

I'm speaking with Mr. Harvey Rhodes and I understand you were assigned with the 327<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Rhodes: The 327<sup>th</sup> as a paratrooper assigned to the Glider Infantry.

What year did you go into the service?

Mr. Rhodes: I went in, in the end of March of 1944.

In the end of March of 1944, so you went into the 101<sup>st</sup> late.

Mr. Rhodes: I'm a young guy.

How old are you now sir?

Mr. Rhodes: I'm seventy-five.

You're just a youngster compared to most of the soldiers. Seventy-seven or seventy-eight is most of the ones that I have been talking with. You were an infantryman?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes.

Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Rhodes: I took my basic training at Camp Walters, Texas. It's about fifty miles west of Forth Worth. It's a town Mineral Wells. We used to listen to them on the radio all the time. They had the western music there.

You were there in March so the weather wasn't too too hot.

Mr. Rhodes: No, it wasn't too bad. We were there for seventeen weeks. We had eight weeks of basic and nine weeks of advanced infantry training.

What about your glider training?

Mr. Rhodes: I didn't get into that.

You didn't get glider training at all?

Mr. Rhodes: No I went into parachute training. In fact they came around interviewing guys at the end of our cycle. So me and my buddy went down there and I didn't know if I wanted to do it. Anyway, we laughed and he went over there and signed up. He signed me up.

He signed you up for the airborne. He volunteered you.

Mr. Rhodes: He told me that when we got back to the barracks. So I said was alright.

Now did you know at that point about the jump day?

Mr. Rhodes: I knew about it. They talked to us about it about everything.

That naturally was an enticement.

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah, an enticement. But I wasn't quite sure.

You weren't so sure about jumping out of an airplane.

Mr. Rhodes: I had never been on an airplane before.

Is that right? So after you finished your infantry training did you go to Fort Benning?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, we went to Fort Benning and we started our parachute training. We had our five training jumps.

I have to ask. You said you had never been on an airplane before. Did you jump out of the airplane the first time you had ever ridden in one?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes. It was kind of exciting. I had five take offs in an airplane but no landings.

How old were you when you finally get to land in an airplane?

Mr. Rhodes: Probably about twenty or so.

Is that right. So you made several jumps ...

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah I made all my parachute jumps.

So you knew what it was like to take off in an airplane but you didn't know what it was like to land in one until several years later.

Mr. Rhodes: In fact I was out of the service when I did that.

You were already out of the service. The war was over and you were in a commercial airplane.

Mr. Rhodes: Well these outfits at the county fair took you up in a small little piper. That was my first landing in an airplane.

So what did you think of parachute training?

Mr. Rhodes: I enjoyed it. It was tough but it really felt good.

Was it tough physically?

Mr. Rhodes: It was tough physically and so forth. It was interesting.

How did you feel to go out the door the first time?

Mr. Rhodes: I had no problem with that. I was apprehensive of course. I remember I was in position number four.

The first jump you were number four on the stick. You went out eyes open?

Mr. Rhodes: Yep.

A lot of guys make all night jumps. They go out in the dark.

Mr. Rhodes: No, I'm number six on that stick. When I got out you are supposed to check your chute you know. They shouted to the back on the loudspeaker, "Number six check your chute!" I said, "Oh I'm number six!" So I checked it. I think they had good control over us.

That's good. So it gave you confidence when training.

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah, the training was good.

After you finished your airborne training you were assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup>?

Mr. Rhodes: The way they do it is that they give you ten days of leave to go home. It happened to be that my mother was down there my last day. I went home with her. I was home for several days and then I came back. A lot of groups didn't have this, but we had a month of advanced airborne training mainly by Rangers that came in. It was all that special training and dirty fighting type of thing: knife throwing and they made night jumps for us.

So this went on for an additional month of training at Fort Benning?

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah at Fort Benning.

At Fort Benning? So these were Rangers that did the training?

Mr. Rhodes: Several of them were paratroopers too. A couple of them there wanted to stay with the airborne rather than go back to the Rangers. I'm not quite sure of the situation but they were Rangers. They had their Ranger patch on.

So they taught you more about night jumping?

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah, night jumping and hand to hand combat; that type of thing.

After that month, then what?

Mr. Rhodes: After that month we started our process. We were assigned to the ETO. There were eight hundred of us out of that group. I'm not sure where the others are at but we started the process going up to New York. Apparently they were real slow because we were at Fort Meade, Maryland for two weeks.

What did they have you do there?

Mr. Rhodes: Nothing, just laying around waiting. We were going into Baltimore and meeting people and so forth.

That was a nice little furlough.

