

Howard Lee

Interviewer: My name is Sara Spencer and today is April 9, 2005. What is your name and your birth date?

Mr. Lee: I'm Howard Lee I was born in Perv County Mississippi July 30, 1924.

Interviewer: Alright and where did you serve during WWII?

Mr. Lee: I served in two areas I served in Europe, several campaigns in Europe then I served with occupation forces in Japan for three year.

Interviewer: And what units were you with?

Mr. Lee: I went into the service I volunteered I was a draftee but I volunteered to go ahead of time before they drafted me and I went into the service in April 1943. And after I served 10 years and I got out of service 10 years later out at Fort Campbell, Kentucky 1953 is when I got out.

Interviewer: So where did you grow up?

Mr. Lee: I grew up in Perv Country Mississippi raised on a farm cotton we had cotton and sugar cane, made syrup and all. And I did all of the farming things and we had a dairy did that we had 40 dairy cows that we milked and everything we did that too. That's basically what I did until I went into service. Now I went through a year of ROTC in my 12th grade and I was in the reserve and took all of the test and went into the cadet program and they I got my basic training in Camp Stewart Georgia.

Interviewer: So what year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Lee: I graduated in 1943. April 43 and I went right in the service then.

Interviewer: So you basically volunteered?

Mr. Lee: Yeh that's right. I couldn't I was the only one left on the farm then I was critical and they wanted me to stay in but I kept on until I got them to let me go.

Interviewer: Did you feel like it was your duty to go or what made you go?

Mr. Lee: Well I just had to go all of my buddies were gone and I just of course in Cadets I wanted to be a pilot and that was the basic thing and I passed all of the test when I was in the 11th grade. I went to Gulf Port, Mississippi to Gulf Port field and I took all of those tests and passed them and so after my basis training was over in Camp Stewart they shipped me to Wisconsin and I went to college at State Issues College Wisconsin. And went through my college time there while I was taking training.

Interviewer: So how long were you in college there?

Mr. Lee: I was in college I got there the beginning of the year in 43 and finished the next year it was an accelerated course. We went straight through I mean we went day and night in school that's the way they did it then you know.

Interviewer: What was the course in was it related to the military?

Mr. Lee: It was a basic college courses and we had a lot of geography courses like that anything that would help us you know while we was in the military. Of course we were flight training at the same time. I went through that part of the flight training up there in Wisconsin and when I got ready to go to Corpus Christi, that was the next step of flight training, they decided they had all of the pilots they needed. And I had applied to be a dive bomb pilot a P47 that's what I learned to fly and that's what my specialty was going to be when I got to Corpus Christi. But all at once the Germans started getting ahead again over there and they decided they needed more infantry than anything else and that's when I went into the infantry. And I trained in Wisconsin Camp McCoy Wisconsin its Fort McCoy now.

Interviewer: So when did you start training with the infantry?

Mr. Lee: I trained in the infantry I started the first part of 44 and after I got out of college at Wisconsin I went to the infantry. Now

Interviewer: Where you any special status? Were you an officer because you had done some college or where you

Mr. Lee: No later on I got the field commission I can tell you about that later on. But if you want me to kind of give you an overview of my military I can at this time. When I went into the infantry to train I was in intelligence and reconnaissance I was in the 35th infantry which is a regiment the 76th infantry division had four regiments and it was kind of they have now they have gone back to those four units now. I think the 101st maybe started that but I had four regiments and each one of them had their own equipment and everything. And we were in the 385th regiment and the intelligence reconnaissance platoon was a separate unit it covered we were supposed to pick up all of the information we could and supply it to the rest of the troops. So I ended up if you want me to tell you about my training I can and about some of that but we trained in all kind of compass work and everything like that. And my job was to draw relays and we would when I got to Germany what I did do in doing those relays when I was in Germany we would go through our infantry lines and we'd get as close as we could to the German lines and sometimes the Germans would be right in front of us and we'd have our field glasses and we'd stay out there a day or two observing. And that was so the other troops could maybe cross a river or something like that and I would I'd observe everything I could then I would make a relay map of it. And they call them overlays and it was kind of a sketched map of all what was in front of us. And that was combined with all of the other intelligence gathering. And our unit did that we were scouts we were called scouts and that was what I did all of the time I was in the infantry.

Interviewer: How long did you receive training for that job?

