

I am Tom Edwards of Austin Peay State University and this is Mr. Herbert J. Fulsom, a veteran of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in World War II in the 401<sup>st</sup> outfit. We are here to talk about his experiences during the war and the depression and some other questions along those lines. I want to ask you first when you were born and where.

Mr. Fulsom: I was born on January 16, 1921, up in Woodstock, Ontario. When I was roughly a year and a half old my parents brought me to Lackawanna, New York, where my dad got a job in a steel plant. He worked there until he died in 1948 at the age of 59 years old.

He worked at the same company all throughout the depression which is incredibly rare; at least according to the text books. While he was working you were going to school I assume.

Mr. Fulsom: Yes. I went to four different elementary schools and three years of high school; which I left when I became seventeen. I just diddled for a couple of years until I started working at a garage, for about six months. Then I had a ruptured appendix and I never went back there. I went to work at the steel plant. The same steel plant as my dad but at a different department; inspector department. I worked there until I was sixty-two years old; a total of forty-two years.

From what I understand about the steel, it can be a very inhospitable work environment.

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah, hot and dangerous.

Were you ever injured?

Mr. Fulsom: No.

Lady beside him: Yes you were when you fell on that....

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. This was before I retired. I tripped over one of the levers that they use to pour the steel with. I didn't think I injured myself. I landed on both elbows when I fell to the ground. About 3 o'clock in the morning I'm keeping her awake with the pain. She said, "You better get up and go down to the dispensary and have them look at it." So I did and they found a fracture in my right elbow. It didn't bother me too much. I got compensation for it. But that was the only real time I got hurt in the plant.

During the depression Roosevelt of course was doing a series of fireside chats. Do you recall any of those sitting around listening to the radio?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. My dad listened to it quite often and of course I had to listen to it too. In those days when the parents listened to something you didn't change the station.

Did you have particular programs that you like to listen to?

Mr. Fulsom: There was Jack Armstrong, Winslow Denave, \_\_\_\_\_ and that was back in the middle 1930's.

Did you have a favorite or did you like a bunch of them?

Mr. Fulsom: I think it was Jack Armstrong; everybody loved him. He was the All-American Boy; sponsored by Wheaties.

After you had been at work awhile, you started in January 1942. Of course Pearl Harbor was December 7, 1941. Do you remember your reaction to that event?

Mr. Fulsom: I was kind of excited.

Did you know you were going? Did you sense that you were going to be....

Mr. Fulsom: I figured that someday I would be going. I didn't know how long but in the meantime six months later we got married. Three months after that I was heading for Fort Campbell down in Fort Niagara.

You were at Fort Niagara for just a short time; just a few days.

Mr. Fulsom: I was there for about four or five days.

Then you went to Fort Bragg and then the training began?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes, ten weeks of basic training.

How did you like the basic training?

Mr. Fulsom: It was kind of strenuous because you took orders all the time. You didn't question the orders you just did what they tell you. You had to look sharp. A Lieutenant told me one morning to get a haircut. So I did get a haircut that afternoon. The next morning he says, "I thought I told you to get a haircut?" It wasn't quite short enough so I had to go back and get another haircut.

After Fort Bragg and the training, ultimately you ended up in the 101<sup>st</sup> in the glider portion. How did that come about?

Mr. Fulsom: We left Fort Niagara and pulled into Fort Bragg about three or four in the morning. We went to a large building after we got off of the train and we were told that we were going to be in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne by a Captain Shelby. He described what the gliders were all about. One young fellow from New York State said, "Sir, Are we going to repair them gliders?" He said, "No you are going to ride in them; which everybody was kind of dismayed about. That was the end of that until we went to our respective barracks and started our basic training from there.

What was the training specifically in the gliders like? Do you remember how you felt the first time you had to be dropped in one?