Mr. Rhodes: We left there and went to Camp \_\_\_\_, New Jersey. We were there for two weeks too. We got to tour all these things and so forth. We were issued all of our equipment there. We went over with complete full equipment carrying an M1 Rifle, gas mask, and all that other equipment and also a barracks bag that you slung over your shoulder. Not like the old strap sacks. When we went overseas, it was right after Thanksgiving. That was a big place at Camp \_\_\_\_. They had the mess hall for Thanksgiving and they had 16,000 troops.

How long was the journey over?

Mr. Rhodes: We got to New York and then we were on the French Liner, Louie P\_\_\_\_ which was the third largest Queen Marriot. About five or six days we were by ourselves. They zigzagged. They were fast enough so they didn't go in a convoy. They travelled by themselves. We seen some icebergs.

Icebergs? Of course you went up along the....

Mr. Rhodes: We travelled way up north and came down to Liverpool. We landed in Liverpool in the evening. There were about 10,000 troops on board of various types: Air Force, nurses, Brats, 800 paratroopers and another regiment.

How were the conditions on the ship? All in all was it pretty comfortable?

Mr. Rhodes: It was fairly good.

I've heard some horror stories. Some guys went over on British ships.

Mr. Rhodes: The British were sailors and the British food was the worst part of it. They had a px and you could buy Pepsi-Cola. The problem is that a lot of people got sea-sick with it. I never got sea sick at all.

When you arrived in Liverpool, what time of the year was that?

Mr. Rhodes: That was probably the first week of December in 1944. We were the last ones really to get off. We got there in the early morning and all the rest got off ahead of us. We got off and actually marched down to the train station. We didn't stay there but we went by and they had these \_\_\_\_\_. They are blacked out and had a little bit of lights on them. We marched down the streets at night. But all of our equipment went down to the railroad station and got on a train. We were headed for South Hampton. We spent all night on the train going through London. You could see the little signs out the window.

Now when you get down to South Hampton, what do they do with you there?

Mr. Rhodes: We got down there the next morning. We got out and just waited around. We got on a ship probably around two or three in the afternoon.

On that same day? So you came in by ship the night before and that same afternoon you're on another ship?

Mr. Rhodes: At South Hampton. We were out there for four days; we had to wait for our berth because everything was so crowded. We were out there on this, I don't know what type of ship, but anyways we were there and Americans were running it, sailors. British guys were on there but a British ship I think. American sailors were on it. So they had pretty good food. They had fresh bread.

Which is a treat after spending about a month on that ship with the British food?

Mr. Rhodes: Oh yea. We just tried to get in and figure out where it was at to get some of it.

So that boat took you over to.....

Mr. Rhodes: We got off there at \_\_\_\_\_. We were about three days of just sitting around on the water. So we got into there probably almost dark. We were waiting for trucks to take us to another depot. They didn't show up until the next morning. We were just on the beach. We built fires. I don't know if you have been to a harbor or not but it is really a damp, cold. You are standing on one side next to that fire and you are hot but your back is freezing and you turn around.

It was the first week of December on the North Sea English Channel. I was stationed in Bremerhaven, Germany which is up and down the sea. It was cold and wet most of the year.

Mr. Rhodes: We were there and the next morning, pretty early they had to come out there with some cups of chow. We got on the trucks and headed for the replacement depot at \_\_\_\_\_, France. It's a little part of France that sticks up into Belgium. There is

an old French fort and that is where they put us. It was right on the \_\_\_\_\_ River. I'm not quite sure but what they told us was half would go to 82<sup>nd</sup> and half to the 101<sup>st</sup>. But we were just sitting there waiting. Then of course the break out happened. The break out they called the bulge. . I think it was called the bulge because on the map it looked like a bulge. The reporters called it that.

You didn't call it the bulge?

Mr. Rhodes: No, we never called it the bulge at all.

How long were you in the replacement detachment before you got assigned over to the 101<sup>st</sup>?

Mr. Rhodes: We were supposed to have been there for about ten days. But of course this break out happened. So we were there. There were some British armor that came down there. We had been talking with them and so forth. One thing that happened and I don't know if you remember about World War II, but the Germans had all these people that spoke English. The \_\_\_\_\_ River ran right in front of us. It's probably about sixty feet wide with a little bridge over it where a truck could go over it or a jeep. One night we were on guard down there and this jeep comes up there with a Captain and Lieutenant and a Sergeant driving it. We asked them all those questions like, "who won the world series, who did this and who did that?" They answered perfectly. They were getting ready to go and they stopped at the edge of the bridge on the far side and then they went down just a little ways and they stopped. This Lieutenant says, "Anyone want a cigarette?" He hollered out where people were standing down there by them. We had already cleared them to go wherever they were going to go. The Sergeant said, "No, we don't. You guys better get out and go down and talk to the Colonel." So they got out and went down there. We found out later that they were Germans.