Mr. Lee: We trained in Wisconsin about three months of course I already had all of that other training we accelerated that training and we stayed out in the field most of the time. We camped out and all as soon as we got that training over with they shipped us out. We went to we went to Boston Harbor and that's where we were put on ships and the Germans were sinking a lot of troop ships then submarines and we went through the north Atlantic and you'd go in one direction then you make a zigzag you'd zigzag zigzag zigzag so it took us about 14 days to get to South Hampton, England. And we finally got there and of course I'll tell you what after we left Boston Harbor well we took a lot of training there how to get off the ship if they tried to sink the ship get into life boats and all. And but we left Boston Harbor and I woke up the next morning sea sick and that's a terrible experience. And we were down in the hole of the ship and the ship didn't hold but about 800 men it was a small we called it USS Howsen was the name of it we called it the Lousy Housy but it was so rough that north Atlantic it was so rough you could feel the ship going out of the water you know just shaking all over. In one storm we lost two or three life boats off the top we couldn't go up there because the water was hitting so heavy. Like I say I got see sick and we were 12 bunks high in the bottom of that ship and of course if you happened to be on the bottom bunk you got everything that happened on the top bunk and it got pretty bad down there so I begged them to take me up on top and they just carried me up there and I said you can just throw me over I'm so sick I don't care. And so they fed me crackers and cheese you know to kind of settle things down. The storm was so bad you would be eating you would have your tray in front of you and all at once it would be way down there you just couldn't even you couldn't do a thing that's how bad the ship was rocking.

Interviewer: What was the feeling amount the men were you guys excited to be going or where you nervous?

Mr. Lee: Well you know you were nervous and we were excited too. We were looking forward to what we didn't know was ahead of us we were excited about new experiences and all. And we were real close to each other you do that when you train together. And our little our scout group there was only ten of us in that there was ten scouts in that unit I was in so we really stayed close we had one of our men Don Kruger he spoke fluent German and so he was in our unit because we needed that you know when we captured prisoners and all which we did a lot of that captured prisoners and all. He would do the interpreting for us and everything. But I say we went to England then South Hampton finally got there. I just got in there and kissed the ground I said I don't know how I'm going to get back when the war is over I don't know how I'm going to get back it's not going to be on a boat I don't know how I'm going to get back because I was so sick. I had been sick all that time the 14 days so anyway we trained in England then two months real accelerated training. We had to learn a lot of things how the German machine guns and all the different weapons they used sounded we needed to know that and all of those things. We had to be able to identify German equipment that was part of our job in the intelligence platoon it was part of our job to identify all of the German equipment. And the airplanes and all of the things they used. We finally we got through our training there in England.

Interviewer: Now did you have men who had already been in the face of combat training you?

Mr. Lee: Yes that's right they came back some of the men who were over there some of the men that were wounded and couldn't go back they got well enough to share that with us you know and that was part of it. But we had that real good training in England and finally the D-Day come and I wasn't over there at D-Day now I want you to understand that. But we went in after D-Day we finally boarded a Polish ship to go across the English Channel.

Interviewer: So about what month was it you crossed the English Channel?

Mr. Lee: I crossed the English Channel in November of D-Day was June of 44 and I crossed in November so they had already gone through pretty well through France we were going to part of France. We fought some in France then we got into Belgium. We were going our assigned mission we were going to relieve the 101st airborne because they were surrounded you know in Bastogne. And so in Humbermont St. Humbermont Belgium that's where we really got involved. We waded ashore there were no docks or anything we waded ashore out of the English Channel.

Interviewer: Did they drop you off off the coast of Belgium?

Mr. Lee: No they dropped us off off the coast of France. Waded ashore and we marched about 10 miles that day into France and put up our tents. And it was cold by then you know we was getting you know over there you get some bad weather it was cold a lot. Like in England you carried your umbrella they count the days they have sunshine over there not the days they have rain. It's in England you had all that black fog and everything. You could hold your hand up in front of you and you couldn't even see it that's how bad the fog was over there in England. But while we were in England before we left I want to tell you about this they had the Germans had these buzz bombs and when it come over they would stop you would hear them coming and then all at once they'd stop and they would hit. We were up in my fox hole buddy was a man named Grant Parker he was from Michigan and we had a fox hole buddy we called them that's who we stayed with all of the time. And we dug fox holes together and all. And Grant and I was there and we'd gone down to a big department store in London there that night and he had found a chess set a real good chess set and he said tomorrow we'll go back don and get it. And that night when they sent those buzz bombs in one of them Shellfish department store one of them blew it all to pieces. That's how close we were when we heard them coming I don't know what I thought it would help me but I was in the USO there in London and when I heard them coming I got under the bed and that wouldn't help much if that would have fit us. But I just wanted to let that one experience while we was in England. But anyway we waded ashore there in France and we marched that 10 miles and put our tents up and finally little by little we moved on up to the front what we called the war front.