Mr. Fulsom: First we had to go to Laurinburg, North Carolina. We took about two weeks of glider training there to learn how to tie down jeeps and artillery pieces. The glider holds thirteen men; one whole squad. You had the regular glider pilot and you had the leader, the corporal or the sergeant, of the squad. He was the actual co-pilot. If anything happened to the pilot well he had to take over although he knew nothing about a glider. We took a few glider rides around the countryside. It was exciting as long as you didn't crash. But everything went well.

What was it like landing it; compare it to flying in an airplane and landing in an airplane. What's it like to land in a glider like compared to an airplane?

Mr. Fulsom: On a plane you can hear the motors running whereas in a glider you fly along and hit air pockets and all of a sudden the glider drops 25, maybe 30 feet. You wouldn't be expecting it and it might upset your stomach a little bit. Of course the landing was fairly smooth. Some of those glider pilots could stop a glider on a dime. They could come in like they had hydraulic brakes with just the controls on the glider which brought it to a stop.

How long of a stretch, just roughly, did it take for that glider to come to a complete stop once it touched down?

Mr. Fulsom: Probably about 100 feet, I guess; 100-150 feet.

So you completed your training specifically in the gliders; and then where did you go?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes. Of course we did our normal training, 25-mile hikes, 9-mile rat races, and compass courses. You would go into the woods and try to find your way out and hope that someone you knew could help find your way out. While you were out in the field you ate K-rations and C-rations. They weren't really delicious and half the time you ate them cold because you had no way to heat them up.

I assumed you were trained with the basic weapon; the M1?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes the M1 Rifle and bazookas.

You were trained with bazookas as well?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes, I was classified as a bazooka man when we went into combat.

As bazooka operator, what would be your main targets?

Mr. Fulsom: Tanks mostly; and buildings if you knew people were going to be in buildings or any housing.

Well you know obviously from hindsight that the German tanks were far superior at least in armor; both the panther and the tiger. Did you know during training how incredibly well built these German tanks were?

Mr. Fulsom: No they never told us. We just hoped for good results when we fired them.

What portion of the tanks would you aim for?

Mr. Fulsom: The tracks; if you knocked them off the tracks they can't move.

So after your training is completed and it's time to head overseas, did you go across in a military vessel or was it a commercial liner?

Mr. Fulsom: It was a regular....we actually went across on an English troop ship called a Stratton; which had all Indians from India. They were all ship hands. The food was terrible. I think we ate bad food half the time. We broke down outside of New York and we wound up in Saint John's, New Foundland. We were there for thirty days until they repaired the ship. When they did repair it, we started out of the harbor and we hit a large rock and we damaged it again. We were there for another week or so until another ship came in and picked us up. The convoy we were supposed to meet when we left was sunk so we felt kind of fortunate about that.

While you were crossing the Atlantic, how concerned were you about the wolf packs? They hadn't been quite neutralized just yet.

Mr. Fulsom: The weather was kind of bad so we didn't worry too much about the wolf packs. You always had it on your mind. You know that if you heard a loud bang, you knew you were in trouble; it wasn't a rock in the ocean.

But you never had any instances where you had to maneuver away from them?

Mr. Fulsom: No. We were in a convoy and every so often we would have our life belt exercises so you knew what to do in case something did happen.

Did you get seasick at all?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. We didn't know if it was from the food or the movement of the ship. You couldn't take a shower because it was all salt water. You could put the soap on but you couldn't wash it off.

That sounds like an unpleasant trip. How long was it? Do you recall?

Mr. Fulsom: I think it was about five days from the time we left. We left Saint John's and had to go to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to load up with supplies and it took us about three or four days from there to go to England I guess, Liverpool.

Is that where you were at; in Liverpool?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

Did you have any preconceived ideas or notions about the British people? Did you have any expectations?

Mr. Fulsom: They were very nice to us. They invited us out to dinner every now and then. I went to church one night and the family sitting next to me invited me to their house and had tea and crumpets. Then I had a heck of a time finding my way back to camp or back to the barracks. But I made it anyway. The people were nice and treated you well.