How did you find them out?

Mr. Rhodes: We didn't find them out correctly, but the intelligence officer came in, found them out and they were executed that night.

How about that...spies.

Mr. Rhodes: We asked the Sergeant how come he knew enough to do that after we had already cleared him. He said, "In my experience in the Army an officer never offers an enlisted man anything free." He smelled a rat. So that was the reason that he stopped them and sent them down to interrogation. At that time there was a huge black market on cigarettes. They were hard to get.

About the cigarettes, little things come up in this interview that interest me for more and more information. Were you issued cigarettes from the Army? Did they issue you cigarettes or did you have to purchase them from the px?

Mr. Rhodes: You had to buy them from the px, except when you had the rations.

So you had C rations?

Mr. Rhodes: And the K rations. C & K had the little packs. They have them at the museum up here. They are three cigarettes. Some of the guys smoked cigarettes. I never smoked. I just kept those and when some of the guys ran out I would give them to them. There was apparently a huge black market in cigarettes plus other things. The Army had a difficult time trying to control that. The French and American officers were involved with it, high-jacking trucks and all that type of things.

For supplies to make a few dollars.

Mr. Rhodes: To make a lot of dollars.

That is true, black marketing is also very dangerous. When you left the replacement detachment to go the 101<sup>st</sup>, what was the 101<sup>st</sup> doing with the 327<sup>th</sup> when you were first assigned to it?

Mr. Rhodes: Let's back up a minute. We were there on Christmas Eve. This was up on a high spot and you could look down the plain and see German tanks coming in.

Was this at Bastogne?

Mr. Rhodes: No this was \_\_\_\_\_ at the Depot.

Oh you're still at Replacement Depot.

Mr. Rhodes: We were there for quite a few days. The major there who ran our camp sent us up on the hill the night of Christmas Eve. We got issued our machine guns and ammo. We stayed there all night and the next morning we looked at the machine guns and they were sitting directly pointed at us that if fired would have killed us all. We came back and found out that the British Army had come down and knocked out the German tanks. They came four miles in that area, the German Amory.

So they almost overran. The German Amory almost overran...

Mr. Rhodes: Oh, yeah. They would have if the British Amory had not have come down and knocked them out.

There is a story I had never heard before. The Replacement Detachment again, what was the name of it?

Mr. Rhodes: Givet, France. If you look at a map it's a little part that sticks up into Belgium. It's a semi mountainous region there. We were up on kind of like a side hill and

there at this big trench old fort. We stayed in there. That is where we stayed and had a little mess hall there.

Did you have barracks or were you in tents?

Mr. Rhodes: No we were in this old fortress.

I bet that was cold and damp in there too.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes it was. There was a lot of straw in there. You just layed down in the straw.

After that, what happened next?

Mr. Rhodes: That was Christmas Day that we got back. We heard a day later that Patton was going to try to drive in. We found out later that it was 4<sup>th</sup> Armored. If you have ever seen that movie Patton, you will see it. The next day Patton had trucks up there. That was on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup>. He had a bunch of trucks up there up through the corridor into Bastogne itself. That night we were in Bastogne.

So one day they took you to the replacement detachment where you were fighting off the German Armory and now you are into Bastogne.

Mr. Rhodes: My son is kind of a military historian. He was in the 82<sup>nd</sup> later after the war. We think that the 327<sup>th</sup> which actually the 401 was the old glider regiments that split up between the 82<sup>nd</sup> and the 101<sup>st</sup>. Those two units absorbed at least 480; 40 of them went to our company and that is all I know of. So we figure out that 40 of them went to each of the others. I don't know where the others went.

When you arrived, they would float you into the line.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, we were down overnight and we just stayed in this old house. They bombed that night, the Germans, right next to us. We didn't know what they did but they did quite a bit of damage I guess. The next morning we were ready to get the assignments and this Captain of the 101<sup>st</sup> started talking to us. The first thing he said was for us to march by this truck and to take our gas mask out of the bag we carried all the way from the station and throw it in the truck. The second thing he did was open up his pocket and pulled out this black book. It was an Army Regulation book and he threw it out in the snow. He then said, "The rules of war apply here, not that. The rules of a world war are if you disobey anyone any sergeant or any officer, they can just shoot you on the spot."

Trying to get your attention.

