Battle of the Bulge.

Interviewer: Now you were resupplying your unit with your truck.

Hollis: Right

Interviewer: Now did you ever like to ambushed?

Hollis: That one time that I was talking about when we had to get back.

Interviewer: And that was during the Battle of the Bulge that this happened?

Hollis: No that was juts before that.

Interviewer: So you recall where you were in relation to the other units?

Hollis: Not really I don't first of all we was all right in there with all of that.

Interviewer: Okay

Hollis: You've probably heard of Bitche France.

Interviewer: Yes I have.

Hollis: You've heard about Bitche our division got credit for Bitche in France and we had to that was the place where they had all of the troops underground and everything and all like that. The Germans in France built that and the Germans when they took France they just ran over it and went on but we had to clean it out. But anyway during the Battle of the Bulge right there we went with the 100<sup>th</sup> division went with other units which I remember the 101<sup>st</sup> and all right in there together. In there and when we back to Bitche France like that we took Bitche France without a foreign shot the Germans just give up.

Interviewer: Oh wow so you took prisoners then?

Hollis: Yeh they just give up and then one other thing I might tell you and you probably if you've interviewed anybody that can remember the same time the Battle Iron. That's the one place the they got so many men on the ground that the Germans and the United States stopped firing like that and cleaned up men together just like me and you and then turned and went back.

Interviewer: So they stopped?

Hollis: There was just so many men on the ground and all like that. Just truck loads of dead men.

Interviewer: Now did you personally did you transport

Hollis: Dead

Interviewer: Bodies

Hollis: Yes

Interviewer: How many from your company sir?

Hollis: (Mr. Hollis begins to cry) I'll be alright in a minute.

Interviewer: Take your time.

Hollis: Really in the service company you said in my company?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: In my service company we didn't lose any to amount to anything at all like that. But my buddy that I told you about it was five that was the M Company and there was only five of them survived it in other words they got the whole company the 397<sup>th</sup> except five men left.

Interviewer: Well I just want to say

Hollis: It's just something I never talk about much.

Interviewer: I understand well I don't understand but I can understand. I just want to say again thank you thank you for talking about this with me.

Hollis: In fact there's just been a group that just went back to Bitche I would have liked to have had a chance to have went back with them which I could show it to you after while in that book.

Interviewer: Okay

Hollis: It would probably tell about it right there in the book. But the 100<sup>th</sup> division had a special bunch that went over there that you could go with and it didn't cost no whole lot and they say the people over there the boys just treat them like angels.

Interviewer: Yeh do did you experience that going into French towns and people waving flags and

Hollis: Oh yeh the French people they waved I shouldn't be talking about French I ain't really talking about them like that. They'd wave them where the flag was gone if we was going that way American flags you'd be passing them up but if we got pushed back them German flags come out.

Interviewer: Oh so they played the tune of whoever's in town?

Hollis: That's right.

Interviewer: Well I can't really blame them.

Hollis: No you can't blame em.

Interviewer: What about your German adversaries?

Hollis: The German people you talking about?

Interviewer: Well the German soldiers how were they what did you think of their fighting abilities?

Hollis: Well they just they had a pretty good army and all like that. I never over there I never really talked to too many German soldiers cause most of them was the biggest part of them was killed. After I come back to the United States after I come back here down in Texas down there Camp Hood down there there was soldiers there they had Germans down there that had been shipped to the United States. And I talked to a lot of them and left Texas and carried back to New York to be loaded on a boats with strange and all like that and what we had the reason we had to back then they didn't want to go back home to keep them on the train to get them on the boat to go back home.

Interviewer: Why didn't they want to go home?

Hollis: I guess they just didn't want to get back over there.

Interviewer: Well yeh they I could understand that.

Hollis: And going up through France we had there was some French people and I know them a lot a good French and all there's a lot of good people. The same thing probably happened in the United States but they would kill you to get your shoes I ain't talking about soldiers I'm talking about the people you had to watch a lot of them. Like that when we were in Germany we didn't have that we could go into a house and just lay down and they would actually hide us. The German people were nice they said we wasn't fighting Germans we was fighting Nazis and they would go on.

Interviewer: So you think that the German people were obviously fed up with

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Hitler and his regime?

Hollis: Yeh I sure do.

Interviewer: Did you feel prepared for combat when you went?

Hollis: Do what?

Interviewer: Did you feel that your training stateside prepared you?

Hollis: Oh yeh yeh

Interviewer: You felt like you were sufficiently prepared?