You had an overall good impression of them?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

A lot of GI's didn't have similar experiences but usually those were the single men. The British had a saying and I'm sure you were familiar with it, "The problem with the Americans is they are overpaid, oversexed and over here. I'm sure that didn't apply to the married guys.

Mr. Fulsom: They claim we took all their girlfriends.

Once you arrived in England how much of your time was spent doing additional training? At what point did you realize that you were going to be participating in an invasion?

Mr. Fulsom: We did training everyday; going out on problems. We had our recreation day playing softball or different sports. After awhile you're in the Army for awhile you wished that you would go into combat because you had a lot of dry runs and this and that and it got boring. So you wished they would say, "Let's go! Let's get this thing over with!"

Did you feel that similar way when the invasion which was originally supposed to happen the day before but the weather was so bad? Did you feel that way; that you were just ready to go?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah.

The geography in Normandy, particularly where the gliders were to land, had these giant hedgerows which proved to be incredibly problematic for landing a glider. Were you aware that those hedgerows existed and that they were there?

Mr. Fulsom: No, not until we got there. We had briefing before and told of what causeways to look for and I think they mentioned the hedgerows. But they didn't mention the obstacles in the water on the beach. They had these things that were supposed to

hinder the landings. They are still there today I hear from people that were over there after the war at the fiftieth year anniversary and this and that.

So on the night of the invasion which will the night of June 5<sup>th</sup>; what were you doing?

Mr. Fulsom: We got on the ships about a whole day or two before. I think we boarded the landing crafts or the LST's about a day or two before and it was cold and rainy. It wasn't too pleasant of a trip over. From there we got about a mile within the beach and then we had to go down the rope ladders, under the landing craft and went in from there.

Did you get into a Higgins boat?

Mr. Fulsom: I think that was a Higgins boat, yeah. They talked about the guy that invented them on TV the last couple of days.

So you didn't actually glide in?

Mr. Fulsom: No I went in sea born. That was my landing craft. One regiment went in by glider. My regiment, 401, went in by landing craft. They didn't have enough gliders.

You went in on June 6<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

Did you hit Utah or Omaha?

Mr. Fulsom: Omaha Beach about ten thirty in the morning.

When you were in that Higgins boat and approaching Omaha Beach what was the, if there was, the general mood among the men.

Mr. Fulsom: Quite anxious! The fellow that was operating our boat got I think shrapnel or a shell went off over our head and he got wounded by it. But we got out of the boat and managed to re-shore alright.

When the front hatch of the boat dropped down and you started to disembark from the boat, was the water over your head?

Mr. Fulsom: No it was up to about here on me (and points to mid stomach). But anybody shorter; some fellows were maybe about 4 ½ feet tall and they were up to their neck carrying four field packs and machine guns and mortars or parts of a mortar which were quite heavy. That kind of bogged them down a little bit.

Did you have the standard Mae West; the inflatable belt?

Mr. Fulsom: No we didn't have those. We just had our regular equipment; rifle belts, leggings, and two sets of clothes on. We had our woolens and our impregnated clothing suit over that. It's like fatigues but they are impregnated to ward off any gas attacks or anything.

As soon as you got out of the boat, you and the men you were with, were you taking fire immediately?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yes, they were dropping shells around and small arms fire but we made it in to the beach alright. We rushed in and landed on the beach and then we had to sit there for an hour to find out what we were going to do from there on. A short while later we walked a little bit inland and ran into some dead soldiers.

Were they German or American?

Mr. Fulsom: German and a couple of American too.

Could you see your fortifications from your vantage point on the beach?

Mr. Fulsom: No.

What about the German pill boxes or the 88's?

Mr. Fulsom: No we didn't see any of that. We just heard them coming in. If you heard them going overhead you knew you were alright. But if you hear them coming and then they stopped then you are in trouble. You knew it was close by.