Mr. Rhodes: So that night he asked what our MOS was. This sergeant that was from our company asked, "Are there were any machine gunners here?" There were several guys that said they were machine gunners. We were all just riflemen. Then he asked if there



were any mortar men. This one fellow that was with us who had been in the army for awhile said to say we were mortar men because we would not have to go on combat patrols. So we said we were mortar men.

Did anybody teach you how to use a mortar now that you are a mortar man?

Mr. Rhodes: We had all that training of course in basic training. \_\_\_\_\_.

That's a heavy piece of equipment with quite a bit of kick to it.

Mr. Rhodes: Oh yeah, that pulls you forward.

You must have been a pretty strong young man.

Mr. Rhodes: Oh I was fairly good. I wasn't as big as I am now. I was about 5'11" and weighed about 165 pounds when I went in the Army.

So you were a good size. Normally the bar just by sheer weight of it and by the recoil the strength it takes to control it normally bigger boys would be put on the ground. So now you are a mortar man.

Mr. Rhodes: The sergeant marched us, the whole forty of us, on up to the company. Our platoon sergeants came out there with weapons. We were in a weapons platoon. So that meant that our mortars were the small 60 mm and the machine guns were just the regular air-cooled machine guns. We kind of figured out we were in a glider place. This buddy of mine said to them, "I got more in this glider outfit. We are all paratroopers." He said, "I'm not sure but they have been talking about that if we have another airborne drop with gliders, we need a lot of pathfinders to clear everything out." So he said, "Maybe you are a pathfinder." We knew mortars, machine guns, rifles and regular infantry things.

What was your unit mission there in Bastogne? You were on the defense of course.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, we were defensive. The 327<sup>th</sup> was a defensive regiment for the entire division. We were on the west side and of course the Germans were surrounding it before we got up there. The three other three parachute regiments, the 501, 502 and the 506<sup>th</sup> were all along there. We would go wherever they were for defensive backup.

So you were mobile.

Mr. Rhodes: We were mobile. We marched back and forth.

A mobile force moving back and forth to help shore up the defense where it was needed.

Mr. Rhodes: The various companies went here and there. We didn't stay with the battalions, we stayed intact. They called us the 401 then because that is the old unit

because they hadn't changed it over. It didn't change officially until after we got out of the Bastogne area.

How long were you in Bastogne?

Mr. Rhodes: We got there on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> of December. We left on the 18<sup>th</sup> our unit did, of January 1945.

A little over three weeks.

Mr. Rhodes: We were there over three weeks. The other guys had been there for the first eight days before Patton opened it up.

And the conditions of course were very cold.

Mr. Rhodes: Cold and ... We left there in a hurry and also the division did. We had no winter supplies. We didn't have boots or any winter clothing. We did have overcoats, us replacements. I had an extra pair of socks. My hometown state is North Dakota. I changed that every day. I got wet. I would put it under my waist band to dry them out. A lot of guys didn't have that. I had extremely severe frostbite.

You had frostbite on your feet?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes. I don't wear shoes now because I feel better without shoes. I'm tingling all the time.

How did you guys stay warm?

Mr. Rhodes: Good question. We did have blankets. We would have to dig foxholes and get in there and cover up. We made some elaborate foxholes. We would put branches over it and put a little dirt over the top and crawl in. The next day we would move to a better place and have to do it all over again.

You broke a lot sweat digging foxholes in the frozen ground too.

Mr. Rhodes: Well the ground wasn't so frozen at that point. The top part of it was. We didn't encounter too much. You had to dig hard that first four or five inches of it.

What about food?

Mr. Rhodes: All you had was rations. After the first of the year, we ran out of food. I talked to some of the guys and tried to find out, at least our regiment did. We had no rations at all. The air drops were bringing supplies. Bradley wanted ammunition and medical. There was no room for anything else. It depends on what some of those armored outfits brought up I guess. But ten days without any issued rations whatever you

happened to have. We scrounged around for the Germans left food for sausage or crackers they may have left.

So there was a ten day period where they didn't issue you any food at all?

Mr. Rhodes: No, not our company. We didn't have water. It was snowing fortunately so we would eat the snow off the trees.

How did that affect morale?

Mr. Rhodes: The morale was fairly good. We were all crazy people. I remember one of the things that we would run around and do. We would give a Nazi salute, Hail Hitler, in case we lose. General Taylor was in the back in Washington we called it. He came up there and asked where we were getting all the Nazi saluting from. McAuliffe said, Well I don't care what the guys do as long as they did their job." That was a way to keep the morale up.

And people did their jobs?

Mr. Rhodes: Oh yeah. No question of that. We were pretty low maintenance. When Taylor got back he asked McAuliffe the condition of the region which was nothing. Then McAuliffe said, "Sir, we are ready to attack!" The next morning we were on defensive, we were on attack.