Interviewer: Now at the time did you know what your mission was or were you just taking orders?

Mr. Lee: Yeh we knew what our mission was. Understand now when we got up there they had taken all of the raid signs down so part of the time we didn't even know where we were you had no way of knowing where you were. But we always in tents and we had snow suits everybody had white snow suits. Now the Germans broke through and were on their way back to France that's when they Battle of the Bulge they call it you might have hear of the Battle of the Bulge. But I was involved in all of that and the Germans they killed a lot of my buddies because well they just shot them with machine guns killed a

lot of them. And they took American uniforms and put American uniforms on and had them snow suits and we couldn't tell who was who. And we had to change our password about twice in 24 hours. If you didn't give us your password after the second time we'd just shoot you we didn't ask no questions. We'd just shoot you we didn't know the Germans looked like American soldiers when they did that. And they broke through and that's when they surrounded the 101st at Bastogne and they really were doing some damage. They were trying to get back through France they were headed for Brimahavid is where they was headed for and they was going to surround us. And that's what we did but anytime we got ready to cross a river or something our infantry would be dug in and in the fox holes and all waiting to cross. My job the squad we had we had eight men in there. Sergeant Sanders was the squad leader and we would go through the infantry lines and we would get as close as we could to the Germans and we would stay there maybe a whole day with our field glass and all getting information about where the Germans were. And these big what they call pillboxes and all you could see was just a little thing sticking up the rest of it was in the ground you couldn't tell how many. After we got in to some of those places there was one they had a railroad running into the back of it and they had there was room for 3,000 troops underground they had laundry the had everything you needed in those pillboxes. And we had to deal with those and of course you had to deal with all of that going through the Siegfried Blind.

Interviewer: How would you guys keep from being seen when you were looking on to the Germans?

Mr. Lee: We dug we would dig in and fix our of course it's just like here in Tennessee a lot of Germany is just like Tennessee and we had plenty of place we could dig in. Trees and all you'd cover yourself up and when we dug in we would camophlounge it we would put all kind of trees and stuff over it and we had these nets could use these green nets we could put over it. So when they flew over they couldn't see where we were. And after we observed my job was to make an overlay map and then we would turn that over to the intelligence section, G2, and they would feed that information back to the units to get ready to go across the river or whatever we crossed. Now while were in that the reason I received this, I was carrying an Browning automatic machine a Browning automatics a 20 it shoots 20 times you have while I was in there one of the jobs I did my lieutenant lieutenant Kennedy he asked me to go with him down to scout out a place to cross the river and while we were down there we really got covered up the Germans seen us they started firing on us and of course we found a place we could get down low enough where the artillery wouldn't hit us the shells wouldn't hit us and we were pinned down for about I guess it was for about three hours. Finally we got out of that and got the information we needed so that the troops could put up a bridge across the river. And that's the reason I have this bronze star I was awarded that because of that relationship there it has a little ribbon there that says "V" for violent. And I go that that's the only metal I got. I'm proud of that bronze star.

Interviewer: Once you got you said your job was to relieve the 101st because they were surrounded how did you guys find where they were how did you make your way to them?

Mr. Lee: Well we had some maps and we had now back then they didn't have all of the equipment they do now they had little planes that would fly over what we call huddle jumpers they were just little piper cut planes and they would fly as close as they could a lot of them would get shot down you know. But they would try to get the information and us up on front we would feed the information back and see