Hollis: I sure did.

Interviewer: Did you recall any of the like your commander and your First Sargent what their names were?

Hollis: Yeh the First Sargent that stayed with us the biggest part of the time was Johnson Sargent Johnson. And it's hard for me to remember names now but he went all the way through like that. And then over there what I worked in all the time which was motor pools and stuff like that and with the trucks and all like that he was a Master Sargent. I haven't heard from him since we come out of war I don't really know what happened to him.

Interviewer: Did you serve with anybody that had served in WWI? Like any of the higher commanders like maybe majors or colonels?

Hollis: No

Interviewer: No. What was the kind of truck that you said that you drove?

Hollis: Just two and a half six by six.

Interviewer: Was it fairly reliable?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Start up every time even in the cold?

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: What kind of engine did it have?

Hollis: It was just a 6 cylinder engines what they were which they were made by General Motors most of them was just about everyone we had was made by General Motors.

Interviewer: Now did you have to do a lot of maintenance on this truck?

Hollis: Not no big lot of course they didn't last no whole lot I mean it was maintenance had to be done on them alright enough but they held up pretty good.

Interviewer: This is just a crazy hair brain question did you ever see a German tank while you were

Hollis: Oh yeh

Interviewer: What was that always fearful when you would see a tank?

Hollis: Yeh really

Interviewer: Because I mean a trucked up against a tank you know is

Hollis: I remember the tanks and of course they had guns too. We'd get into the wrong place and all e going along the road and one of those big ones would go off right beside of you like that and your truck would might near bounce off the road.

Interviewer: Really

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: Now did your truck have like a cruiser weapon like a machine gun mounted on top of it.

Hollis: No

Interviewer: So you just had whatever people were with you for security.

Hollis: That's right the only thing I had was the M1 riffle sitting beside of me all of the time.

Interviewer: Oh man that's now did you have like a co-driver that would always ride with you?

Hollis: No

Interviewer: It was just you by yourself you and your truck?

Hollis: we hardly was by our self most of the time there would be two or three together and if we was by our self there would be somebody it was very seldom that you was ever really alone by yourself.

Interviewer: And it wasn't always the same guy with you?

Hollis: No

Interviewer: It switched out. What were the rations like?

Hollis: Well I was back in the service company we most of the time we had coffee and stuff like that we'd make but most of what I was eating was K-rations. I don't know whether you're familiar with them or not.

Interviewer: Yes and no before my time.

Hollis: Before your time which would be little packs of them and they'd have some kind of little canned meat in them and cheese and stuff and all like that which was good at that time.

Interviewer: You never got tired of it?

Hollis: Well yeh you'd get tired of it but you had to have something to eat so you'd eat it.

Interviewer: Do you recall eating spam?

Hollis: Oh yeh I told them there was more spam sent over there than there was ammunition.

Interviewer: When you when war when the major combat was over you know Germany fell you guys went all the way into the heart of Germany.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: According to that map.

Hollis: Yeh and we stayed three let's see that ended in April and it was right the last of October when I left there when I rejoined and got send home and come home.

Interviewer: So did a lot of your fellow comrades that were in your unit stay longer in Germany?

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: And they just decided not to re-enlist?

Hollis: One of them had come home had re-enlist had to go back over there it was only there was about 15 of us in the company that did that only one of them ever had to go back to Germany before that year we just had to re-enlist for a year. I went to Camp Hood Texas and the outfit I was with down there was going to move and they knew I done told them I wasn't going to stay I was coming out. So I only stayed about 10 months of it. They went ahead and let me discharge and come home.

Interviewer: I want to ask you about the winter during the Battle of the Bulge. Was there ever a time that you were just chilled to the bone?

Hollis: Do what now?

Interviewer: Was there ever a time that you were completely cold?

Hollis: Oh it snowed the whole winter.

Interviewer: Were you just cold constantly or was

Hollis: Yeh just about the whole winter yeh until they of course when spring come kind of like it is here it began to break up. But we had snow on the ground where we was at the biggest part of the time.

Interviewer: Now was that worse was that the answers probably yes but was it obviously worse than at Nashville when you guys were outside for three months?

Hollis: In the German part?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: No it really wasn't. I spent more time because over there really after we hit Germany in Service Company where we were at somebody would get us a pallet where we could make pallet or something another like that.

Interviewer: Oh I see.

Hollis: Like that of course the rifle companies couldn't do that but the service company they could.

Interviewer: So you got to sleep inside part of the time then?