How were the replacements received by the veterans? When you joined the battle, the 101<sup>st</sup> had already been through D-Day, they had been to Market Garden and they had gone into the bulge...at the time Bastogne, they have not called it the bulge yet. So I would assume there was cohesiveness within the unit before you arrived. How did they treat the new guys?

Mr. Rhodes: They treated us good. We were well received. They showed us various things and helped us with all kinds of things. They showed us what our jobs were. When I start with the mortars all I did was carry mortar shells around in those little sacks with six in the back and six in the front. The guys that got killed or injured or something you got advanced up. I was carrying the part of the mortar where you \_\_\_\_\_. So you just worked your way up. Hardly anyone left you. One time the Germans, right at the beginning, captured the division hospital and took away the nurses. There were a bunch of nurses. So we had no division hospital. They flew in by parachute some doctors and so forth. We had very few medics. In fact, we didn't have any medics there in the end in our company. So if somebody got hurt or killed or hollered medic like you see in the movies....They just didn't have anybody to holler to.

So you had to treat each other?

Mr. Rhodes: Yeah, we had to try. But when you are in combat you just have to go on if you are on a move, you can't stand around and do something. If you are stopped you can.

You said about the 18<sup>th</sup> of January you were pulled back from Bastogne; did they take the division back to a rest area?

Mr. Rhodes: No. When we pulled out in our area one of the armored infantry came up. They were fresh from the states. I remembered there were a Life magazine and Time magazine photographers interviewing. They were talking to some of them. They didn't talk to our particular group but they were right next to us. All I remember is this one reporter talking to this other guy. He said that he had just come from the states. These other guys did. He said, "Boy the 101<sup>st</sup> is famous back in the states." They were new and this other sergeant from the armory, they were pulling their 50 calibers through the snow with wires and said, "Where is the front line?" \_\_\_\_\_ looked down and said, "You are standing on it!" There is an imaginary line but there is nothing layed down that says this is it. I'm not sure but we pulled out of there and Patton and one of his armored divisions and those things are big. He had them lined up on both sides of the road for about twenty miles just one armored division. So we went down to this place and they had tents set up. The first thing we did was we had to go take a shower. We hadn't had one. We hadn't changed clothes the whole time we were there. We threw our clothes over in one pile, took a shower and then they had all these other clothes. We just had to pick out our size and put on new fatigues, a fresh set of clothes. All of us guys had a little container from when we throw our gas masks out. We kept all of our personal stuff in there. So we just hauled all that along with us, set it outside the shower and picked it up again. Then we got our first warm meal. We never had a hot meal all the time I was there.

I bet that felt good to get a hot shower and a hot meal.

Mr. Rhodes: My memory isn't too good of as to exactly what happened afterward. But they gave everybody those little razors so we could shave. The odd thing about it is us guys coming in there we all had beards and all dirty from these little external things. When we shaved and so forth I looked around at all these young guys. Of course I was the youngest of the bunch and the only way you could tell of who it was, was by the sound of their voice.

You didn't recognize them anymore once you removed the soot and whiskers. When you were at the unit they were already filthy.

Mr. Rhodes: One thing up there that a lot of people don't realize is that we had a lot of spare time when we were up there even though we were doing all of this. We were sitting around half a day, talking and gabbing and so forth. We would be in our foxholes sleeping until two in the afternoon after we had been out half the night marching around. One of the other jokes that they had is that they had a lot of goofy movies of the army decisions. My sergeant was sitting in my foxhole and he had a Stars & Stripes. He was reading it and says, "Oh what a comfort it is to us to know that Adolf Hitler is still in charge of the German army." The whole thing is, is that you're not just this rigid type of person that is just there not saying anything.

That is a lot of what we are looking for in these interviews is the unit side. We are not interested in interviewing the Colonels and the Generals. They wrote their memoirs. They have had their day. What we are interested in is the privates and the corporals and the sergeants and finding out coping mechanisms. What kept you going? These jokes and little games and things to help you keep your sanity.

Mr. Rhodes: It kept us moving when it needed to be otherwise we didn't do anything. We just sat around.