when we started going in there and putting pressure on the Germans to get in where the 101st could be relieved that's when the Germans broke through and surrounded a lot of our units and that's where a lot of my buddies got killed you know. And there's cemeteries over there in the Netherlands Holland they call it the Netherlands what we called it that's where the cemeteries are. Any rate our division was selected to General Patton was coming through and he selected the 76th infantry division it was called the only way division it was selected to be one of his units. We were in the first army when we first went in General Bradley was the first army commander. Then General Patton come up and we went all the way from Belgium to the northern part of Belgium where the Battle of the Bulge where the 101st was at Bastogne we went all the way there when they got relieved. And we I got three campaigns in Europe these are called these stars these little stars here you see on these ribbons these are called campaign stars and I had three different campaigns in Germany that's what those stars are. And we went from Belgium all the way through Luxembourg at Luxembourg and all the way down and when we finished in Germany when the war was over we were guarding the Russians were on one side of the river and we was on the other. They were in Poland we were right down the Polish boarder and that's where we finished up when the war was over. One of the hard things we had to deal with I guess was we call it policing up the dead. And that's one of the terrible things we had to deal with. Of Course when winter time came on and it was about 8 inches of snow about 8 degrees over there that was one of the hazards of being over there you know. Winter time starts about October over there and goes all the way through May it's still cold in May. Our equipment was not that good we had combat boots which were just rough leather you know and all we had we didn't have any snow equipment or anything. We had our over shoes were just rubber galoshes. Of course you got to remember we had over 13 million people in WWII and we did good to have what we had and our rations were C-rations. And they were in little boxes looked like a big cracker jack box and they were sealed and some of the stuff we had in those C-rations to eat, you might be interested in that, we'd have a little square of chocolate we could scrape it off and make chocolate milk if you want to we had bullion cubes to make bullion soup and we had cheese and you had some kind of meat most of the time some kind of meat you know it was a little can of meat. And we had what we called little Bronson burners when we'd dig our fox hole sometimes a whole squad of men 8 or 10 men would dig one big hole and get down in there when we was going to be in a position where we'd be there maybe for a week or two weeks on front lines we'd dig those holes and then one man could stick his head up far enough to see what was going on. The rest of us would be down in there we'd be relieved every so many hours you'd get relief you know day and night we stood guard.

Interviewer: What rank were you while you were in Europe?

Mr. Lee: I was a PFC of course I got promoted to corporal before I left over there. Speaking of the rank I ended up a first lieutenant. After, I'll just give you a general overview, after we finished in Germany like I say we finished on the Polish border after we finished that we came back I came back to Etos, France and we were getting ready to go invade Japan see the war with Germany was over in May and then we were going to invade Japan because they were still involved in the war down in the Philippines hadn't been taken then the Philippines were still all of that stuff was still going on over there in the islands. But I stayed in Warton American Technical School I was a one of the instructors at Warton American

Technical School in England after the war was over. And I stayed there for a little while to get ready to load up and go to Japan. But before I got through with all of that I had already enlisted again for three more years I wanted I just felt like I wanted to stay in the army you know I really liked what I was going. And by that time the I call them little firecrackers but the atomic bombs the two atomic bombs that they had dropped on Hiroshima and Niro sackie and that kind of wound the war down and when I left I went to came home fore some vacation time before I was shipped out. And they shipped me out I boarded another boat in San Francisco and I ended up in Yokohoma in Japan. And that's when I joined the 11th airborne division. And I stayed with the 11th airborne division I got there in June of 46 and we came back to Fort Campbell in March of 49. So I was with the 11th airborne division about nearly seven years. I got a field commission while I was in Japan. I was working there and General Miley was the commanding officer he was an assistant division commander in Japan. We was in the northern part of Japan Sinai and Sapura was the headquarters of the 11th airborne division. And so General Miley came in one day and of course by then I had been promoted to E6 they call it a tech sergeant. And he came in one day and said I'm going to send you to Tokyo and we're going to made you a second Lieutenant. And said you'll go down one day and come back with your bars the next day so that was kinds of quick for me. Of course I told him I didn't want to first and he said no it's not what you want to it's what you are going to do we are going to send you.

Interviewer: Did they need lieutenants because they had lost so many in the war or what made them want somebody.

Mr. Lee: No honey this was after the war they just wanted me they just felt like I needed to be an officer so that was I had a responsibility. I guess I had worked day and night I was in what we call the troops came in the 11th airborne division when they came into Sinai on the train I met the train and I was responsible to assign all those troops to all of the divisions. I got all of the records and you went through our office to all the different places and that was my responsibility and that's when I was in the general section. All the time before that I was in the infantry but I got my commission in the infantry and after of course we finished in Japan with our occupation forces when I got to Japan of course Japan was still all torn up and everything we stayed over there all during the time of reconstruction and all in Japan. And we had several experiences over there that was good in some ways and in some ways it was hard to deal with. But we came back to Fort Campbell and we got there March of 49. I was in advanced party I came in and in the general section and my job we brought all of the top secret documents back. Had two men who were twins they were corporals Summers twins Summers was their last name. And they guarded secret documents that we had and of course I was in charge of that when we got to Fort Campbell to division headquarters. And of course that building is still there where my office was a t Fort Campbell where the eagle is and the flag pole and all that that is where my office was when I was at Fort Campbell. When we came in of course we came back on boat from Japan and we stopped at Hawaiian Islands and I had some Japanese friends who had some family in the Hawaiian Islands. My interpreter squad was in Japan after I got my commission they sent me out to Umota they had a jump school there and I was part of the Umota Cadre and I had interpreters over there in Japan Bobby and Doris Osheda and they had kin in the Hawaiian Islands and when I got to the Hawaiian Islands they let us stay there a few days on the way back. They came came down to the docks can got me showed me all over the