How long did you spend just roughly; I realize in this situation that you are probably not looking at you're watch. How long did you spend on the beach before you started working your way inland a little bit?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh about three or four hours until we got orientated on what they wanted to do.

I'm going to back up just a little bit. When you were coming in on the Higgins boat were the naval vessels shelling?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. We were under barrage all the time.

Did they continue shelling while you were on the beach?

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

I'm trying to get an idea of how loud it must sound to have a giant shell go off anywhere near you. Was it just incredibly deafening? What was that like? Not so much the fear of

being hit but just the sound of it; the sheer volume. Was it as loud as they talk about it in the books?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah; quite loud.

So once you start moving inland a little bit and the first night falls and of course the winter hasn't kicked in full force as it would later just yet. I'm assuming this was your first trip to France.

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

Was the terrain much different from anything you had seen before?

Mr. Fulsom: It was a beautiful countryside and of course you had your hedgerows. You saw bombed out houses but we didn't see any of the French people around; not the first couple of days anyway. After that you would see them coming and going here and there. There were people riding up and down the road on bicycles. They just went on with their normal lives even though the war was going on.

How were you treated by the French civilians?

Mr. Fulsom: Good.

Did they treat you as a liberator?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah.

So after your initial invasion you start moving in a little bit. What was that first night like? Did you dig foxholes?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah we dug in 6 trenches. I remember the Germans were firing 88 shells and they had screaming mimi's. They had an artillery piece of machinery and it had eight or ten barrels on it and these things would all come out just like a machine gun. You heard them go right over. If you didn't hear them anymore you knew they were going to hit you. It was kind of shaky. The very next morning we left there and walked a little ways. We had cross a hedgerow and you didn't know how far down; you had to walk over and hope nothing was on the other side. We lost one of our buddies. He was the cleanest guy in the Army I think. He never swore. He was always neat and he had a beautiful set of teeth. He was the first one killed.

Did you use the cricket much?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah.

One click to challenge, two to ....



Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah.

Were you ever in a situation to where you felt that it actually saved you?

Mr. Fulsom: No.

I was talking to another gentleman about the cricket and he said the think was more of a nuisance than anything else. He mentioned that he had lost it once and he heard a noise and he just jumped up and started saying, "Yankees! Roosevelt!" The other guy luckily was American and he said, "Shut the hell up or you are going to wake up the whole German Army!" In the first few days, this was obviously your first encounter with anything resembling battle and of course you are in the biggest battle in a certainly enabling history. Were you aware of the scope of what you were doing and just the sheer magnitude of it?

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah, we knew we had a big job ahead of us. You didn't know what you were going to run into from day to day. We went into a little town on D+ 3 or 4. We went into a town by the name of Carantan and everybody was celebrating. The ladies ere running, the girls were running out handing you bottles of wine and running up and kissing people. They never kissed me though. We went through town and we had to dig in. After we got all dug in we had to withdraw and get a little bit out of town and dig in again. Of course the Germans were shelling most of the time. You hear certain small arms fire now and then just to let you know that you were in a combat zone.

Do you recall your first experience with one of the German tanks?

Mr. Fulsom: I think it was about D + 2 or 3. In one incident we didn't know whether they were behind us or in front of us. So we were kind of alarmed by that. They had a lot of snipers that were shooting wooden bullets from the trees. You hoped that you didn't get weighed by one of those things.

What about mines? How heavy of a toll did they tank? Even psychologically Rommel loved to use mines.

Mr. Fulsom: We never came in contact with any mines until we got up in Holland actually and one of our sergeants got killed with one. He stepped on a landmine and it blew his leg off and he died.

You mentioned how you were in Operation Market Garden. How thrilled were you to learn that you would be under Montgomery now?

Mr. Fulsom: We didn't bother with that too much. We had heard that he wasn't the nicest guy but we didn't get too concerned with it; except for the British. Every day at 11 o'clock in the morning they would have to have their tea time. It didn't matter whether the Germans were coming or going. They still had to stop for their tea and that left a gap in the lines. That is why the Germans would run right through the lines sometimes

because the British stopped when they should have been going ahead. They stopped for tea. The operation got kind of bungled up.