Did you go to Bertchesgarden?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes. After we got out of there and had our shave and shower and spending the night in the sleeping unit, we went down to the 7<sup>th</sup> Army front. We were down there and it was pretty quiet. We were replacing some of Patton's line divisions so that he could get them refitted. He was in charge of armor plus several line divisions. He was getting them ready to go into Germany. So we just took their places there. There was probably a few patrols. I doubt if there was more than a dozen or so of our company that got injured or killed out there. It was real quiet but still a battle. We went down there probably around the 20<sup>th</sup> of January. We stayed there until the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. Then we went back to our base camp at \_\_\_\_\_. Originally the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> had these big old French barracks but someone else had taken that over. So they put us out in these eight man tents. They had cots. The 82<sup>nd</sup> was on one side and the 101<sup>st</sup> was on the other side. Of course there was a lot of fighting going on. So we were there especially resting and doing some training. We got a whole bunch of new guys in, more replacements. We call them \_\_\_\_\_. They came in and we got them started and helped them out to get going. Also, when we were there we had a big treason review with Eisenhower. That is when we got the Presidential citation. The whole division got it. We had to go out and get ready for that. Our regiment, and Colonel Harper was his name and he said, "I don't think I have enough here for a good battalion and just left out of that regiment. We had fifty-six guys. We had the most of any company left. There were smaller units. We had about one hundred and forty-five total. A Company of the 327<sup>th</sup> had less than ten. B Company had about sixteen or seventeen. Even those two companies didn't have enough; he couldn't even make a platoon out of us. They lost a lot of people so they were starting to fill them back in. There was one incident that is kind of interesting back in the bulge. There was a German mortar attack. The Germans had a lot of foxholes around there. So me and my foxhole buddy jumped in this foxhole. You could tell although mortars aren't like artillery but you can tell when they are coming. We got in there and all of a sudden someone jumped in on top of us and my foxhole buddy said, "Who is trying to crush us to death down here." This other guy says, "Careful what you say this is a full colonel up here." Our Regimental Colonel, Colonel Harper, jumped in on top of us with his rifle and his radio man. So the four of us were in there and that saved our lives. When we got out two of the tanker guys, a Lieutenant and a Sergeant, couldn't get out of the way, so they got killed by the mortars. Those foxholes really save. I didn't even see him around so I didn't even know he was there. You didn't wear any insignia up there. They had some, but not obvious.

After the rest camp, refitted, you went in to Germany.

Mr. Rhodes: We went in to Germany. We were right across from Dusseldorf, a town called Ussen. We were just there and just holding the line along there. Again one of companies had crossed the Rheine for a combat mission and so forth and exploring things. Probably about three or four of them got killed. That was about the only casualties we had there. For that Eisenhower thing, we all got our new Eisenhower jackets. These are complete equipment. Bradley issued extra stuff every so often. We had barracks bags full of clothes.

You could have used those a few months back.

Mr. Rhodes: The French were always trying to buy them from us so we were maybe black marketing that stuff to them. We were there and we left there about the end of March. We were there probably about three weeks. Taylor was an ambitious guy. He always tried to get more missions for his division. Patton kept beating him out. We had three or four of them set up and getting ready to go the next day and word came back that Patton had already taken that. A lot of people didn't care for Patton. But he understood war. He knew what was going on and he had his troops trained. When he came over to the bulge, he took over that whole area. When he was there, you had to wear your helmet and jacket. You had to be ready for all times and don't fool around in Patton's area. He was a rough guy, but he was good. Taylor wanted us to go down to southern Germany. In that area he felt that was someplace we should be. Eisenhower said that we had needed some military government, so he made the 101<sup>st</sup> a military government. We couldn't get any trucks to go down there. We went down in ducks, the amphibious vehicles. About twenty of us could get into one of the ducks. We went down all the way to Munich on those ducks. We went through those narrow German towns and German people were out there. They had their white flags on their windows. We found out that the German people were relaxed, friendly people. We didn't have any really strong hatred of German soldiers. We knew they were there just like we were. We knew we had to fight them.

But no personal animosity toward them?

Mr. Rhodes: No. They were young guys. Some of them were sixteen or seventeen. We captured quite a few of them up in the bulge who were sixteen or seventeen. On our way down to Munich our duties were to take over all the political prisoners. They are like slave laborers really. So we organized all of those. The place where we were at was called Dachau. There was a big concentration camp there. But there was a big hospital there. We were guards there. One of the things that I was exposed to was I was an escort guard. I went around with the American Medical Major and a German Medical Major all at the hospital and seen all these experiments on people lying in their bed and so forth. That was kind of a nerve racking experience to see all that.

That is not war though. Did you get a chance to go into the camp at Dachau?

Mr. Rhodes: We went right by it, but no we didn't. They were turned loose and there were all of those people in the camp. They were running around all over. One thing the Germans did was that they photographed everything there was under the sun. They had all this film there and these people would try to break in. Our medical officer there, this Colonel, said to protect that film because the American Army wanted it, those vaults. After we got out of there, I found out later that my cousin, my sister and my brother in law was there at the same time I was there. He was a military police. But I didn't know him.