islands and everything. I had a real good visit there I had never been to Hawaii. Then we came on through the Sues Cannel and came around to New Orleans and came on a train and of course I lived right close to New Orleans and when I came back now remember I had been gone three years and I came right through my hometown and couldn't get off I was on the train and I just could see all the places I had been raised up with the little towns you know. And we came back to Fort Campbell now we came to Nashville and when we came into Fort Campbell we came on the Tennessee Central Railroad. And this railroad down here came right through Clarksville it came right down the Cumberland River and part of it is still around part of the railroad bridge. That bridge down here in town where they have the trail where their making that trail through from the river that part of that bridge is part of the Tennessee Central Railroad. It came in to Fort Campbell and that's where we came and like I said I was in the advanced party. The gradually little by little all of the 11th airborne division ended up at Fort Campbell.

Interviewer: I want to get back to some of your memories of Europe. What was your leadership like? Did you really depend on your sergeant or first sergeant or how did your interaction with them what was it like?

Mr. Lee: Your leadership composed of our sergeant was sergeant Sanders he was from Odessa, Missouri and of course like I said I was a PFC we only had eight men in our unit cause it like I said its intelligence and reconicents. We were separate from all of the other units. But we were under we based under the 385th infantry regiment and of course you had a coronel the coronel was in charge of the regiment and on down we had a lieutenant coronel for had four battalions right on down. And each company had a captain and when you were in one of the units they had the lower unites they had first lieutenants and my immediate supervisor was a first lieutenant, Lieutenant Kennedy. And you remember during WWII everybody practically went in regardless and he was a lawyer in civilian life. He was Wyoming and he really he couldn't wait to get out so he could go back to law practice. He was part of the part of the S2 section and that's what we worked out of we worked out of the S2 section which is intelligence part of the unit. We gathered all of the information that's what we did gathered information so the rest of the units could go across rivers or do whatever they was going to do.

Interviewer: Do you feel like they led you well? Did you trust them while you were there were they important to you?

Mr. Lee: What's that honey?

Interviewer: Did you feel like your leadership led you well while you were there? Did you have a lot of trust for them?

Mr. Lee: Oh yeh you learned to depend on each other so much that's very important very important. That's the reason we have we call them fox hole buddies and everybody depends on everybody else. I didn't get wounded there wasn't no bold but we were waiting to cross the Rine River one experience that was not too good we had to cross the Rine River and the Navy was going to carry us across the Rine River they had these Navy boats and all and that's how we were going to get across the Rine River. And we could see the Germans and of course they could see us when got out there where they could see us and we had these field classes and all and sometimes we had these big field glass we'd mount on tripod

and all and we knew where they were and they knew where we were. And the Germans the best weapon they had was on a tank it was an 88 mm and we had 90 mm on our tanks but there tanks were far superior to ours. And they would shoot one man with that 88 mm that's how good they were with that thing. And so we was waiting to go across the Rhine River and we got a guess a little bold a little careless and they shot right into us and killed two of my men in our squad and I woke up in the hospital, I didn't know where I was, it knocked me out and I woke up in the hospital I had been there already a day or two. I was alright there wasn't no scratch on me or nothing I was fine. And so they sent me back to another hospital a field hospital and I started telling them every day I'm not going to stay in here I'm not going to stay in here so finally I convinced them to let me go back to my unit I wanted to go back to my unit. And when I got back to my unit my unit still hadn't crossed the Rhine River and the Navy carried us across. But it was difficult those rivers because the Germans they had all kind of pillboxes along those rivers you know. Between France and Germany is where they had the Siegfried line and they had all of these obstacles so the tanks couldn't get through either you had to blow up the concrete obstacles so the tank could get through and of course all of those things had to be done before we could get through there. And it was so good to get through and take them pillboxes over we'd go down in the and we could see what all they had been doing and where they had been and all.

Interviewer: Would you ever take them over? Would there still be Germans inside the pillbox?

Mr. Lee: Well we had to kill them yeh there Germans they wasn't going to sometimes they stayed until we threw grenades on them. That's how you a lot of that all of us were equipped with I had two fragmentation grade grenades on each side on my belt and I had two chemical white phosphorous grenades they will burn you up when you throw one of them. They will explode and they will burn you up, we had two of them and of course we had our mortars 81 mm mortars and they had white phosphorous for shells if they seen a bunch of Germans sometimes they would drop that white phosphorous in there and set them on fire you know. And then we had flame throwers those flame throwers was good for those pillboxes. We'd use them sometimes the flame throwers.