Hollis: Yeh just like that maybe there would be a little room that we could take out stuff that we had and slept on you know and lay bring it in there like that. But maneuvers in Nashville we stayed right out all the time like that you didn't it had to be

Interviewer: There was no exception

Hollis: No exception

Interviewer: Always outside. When you did go indoors how was what was the average of sleep per night that you approximately got the time you were in Europe?

Hollis: How much time you got to sleep?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: Well it just it depended sometime you would get a pretty good little sleep and then sometimes it might be you might not get an hour a night or something another like that.

Interviewer: Now was there ever a time when you just felt like you were exhausted beyond going any farther?

Hollis: On Tennessee maneuvers.

Interviewer: But not overseas?

Hollis: We went for three days on Tennessee maneuvers you slept two hours out of 24 and it was to show that you could do that. And that's rough.

Interviewer: And that was three days long?

Hollis: Three days long.

Interviewer: Wow so you got six hours of sleep.

Hollis: Six hours of sleep in three days.

Interviewer: You were walking constantly doing stuff?

Hollis: We'd be in a convoy and you'd wonder what happened you was back in a convoy or something like that and somebody up in front had went to sleep and was sitting there.

Interviewer: That's funny because I've seen that happen in the army today it still happens.

Hollis: It still happens.

Interviewer: You know at NTC National Training Center you know you'd be you'd be in a convoy and you'd be stopped for just a second and you know a guy would fall asleep and you'd be waiting there and waiting there and you'd have a break in contact from the call and take off and everybody else behind him

Hollis: That did for us like that.

Interviewer: Now did that ever happen overseas?

Hollis: No I can't remember it ever happening overseas but I don't never remember being in real long convoys over there most of the time we just had our company and that would be just about it.

Interviewer: So you would you'd get supplies to the troops ammo, rations any way you could with one truck.

Hollis: That's right

Interviewer: Now how did that normally happen would you just stop like 100 yards behind the line you know link up with the First Sargent or Commander of that unit and then have him

Hollis: Yeh we didn't get right up at them and all like that and they had people there to get it I mean to pick it all up and all like that and their lunch too.

Interviewer: They were probably usually happy to see you huh?

Hollis: Most of the time they'd come back to eat like that cause they all wouldn't come at one time but they'd easy back and eat and then back like that.

Interviewer: To keep security on the line I suppose?

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: What did you do in your free time?

Hollis: It wasn't any free time.

Interviewer: Constantly going I guess if you're if you're the one resupplying everybody you've got to move all the time.

Hollis: Well you was just always subject to be ready to go regardless of what it might be whatever time it was.

Interviewer: Never a chance to set down and play a card game or

Hollis: No you didn't do all of that.

Interviewer: But after you took Germany was Germany fell.

Hollis: You mean after they went through that?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hollis: Oh it was nice over there.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Hollis: The German people would do anything in the world for them. We'd visit their homes they would take us in homes and like that and if they had any food they would feed us and something like that. And we almost always had cigarettes there was men there they was always wanting cigarettes.

Interviewer: Did you guys get a chance to go to the bars and drink?

Hollis: What now? No

Interviewer: They wouldn't let you go have German beer?

Hollis: It wasn't we had some German beer and stuff like that. In fact after it ended we stayed in Stuttgart there a pretty good long while just right at Stuttgart and our company and all like that we had a little place built up just like a place like that and that's where they went and drank beer and stuff like that carried our beer.

Interviewer: Would you mind opening that map again so we can see where Stuttgart is?

Hollis: It's hard to get it completely open

Interviewer: Let's see here. If you see it on there let me know cause I'm having trouble reading it from back here.

Hollis: I have a hard time getting these corners straightened out.

Interviewer: Yeh there it is. When you cross another river right here and move on down and there's where you stayed in Stuttgart right there.

Hollis: We crossed the Rhine River at Manahan and part of us got across and the bridge had blowed out before we all got across. We was back on the back side of it and that kind of worried us a little bit and there was a railroad bridge right close and jeeps went across the Rhine River on a railroad bridge.

Interviewer: On a railroad bridge?

Hollis: On a railroad bridge they sure did.

Interviewer: Now did your truck do that or did your truck stay back?

Hollis: No we had to wait and we didn't get across until the platoon bridge was put in. The Germans at that time was pretty much on the run so they wasn't it wasn't too awful bad, they was gone.

Interviewer: So then you was that ever nerve racking did those pontoon boats really hold up to their

Hollis: They we was there close to three months and they were still there when I left.