He wasn't your brother-in-law yet?

Mr. Rhodes: No he wasn't yet. But I knew who he was. We went down and got in the trucks and went on down to Munich. Then we went down to Berchtesgaden. In our regiment there I was an escort guard. All these Generals came down there and we escorted them through. We had the Eagle's Nest.

Did you personally get to go up in there?

Mr. Rhodes: Oh yes, I was all over it. One place had like a tunnel cave-like place where they had all the meetings.

So you were one of the guards that took people through?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, we took them. We were escort guards. As an escort guard you were one day on and two days off. On the day you were on, you were escort guard for eight hours and the rest of the time off. We pressed the uniforms ourselves and you couldn't sit down. You had to stand up all that time. I can't remember what he said. My sergeant was a nice guy and pretty good looking guy and he really dressed nice. He was standing at the door. General Hodge came up to the door and looked him over and says, "Soldier, you are the best dressed soldier I have seen in the ETO." A couple other of my buddies took him around. He always gave me something. Hodge says, "I forgot to pick up anything for you." So he took off his real good watch and gave it to him. His wrist watch.

So you had pretty light duty there.

Mr. Rhodes: We had real light duty and so forth at that place.

One eight hour day and two days off. So you spent a lot of time preparing.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, we had to get our assignments. We had a pretty large camp of German PW's there. The German Army, we put them in charge. They were discharging them and taking them to places, similar to what we have based on a point system. They had their camps scattered around there in that part of Germany, Bavaria and then over in Austria. One day they said that I was going to have to escort this German Major and the sergeants out there. I had a pass to get through all the American roadblocks. So I took him around. He spoke good English. He said he went to Cambridge in England before the war. He

sounds like an Englishman. He talked about a lot of things. He asked me a lot about the states. So we ran around all day long. He said, "Wow, this place here, the little American place the encampment not too far from where he was at where he was inspecting. He was checking all those places to see where they could be assigned out. So he said, "Well I need to go on ahead and eat." So I went in there to eat and they stayed at the other place about five miles away. So they came back and picked me up and ran around the rest of the day. We were only about sixteen miles from Vienna. The thing I had noticed about Bavaria is that it was so inspiring. I can see how all these musicians and writers and so forth could do all these things. It was so inspiring and the mountains there too. We were right on the edge of Austria. Salzburg was the town there. The 101<sup>st</sup> had a huge R & R place there. Everybody got to spend three days there. The German PW's had a lot of good experience at all kinds of things, especially cooks. They used to take these crackers that we used to have, grind them up and make nice biscuits out of them.

The Germans did?

Mr. Rhodes: The Germans did that. They had all this nice food. We had good food there.

It's amazing what they can do with our food.

Mr. Rhodes: Anyways, we had three days and we would just lounge around and stay at a nice place. We had maid service and German gals would come around and make the bed for you.

Bed and sheets, I bet that was a treat for you. It's been awhile since you had seen sheets.

Mr. Rhodes: In some houses we stayed in, we had sleeping bags. Once in awhile there were some beds there we crawled in. But most of the time there wasn't. We did see \_\_\_\_\_ when they brought \_\_\_\_\_ in. His train was there and his car was in the back in the garage. I didn't see the car myself but I went down to see the train and he had this huge bathtub. Of course they had all their radio equipment in there. The Germans were good on that type of thing. The Germans had excellent communication. It seemed like they knew how to use it to. On the front lines you had this cable running and we used to see that German stuff hanging there. We all wanted a souvenir so we tried to take a piece of it home. We chopped it with our bayonets and that was the toughest stuff. It took me almost two hours to chop through that. I got a piece about thirty feet long. I still have it coiled up at home.

What you wouldn't have given for a pair of wire cutters!

Mr. Rhodes: We didn't have that. The British had all of that.

How long were you at Berchtesgaden?

Mr. Rhodes: We got there I think it may have been about the first part of May. It was just a couple of days before VE day.



So you already knew Hitler was dead when you got to Berchtesgaden? Had they told you yet that Hitler was dead, that he died in Berlin?

Mr. Rhodes: We saw it in the Stars & Stripes, so I guess we probably knew it. I don't remember if we knew or not but I believe we did. One thing the Germans had was nickelodeon type sheets to play records. They had a lot of American records on their machines. I was quite surprised the German people were so up to date and modern. On the short wave radios they had Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Boston. They listened to whatever they wanted to I guess.

You were still at Berchtesgaden on VE Day right?

Mr. Rhodes: Yes. We were there on VE Day and we were there until about the fourth of July.

What kind of celebration did you have on VE Day?