How were the local civilians? Were they relatively friendly as well as the French were?

Mr. Fulsom: Most of them, yeah. The Dutch were very nice; actually we lived in their homes. They just ran around doing their work and we just sat there waiting for something to happen. The Dutch were really nice.

After Operation Market Garden, where did you go?

Mr. Fulsom: I went back to Morlanne and we were there for about two weeks when the situation came up with the bulge. We just packed up on cattle trucks and headed up to Belgium.

At any time in combat did you ever have to come down in a glider?

Mr. Fulsom: No, I never did.

That's probably very fortunate.

Mr. Fulsom: For D-Day we went in seaborne and when the gliders when they went to Holland I had sprained my ankle. I helped drive a ¾ ton truck up to France all the way up to Holland and I joined the company from there.

How surprised were you at the Battle of the Bulge because at that point the Germans had been on the run up to that point.

Mr. Fulsom: Everybody figured the war was over. Our General, Maxwell D. Taylor, had gone back to the states so we figured he were fixing up with the President for us to go home when this thing came up.

So you headed out towards; you'll piled up on these cattle trucks and headed toward the bulge; as you were heading there did you pass any American infantry coming the other way in retreat?

Mr. Fulsom: No actually I didn't notice any. When we got up on the line, we got up on this one road outside of Bastogne and there was this colored artillery group that went up past up going forward. During that night they all pulled out and left us alone. They more or less deserted us you know.

Did you have any idea just the incredible force that the Germans had bearing down on you?

Mr. Fulsom: No we didn't know. But we heard that we were surrounded.

Do you remember how you felt when you heard that you were surrounded? Was it disbelief? Was it as one gentleman put it when they asked him to surrender, "Aw Nuts!" Do you remember how you responded to that?

Mr. Fulsom: We just took it as a joke more or less you know. They knew what they were doing and we just hoped that everything would come out well.

Sometime between the beginning of the German counter offensive on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December and the 19<sup>th</sup> when they arrived pretty much at the border of Bastogne; there were a couple of incidents one in particular at Massacre at Normandy. I'm sure you are aware of that now. Were you aware of that at the time as you were coming into that?

Mr. Fulsom: No, we didn't know that until later on what we heard. We didn't know of any other outfits that were involved in this. We just thought we went up to Fulda to stop what was going on. But we didn't know anything about the 106<sup>th</sup> or the 29<sup>th</sup> Division.

What kind of an impression did you have about the German soldier? The Wehrmacht and the SS in particular, did you believe they were very, very good soldiers?

Mr. Fulsom: The Wehrmacht was just like us, they were a common soldier; where the SS were battle driven. They were more dangerous to fight against than the regular Wehrmacht. They were mostly a lot of kids and older people that didn't want any part of war. They were pushed into it.

So the battle is in full swing and Christmas is approaching. Do you remember what you were doing Christmas Eve?

Mr. Fulsom: We didn't have any turkey. We made an attack on a house down below; we were on a hill. One of the Lieutenants said, "I will take a bunch of men down there and clean it out." They can see these Germans coming in to this house. This Lieutenant took us down there and we lost about eight or ten men down there. My best buddy got killed.

While trying to oust them from the house?

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah. I was only from here to that wall over there away from him when he got shot by machine.

Is this someone that you had met during training or someone you had met a little bit later?

Mr. Fulsom: I met during training all the way through a training course. We were real good buddies all the way through up to that point. We bought a bike together over in England and he would have it one day and I would have it the next day. He used to talk about his wife and his little girl; which I finally got to meet after fifty years up in Jamestown, New York. This couple we are with now, I mentioned to them about a Crossly family. This Fred Crossly got killed and his wife said, "One of my nieces is

married to a Crossly.” They got in touch with him and they called up Fred’s daughter and said they were going to come down and visit us. This was about four or five years ago now. They come down and visit with us and we keep in touch every year. His wife just died last year; she took her own life.