Interviewer: So they used the

Hollis: That one that they put us across on right quick was just like driving up on a Greece rack you might say because they just pushed them together and hooked them and just two tracks on each side going across them. But then that was made just a solid floor it was still sitting out on the water and all like that but they made a solid wood floor out over the whole thing moving back and forth. So then it was that way when I left Germany it was like that.

Interviewer: Wow that's awesome. So the Germans blew the bridge you had to wait and then when the pontoon boats came you kept going. So did you feel like they were pushing for you guys to move move move?

Hollis: In a way yeh I guess they was just wanting to get on and all like that.

Interviewer: Get it over with. Now we were talking about like after you got down to Stuttgart and Germany had fallen and you were saying that life was pretty good and the German people were good to you. Did you make any German acquaintances that you are still in contact with?

Hollis: Oh no well no not no Germans. But one of our boys a French girl was right in there right almost in Germany the German and French line and all like that I can remember the family but after we come back here and all like that one of these girls left over there and come back and she made it back to the United States. Now just how she got back I don't know but she come back and married this boy over there that he seen over there and come back and married. And we're still in contact with them he's from Ohio but he lives in Florida right now in fact I talked to him within the last week.

Interviewer: And he married that French girl?

Hollis: The French girl uh huh and she's been here all this time and all like that.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of that or was that kind of the exception?

Hollis: That's the only one that I know of in our group there probably was a whole lot of it. I've heard a lot of rumors to how she got back but how she got over here I don't know. They wouldn't an enlisted man couldn't marry them and bring them back not at that time and I've heard rumors that the officers could. And one of the officers brought her back for him but now that's hear say I don't know that to be true. Anyway she got here.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded?

Hollis: No

Interviewer: Do you know

Hollis: I've got a place on my leg I could show it to you if you want to see it. It's about that long where I stuck a bayonet in my leg over there and that was done in Germany like that but a whole bunch of us boys was pranking and did that before the war ended.

Interviewer: You stuck a bayonet in your leg?

Hollis: Stuck a bayonet in my leg sure did.

Interviewer: To show that you were tuff or?

Hollis: No I we was just pranking with them with each other like that no it was done accidentally.

Interviewer: Oh so you were practicing and

Hollis: I had to go to the hospital and back then you went to the hospital in tents and all where you went to and back then we had some old boys that got sick and when they went to the hospital our company went off and left them and we didn't know what happened to them. And I knew that was going to happen I went to the hospital and they sewed my leg up and I got up and left and went back to the company.

Interviewer: So you sewed your own leg up?

Hollis: Do what?

Interviewer: You sewed your leg up?

Hollis: No I went to the hospital. When they got it sewed up and all like that I was supposed to stay at the hospital but I didn't I left out of the tent and I went back to my company. And then they the company commander I don't know how he took care of it but he took care of it he told me to stay and the medics there took care of me took the stitches and all out when they needed.

Interviewer: So you would rather you really wanted to stay with your company?

Hollis: I wanted to stay with my company.

Interviewer: Because you already knew those guys?

Hollis: Already knew them I had been with them all that time training with them in the United States and everything we all stayed together.

Interviewer: Did you write a lot of letters when you were

Hollis: Oh yeh we wrote a lot of letters of course you had to you couldn't tell them a whole lot cause they every one of our letters were read before they were mailed home. And they tell me about a lot of it was always blotted out when they got them.

Interviewer: So they were kind of generic then?

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: What how many about how often did you receive mail?

Hollis: We got mail just about every week at least.

Interviewer: Was it always good to get mail?

Hollis: Oh yeh. Of course we couldn't back then we couldn't tell write home and tell where we was at or anything. The only thing in France we could tell them we was in France in Germany we could tell them we was in Germany and that's as far as you could go. The Army's at where they these boys tell me their back here waiting what their going to do in about a month from now and going. In my training we left Fort Jackson South Caroline to come to Tennessee maneuvers and I knew they had that when they were there and I was coming towards home and I was pretty sure where we was going. Because I know we was going on maneuvers somewhere but as far as saying that's where we was going I didn't know. They told us where we was going to camp the truck drivers and of course we had the men all on there and where we was going to camp at that night and that's as far as you knew.

Interviewer: So they tried to keep what the operation was pretty secret?

Hollis: That's right.

Interviewer: That way the enemy doesn't follow.

Hollis: Of course now I hear these boys talking and they know what their going to do for the next two or three months and where their going.