Mr. Rhodes: None. It was just another day. We sat around and talked. We were happy the war was over there but we knew the Japs were there. We were still worried.

Were there rumors going around there that you were going to be packed up and sent over to the...

Mr. Rhodes: What happened is that after the fourth of July they pulled out all of the young paratroopers that had combat experience from the 101<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> and sent us up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne. They pulled out most of theirs out. We were at a town called Lunville, France. We stayed for about a month waiting to come back to the states. What apparently was happening was that Marshall wanted to form two new airborne divisions when invasion into Japan. He wanted them to always be trained as far as military training, but they wanted combat paratroop training. We were going to be training all these sergeants for all these various units; training them in the combat area. We were there for about a month at Lunville. They were the most lackadaisical people I have ever seen. They always take it as it goes. They didn't fix up much of anything. The Germans were ambitious. That night we got shipped to LaHar (?) getting ready to come back. We were up there at LaHar (?) just before they dropped that first atomic bomb. All of the little camps there they named after cigarettes: Lucky Strike, Chesterfield, Camels there were six different ones. Everything but Chelsies. They were horrible cigarettes. Nobody wanted them.

I was born in the fifties so I didn't hear about them.

Mr. Rhodes: We were at the \_\_\_\_\_. We were there for a few days in big tents and getting ready to come back. Then they dropped the atomic bomb. When I was in high school during the last couple of years, we were a small town out in North Dakota, a small high school. Me and one of the guys there he was kind of a history buff. We used to talk about all this stuff about the war and so forth and situations. I remember when we were in

the eighth grade he made a map of Europe. He was about we could take this, we should take this country and so forth. We had all kinds of time. We read all the Life magazines and Time magazines, everything. We found that they were working on some kind of atomic bomb. There were some descriptions of how those things would work. The government was kind of concerned about some of that. But they said, "We don't care, suppress it." So anyway they dropped it and everybody was wondering what it was. I gave a five minute talk on what I knew. They were all sitting around there telling the Captain too. I must have been the atomic bomb expert for a few minutes. By the time we got there we had no identification. We had been with the 17<sup>th</sup> down there. The 13<sup>th</sup> was coming back. They were going to stretch them out and have them do something. So we came back with them. We wore what they called the first airborne army patch; allied airborne forces patch. I have shirts that still have that patch on them. So we came back and we got half way across the Atlantic and here we had VEJ-Day.

Where did you land when you came back?

Mr. Rhodes: New York at Camp \_\_\_\_\_.

How was the reception?

Mr. Rhodes: they had those fire boats shooting water cannons. That was all still going on even though there a couple of us three days after VEJ- Day. So then we were there for about three days and they were dividing people up to go to their company. They didn't know what to do with all of us paratroopers. They sent us home just to give us six weeks and come back in six weeks to the camps. We went to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. We came back to where we were at: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin were the states for that area. I went home and had a big time. I met a young lady that I kind of got to know real well.

When you went back to McCoy did they muster you out from there?

Mr. Rhodes: No, when I got back to McCoy, we were there for a week.

You had only been in the Army for about a year and a half now.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes. I had another eight months or so to go. Actually I was in the Army for not quite two and a half years.

So they kept you in for almost a year after the war was over.

Mr. Rhodes: Yes, just about a year. We had to get the points. It was based on your points. We were there and they call your name finally and we went to Fort Bragg. The 13<sup>th</sup> was there and they were sending the Army Paratroopers all there. So we joined the 517<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment which was an independent regiment. I've been with the 82<sup>nd</sup> and various groups but now I was with the 13<sup>th</sup>. We were there just killing time until we got out. We got there it must have been about November sometime. In early January the 82<sup>nd</sup>

came back from overseas. They were going to have the victory parade for World War II in New York City when they came back. So they sent all the paratroopers from Fort Bragg up there in trucks in the same old path that we had when we went overseas. We went up there and were in the victory parade. That was a great experience. There were a lot of people down there and at night afterward you wondered around Manhattan. You couldn't buy anything. They kept giving you drinks or something to eat or something. We had a wonderful time. We stayed right in town and they opened up a lot of the hotels. We stayed at the Hotel Lexington. We got half rates. We had to pay something. Then we went back to Fort Bragg. It took the Army Brass (?) about almost six weeks before they switched over to the 82<sup>nd</sup>. Then we were in the 505 Parachute Infantry. In the states they had a jump every six months to keep your jump status. We got fifty dollars a month for jump pay. We were there just waiting. I had one parachute jump. It's the easiest jump I have ever made. We were there at Camp Mable (?) went down to \_\_\_\_\_ and got discharged.