Interviewer: Would you guys use the pillboxes for yourselves once you had taken them over or would you just leave them?

Mr. Lee: No we basically didn't use them too much because the holes pointed the wrong way we was going that way and the holes were pointed towards France and so forth. But after we crossed the Rhine River we made some progress unto Germany you know that's where we crossed. We crossed at Bopard a place called Bopard Germany is where we crossed it had several not that many crossings but of course like I said the Navy carried us across. And we you can't believe how many rivers they have in Germany I mean they just one little river after another. And that's a real obstacle when you're in battle crossing rivers. And our combat engineers they were the bravest men they'd come in there at night and they'd put a steel bridge up across the river that was the only way you could get across you know is those pontoon bridges. And they would put that steel bridge across the river.

Interviewer: So while you were moving across Europe where would you guys stay when you were sleeping? Would you have

Mr. Lee: We'd dig holes we'd dig holes on the ground and when we went into little towns when we got ready to take a town they would call the artillery we had the 105 right close to our unit they were close then we had the 155 mm they were the big ones they were about 6 or 8 miles behind us. And that's another things when we made all that relay and everything we got all of the information we would call the grid coordinance back and that's the way they'd fire and we'd have an artillery spotter up there and you could hear that 10155 shell going over it was making a hissing sound and you could hear it going over your head and of course they would fire one and the spotter would tell them your too far up or your too far back and they called that firing for effect. And when they got the right thing they would start just one shell after another they would have just a whole a bunch of them just one shell after another. And before we went in then to a town you know that's what they did and we had tanks that would come up. We tried to stay away form the tanks because when the Germans when the tanks come up they'd shoot at the tanks and of course they'd shoot at us too.

Interviewer: So were you moving on foot?

Mr. Lee: Yeh I was on foot yeh we were infantry we were straight infantry. Sometimes we got a ride when we had a piece to go maybe if we could do it we would get a ride but most of the time we walked. And we walked and we walked sometimes it would be three or four days of just walking and digging fox holes and walking digging fox holes and walking you know its according to how fast we was moving up.

Interviewer: How long did it take you guys to dig a fox hole?

Mr. Lee: Well we had little shovels every one of us had little shovels we carried and it was according to the land some of it was kind of rocky some of it was easy to dig in. And if they are shooting at you you just dig what they call a slip trench that's a long shallow trench and you get down. See when the artillery hits it goes that way across everyway it just explodes and you could get down in those trenches and it would go over your head if you was down far enough. And so that was the best way.

Interviewer: How deep would a slip trench have been I mean how many feet deep?

Mr. Lee: About a foot and a half it would be long enough you dug that real quick. That's when there would be maybe or you would get down in a hole you'd just find a place you could get in. But sometimes they would catch us there's a lot of pine trees in Germany and sometimes they would catch us in those pine trees and they would fire the artillery and hit the pine trees and the pine trees would splinter and come right down on you and that killed a lot of men when those pin tress you couldn't get out you know they just come down. And we couldn't get through those pin forest because well it's that tanks couldn't get through there and all of the little ole roads in Germany they are just little ole small country roads. I mean they were really had to get through those forests they have a lot of trees over there a lot of tress and that was difficult to get through. I think the most difficult place we fought in was about down around Luxemburg in that part. When we went into Germany from Luxemburg that was the most difficult they had more little rivers to cross and they had all these pine trees.

Interviewer: Did you feel like the Germans had an advantage because they were firmilure with the landscape already?

Mr. Lee: Well they were in their own home they were in there you know they knew where they were. It's just like being here in Tennessee somebody come in here we'd know what to do where we were and we could do it a lot better than they could. But the Germans really I mean the closer and closer we got to Germany the harder they fought cause they didn't want us in Germany in all you know. And of course everyday the B17s and B24s is what we had the B17s come over during the day and the B24s at night. But the B24s were a little slower they carried more bombs than the B17s. The B17s sometimes we'd have as many there would be so many there would be a dark shadow there would be just hundreds of B17s come over together come over together to bomb maybe we had a town we was going to take and they would just drop all their bombs right on that town before we went in. Of course we had the artillery too. And we would see a lot of the B17s we'd see them during the day when they got shot down and some of them went into German territory and got captured. We see them when they'd jump out with parachutes but we couldn't help them because they was behind the German lines. And some of them would land close to us and we you know could help those men and we did help some of them. But a lot of them the plane would be on fire when they shot it down. The Germans they had airplanes too. They had a 109 a message smith fighter which was real good and so forth. And let me take a little break here hon.