How old was she?

Mr. Fulsom: She was probably in her seventies or so. She had quite a bit of pain due to arthritis or different ailments that the doctors couldn’t find what was wrong with her. She would write and complain about all her illnesses and pain and it finally caught up to her in the end. It was just before last Christmas.

After the battle that you lost your friend, what happened in the next couple of days? Were there any major engagements?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. We were being shelled constantly and we heard of different ones getting killed that had been in our company. A Lieutenant from another C Company, he got killed by artillery shells I guess or small arms fire.

By now it is very cold. It is supposed to be the coldest winter in fifty years in that area.

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah.

How in the world did you stay even remotely warm? Well that is a stupid question, you didn’t stay warm. How did you survive?

Mr. Fulsom: Well in the foxholes were warm.

Were you in a foxhole by yourself?

Mr. Fulsom: No it was with another man the whole time. I think the Germans had dug the foxholes previous to us being there. Some of them were about 6 x 6 square and maybe 5 feet deep. They had logs over the top; it was like a roof on a log cabin. They would put the dirt and the branches over that to camouflage it.

So it was like a little pill box.

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah it was. There was an opening in there; just enough to get in with little steps down in there. This one night we put our shelter halves over the opening to the foxhole and in the morning when I woke up and it was just like a \_\_\_\_\_. The shells had hit close by and put holes in this shelter half but I never got hurt at all. It just \_\_\_\_\_ I guess and it must have went in the dirt around us. We didn’t get touched.

You said you were being shelled constantly. I imagine you were in your hole. What was that like being shelled incessantly and having to sit in the place?

Mr. Fulsom: You were just hoping that they didn't have a direct hit on it. Some weren't that fortunate. One tank commander had a direct hit on his hole and he got killed outright.

Of course Patton's Third Army was rushing.

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah they were coming in then.

Did you know they were on their way?

Mr. Fulsom: No, but we heard about it; that we would be relieved shortly.

As Christmas turned into the New Year there were a lot of American prisoners taken around Bastogne. Were you aware of that as well?

Mr. Fulsom: No, we never heard anything about it.

How did it finally end in Bastogne?

Mr. Fulsom: Once the tanks came in, Patton's outfit, they pretty well....it was a long drawn out affair I guess from what I saw on television. But we didn't know anything about that. We were just glad to get out of there. Then we headed for the 7<sup>th</sup> Army fun to mop up down there.

How quickly were you being replaced with troops? At what rate were your replacements in?

Mr. Fulsom: I couldn't say off hand but I know we got replacements up in Bastogne. Guys would come in and this one group had come in and we were out in the open and the German came in and lay in some shells. Some of these guys got killed and we didn't even know who they were. I never got to know them or anything.

They said that the replacements would have much higher mortality rates because they hadn't learned the tricks of the trade just yet. They would come in and bunch up which would prove to be a nice target.

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah. They always told us not to bunch up; spread out. You might lose one person but you want lose ten people.

You finally got out of Bastogne. Were you injured at all there?

Mr. Fulsom: No.

You were very fortunate. You started heading toward to link up with the 7<sup>th</sup> Army.

Mr. Fulsom: Yes.

Where did you finally reach up with them?

Mr. Fulsom: It was down around Metz; outside of Metz. I don't remember just how long we were there; I think maybe about a week or so. A couple of days after we got there they drew my name out of a hat to go back to Paris for three days.

Did you have a choice between going to Paris and going somewhere else?

Mr. Fulsom: No.

But it was a good choice; just having that one choice was fine. So you went back for some much deserved R & R.

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah.

How long did you stay there?