Interviewer: That's probably because of the media. The media knows before the soldier does now a days. Speaking of the strategy and the big picture did you ever get a since of like where you were in the big picture? Like knowing that okay this divisions over here doing this and Patton's you know armored army is doing this?

Hollis: Not really cause the group we was in there just about most all the time we run into them different ways and all like that but

Interviewer: When you came back and you spent that year back at Texas and you shuttled German soldiers did you want to get out of the Army?

Hollis: Did I want to get out?

Interviewer: Yes sir.

Hollis: Well yeh I did.

Interviewer: You want to come back home and

Hollis: Yeh I wanted to get home cause we'd been it had been a good long while since I'd been home. We actually we stayed over there way over a year and about seven months of it was actual combat. And I was really wanting to get home.

Interviewer: So you when you got home how did the community receive you?

Hollis: Oh everything was fine.

Interviewer: Did the army give you any type of educational assistance or anything like that?

Hollis: Oh yeh that's after I come home of course I went to Camp Hood and after I was discharged then yeh.

Interviewer: So what did you do after?

Hollis: I stayed in an educational agricultural school for about three years and I actually enrolled at Austin Peay which they paid for. I didn't graduate or nothing like that but I stayed in awhile which really helped me.

Interviewer: So then you came and did you farm the rest of your life?

Hollis: Oh no I worked for Montgomery County Highways.

Interviewer: Okay

Hollis: For the rest for my whole life.

Interviewer: Now was there when you got home was there a lot of other fellows now you mentioned this guy down the road that you served with was there a vast majority of WWII vets in this community living here?

Hollis: A pretty good bunch of them yeh.

Interviewer: So you felt well I mean you felt you know that you had somebody to talk to about what you experienced over there?

Hollis: In fact I had a first cousin that was a prisoner over there and we run upon a prison camp where he was at. That's when it was on the long run and the war was just practically over in fast over and all like that. And of course I knew him all of my life and everything like that but they he was a great big man and they got him down to where he wasn't much bigger than you are right there that small of a man. And I didn't even know who he was when we picked him up in prison we was first cousins I was raised right up here with him and everything. But he was he said they just really hadn't had nothing to eat. And they might near just starved him to death.

Interviewer: So you

Hollis: And I didn't even know who he was but he recognized me he knew me. Then he said something to me and it took me a while before I could even figure out who he was.

Interviewer: So you met your first cousin over

Hollis: First cousin

Interviewer: Where what prison camp was that do you remember?

Hollis: No I don't just before we ended up right there on this map right close to it and I don't remember just exactly where it was at.

Interviewer: Now is he is he still alive?

Hollis: No

Interviewer: He passed, that's an awesome story to I mean you basically saved your cousin there your unit.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: That's incredible. Did what did they do with the American prisoners of war after you did they send them to the rear so they could get healthy again?

Hollis: Our like that

Interviewer: Yes

Hollis: They went on back to just like a hospital that they had big tent areas and all like that, they all went back to that until they could get straightened out.

Interviewer: Well I think that about covers it. I just want to say thank you and I'm going to open it up we have a few minutes of tape left if you want to say anything that in particular that your last final words you know.

Hollis: Not really.

Interviewer: Okay thank you Mr. Hollis. And again this is Ervin J. Hollis of the 100<sup>th</sup> division. (Mr. Hollis is holding up a case which has his metal in it. Then he is holding up a photo of a ship The George Washington). How many men did you say was on this ship a thousand ten thousand?

Hollis: Ten thousand on it. It's a great big ship it doesn't look like it there and the way they had us in there.

Interviewer: Now you said that this ship right here when you rode across the Atlantic on it it didn't have the smoke stack right.

Hollis: No this was the old George Washington is what it is and that this was a WWI cargo ship is what it was. I t was sunk sometime after we went over there I understand.

Interviewer: And then you said it was converted to diesel then.

Hollis: Yeh

Interviewer: From steam

Hollis: I imagine it was steam most likely.

Interviewer: Okay I'm recording let me zoom in on that hat that says Sons of Bitche (Mr. Hollis is wearing a 100<sup>th</sup> infantry division hat and holding up a sweatshirt with 100<sup>th</sup> infantry division on it).

Woman in the back ground: make sure you get that card so you know its official.

Interviewer: (Mr. Hollis is holding up a card) you mind flipping it over? (The back of the card has a picture of a soldier and says "The Society of the 100 Sons of Bitche". (The tape ended)