Interviewer: Now when you lost men in your unit how were they who did they add new people to it how were their spots filled? Did they bring in men from other units?

Mr. Lee: When we had we had recruits come in all the time raw recruits and when our units a lot of times they would pull us back after we went into a maybe we had a battle you know we had been in and lost a lot of men. We had a lot men killed and so we had to pull back and get new men and so they'd pull us back. We'd stay up there maybe the longest I ever stayed right on the front line was probably three weeks at a time right on the front lines you know. Then we'd pull back for well we'd go back about two miles maybe and we'd get hot showers and hot meals. Other wise we had those C-rations that's all we had C-rations.

Interviewer: Now was it hard to integrate the new men into your unit after you had trained with other men?

Mr. Lee: Yeh kind of we'd well I won't say we didn't trust them but we didn't know them. And most of them were kind of scared too you know you come up there and you're not used to people shooting at you you kind of think twice. So we would do the best we could our unit our scout unit they had to be specially trained for that kind of work and it wasn't like we were the infantry but we were scouts. And our job was to make sure that all of the information that we could we would feed it back to the main units so they'd know where to go and what to do and who to shoot at and when to shoot and everything like that.

Interviewer: What did you feel like the difference between the men that you were with that had experienced combat and the new men that came in? Did you guys feel like you had a lot more knowledge of what to do did you see them make simple mistakes that you guys had already done?

Mr. Lee: Pretty well by the time they got to us they had been pretty well trained by people that had been up there that went back to train them. It's just like when Pearl Harbor came you know after Pearl Harbor we had men that came that went through that and they came to our units and told us how it was and what happened and everything. So then they integrated people into we wouldn't get over two or three men in each squad the new men at one time they wouldn't put a whole bunch they would scatter them around. And of course then in the service and they probably still have the same thing we had what we call the MOS that's your spec number and that's what we assign people by ours were our MOS mine was 7601 that was scout you know. And everyone had their own MOS and all your records were cataloged like that so infantry had their own MOS and everything.

Interviewer: As you moved through Europe did you ever encounter any civilians and did you feel like you were able to trust them if you did?

Mr. Lee: Alright here's what happened when we would take a town there's a lot of experiences I could I'll just give you one experience we had in taking a little city. Let's say the town had they had a lot of little villages over there maybe 5,000 people lived in it. See over there they all lived in a town and went out to their farms they didn't have many farm houses they all lived in those towns and went out to the farms. But anyway when we'd take one of those towns one of the worst ones we had the Germans we thought we was ready to go into that town and take it and the Germans put up white flags and we thought everything was fine but when we got close to the city limits they started shooting at us again so we just pulled back and waited till dark till we called the artillery back in and waited until dark and when we went in that time we didn't take that many prisoners because we didn't trust them anymore. But most of the time the civilians were already gone when we got in there. No we went into some towns that even had left their food on the table they left so quick. We'd get a surprise you know we might be setting out there waiting to go in and they didn't know when we was going to come in and we'd have artillery shooting you know going over head and everything we might go in there at night or something they didn't know when we was coming so they would get up and leave everything just like and if they left all of their food on the table we didn't mind eating it there wasn't nothing wrong with it. And sometimes that's kind of against we wasn't supposed to do that you do a lot of things up there your not supposed to cause your up there by yourself a lot of times and they are shooting at you. But when we occupied a town then we had teams that came in later on and they would try to get the civilians back we wanted it to be as natural as it could. We were not afraid of the civilians you know and if you didn't have a uniform on and you was a soldier and we caught you you got into real trouble because that's you know. But there was several experiences like that we had that was good and bad.

Interviewer: Now did you ever have to take men prisoner and if you did what was that experience like?

Mr. Lee: Oh yeh there at the last hon well the last month they were still shooting at us but they knew it was all over with and we got a lot of prisoners. One time we had a lot of prisoners and we were guarding them and they came by and I said something about it was so cold over there we was always talking about good to be in warm climate. I said something about Florida and one of the prisoners marching by us said I want you to know that I graduate from University of Florida and said I finished and he spoke perfect English. And of course the thing about the Germans when they are in the early grades they learn

languages not like us we don't learn languages they learn languages. And a lot of the Germans could speak perfect English you know. And so we had to be careful in all of our conversations if we had something we didn't want them to know about we didn't dare let them hear what we said especially if they could hear us close enough it made a difference.

Interviewer: What would you do with the soldiers when you got them?

Mr. Lee: What hon?

Interviewer: What would you do with the prisoners?

Mr. Lee: We had a process at first we would search them and get everything off them and we'd get their names and we had to tag them and everything and all. And they sent them back they had steps they went through as a prisoner. And you know we had a lot of prisoners sent to the United States. At Fort Campbell they had prisoners' out there that worked on farms and everything else.

Interviewer: Did you ever get any that were resistant or that tried to give you a hard time?

Mr. Lee: Yeh all of the all of the storm troopers you didn't dare you didn't dare turn your head a minute those storm troopers they would kill you in a minute. They were the worst ones you know and of course they had Gestapo too which was their intelligence group and they could be a civilian or could be in uniform. And so we pretty well understood all of that we had been taught about those things and that's one of those things we were taught in England you know they tried to they identified all of the uniforms we had to be able to tell what they were what kind of uniforms they wore and their rank and all of that all those things we had to be able to do you know. When we caught prisoners then we had to know what to do with them and everything and we'd treat the officers were separated as soon as we got them the officers were separated from the men. Because those officers had so much control over the men there would be trouble you know when we sent them back so we had identification we separated them and all.

Interviewer: What little things do you have in your box there? Anything else you'd like to show me?

Mr. Lee: Yeh these I believe I showed you did I show you the combat infantry badge?

Interviewer: No you didn't show me that let me zoom in on that.

Mr. Lee: This is I'm so proud of this now I'm proud of it because one thing you got extra money when you had one of these. Now the infantry badge the basic badge I got when I was in Camp Lacoy, Wisconsin I got that we took all kind of test and you ended up with that in the infantry. That showed you had qualified as an infantry man. And then they wreath that you see around it that wreath was when I got in combat out unit was one of the first ones to get the combat infantry badge. One of the first ones the reason we was on e of the first ones is because we were scouts and we went out there first and of course you got shot at. And when the Germans started shooting at us we were qualified fro that wreath that's around there and see that's \$10 extra a month and that meant a lot because I got \$34 a month when I first went in. And of course I spent part of that was war bond money \$7 of that went to war

bonds and then I sent home \$20 so you know what I had I didn't have much left and you didn't eat anything because they furnished everything you had. But I was real proud of this because it meant extra money I was so proud when I was an enlisted man I got \$50 a month for jumping jump pay and then when I got to be an officer I got \$100 I never did think that was fair about it because the enlisted men did the same thing we did but anyway that's the way it was. We got like I say those campaign ribbons I might have showed that to you I don't know. But I'm so proud of this this is the 11th airborne division I got that recently and I've got a little card with it and the card says Angle 1,739 the 11th airborne division of course got that name of Angles when they made that jump at Corregidor they jumped on the Losbanos that was the name of the prison camp and they made that jump I wasn't in that I joined the 11th airborne division later on in occupation force. I really I tell you what I was so glad to get through jump school by the time I got through that fifth jump the first time I hit on one side back there on my back part and the next time I hit on the other side and I said well the third jump I don't know where I'm going to hit because it sure is sore. But sometimes we made two jumps two days and one jump the other day it was five jumps. You qualified if you made five jumps you know that was your qualification. But that was one of the highlights of my career when I finished jump school.

Interviewer: can we pause for on minute?

Mr. Lee: Okay

Interviewer: How did you get selected to be part of the 11th airborne?

Mr. Lee: We had that privilege when I left for Japan I knew pretty well that's what I wanted to do join the 11th airborne division because I had heard about them and read about them and you know they were in the Pacific. Basically they did all of their training and they were in the Pacific they did a lot they did jumps down there and of course they had a lot of experiences that a lot of people don't know about. And I was so proud to be selected when I got to Japan while I was waiting for my assignment we had a big assignment depot Yomo it's called Yomo it's right there out of Tokyo and that's where I joined the 11th airborne division.

Interviewer: Where did you go for flight school?

Mr. Lee: For flight school?

Interviewer: Not flight school jump school.

Mr. Lee: Jump school they had a jump school in Japan and we went through there. Now the jump school over there if you stayed in the 11th airborne division they had one unit it's called the glider infantry and if you didn't want to jump they would send you through glider school. Of course you could go through both of them I rode in those gliders I never did qualify because I didn't want to be a glider man I wanted to jump. And but we had men who didn't want to jump but most of them with the 11th airborne were jumpers even though they'd go through glider school most of them were jumpers. We had men coming in all the time to the 11th airborne division from Fort Benning. And everybody of course we had a lot of

fun back then we called them the Bennigng Bullets and they would come in for assignment and that's what I did from the very beginning.