Mr. Fulsom: For three days and then we came back and went right back on the lines again. After we left there we went back to Morlanne and did a little crawling on our hands and knees, like going through an infiltration course. We just kept exercising. One day the company runner came out and he said, "Herbert and Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_, go get packed up, you are going to Rivera for a whole week."

For a whole week. Did you know somebody high up?

Mr. Fulsom: No, just lucky. I can't win on the lottery but I was lucky to win on that. We went down there for the whole week and it cost us \$1. We lived in Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ right on the Mediterranean and just roamed around. You didn't have to salute officers; you could leave your tie and shirt open. It was a real vacation. We were down in Nice and the officers were down in \_\_\_\_\_. They didn't want the officers and the enlisted men to mingle. So they were in a different town.

How did you feel generally about your officers?

Mr. Fulsom: Good, there was one or two; one that I really didn't care about. I said two; there was one that let us down in Bastogne where a bunch of guys got killed. A bunch of guys got killed; he was an eager beaver. He wanted to make a name for himself. That is the way we took it anyway and he got us into trouble. The rest were really gentlemen.

You mentioned several times you used the word anxious prior to and I noticed that it was towards the beginning. This was really before battle. As you had got into these horrible battles and lost a friend did this anxiousness turn to something else? This is kind of a vague question but did you find that you felt a lot different that the onset of the battle was...was your perception much different?

Mr. Fulsom: Well you wonder sometimes whether you are going to be next or whether you were going to make it through because with shells landing you never knew where they were going to land at or how fortunate you were going to be to come through it. There is one person in particular, he was very unlucky. When we were in England we were playing ball one day. Somebody swung at the ball and the bat flew out of his hand and hit this fellow in the head. He got injured by it. Then it was D+2 and after we had crossed a hedgerow we had to go out in this field into this road to go up the road and he got hit with machine gun fire and he got killed. I guess he was having trouble with his wife too. Everything seemed to bunch up at one time for him and he finally got killed and that was it. You had to have a positive thought. You didn't think about getting killed or anything. You just hoped it didn't happen.

There was a saying that was supposedly widely used at the time. It don't mean nothing; somewhere along those lines to where it was almost a coping mechanism when you had to see something like a buddy die or just see and smell the horrors of war. It was just something that you do to deal with it. Did you have a similar phrase or something that you did to cope with it?

Mr. Fulsom: Not that I remember, no.

Just plowed on enough to get out.

Mr. Fulsom: Yeah. I know up at Holland there was this one little town we were in and there was a lot of shelling by the Germans. In one case I consider myself pretty lucky. We pulled up in like a crossroad; it was two roads joined together. We got there and my squad sergeant says, "You dig in over here!" I said, "No, there is already 6 trench here. I will stay right here." He said, "No, you dig over here and leave that one alone." That one that I would have taken had a direct hit on it.

That was probably one of the officers that you had a favorable opinion of.

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah, it was a sergeant. He did the right thing by telling me to dig in another spot.

So when was the war starting to wind down for you?

Mr. Fulsom: We had to go up on the Rheine River near, I can't think of the town but it was on the Rheine River. It was soon after they had the \_\_\_\_ bridge crossing. We lost our Colonel up there. They had this large railroad gun on the other side of the Rheine; the Germans did that every so often they would fire. A couple days we were up in this big factory and it was sort of like a warehouse. It had coffee in there which was terrible; the German coffee. They had eyeglasses and frames lying all over the place and you could pick all the frames that you wanted if you wanted to take them home with you. They would fire these railroad guns and you could hear it coming and all of a sudden you wouldn't hear anything anymore. You would hear the hollow propelling of it and then all of a sudden you wouldn't hear it again for maybe a minute or so and then all of a sudden

you would hear it coming again. We always said it was stopping to pick up fuel or something. Our Colonel, one of the shells hit close to where he was in this housing there and he lost his leg to it. He is still living, he is 99 today.

As you started moving into Germany, did you run into any German civilians or had they been pretty much evacuated by that point?

Mr. Fulsom: They were pretty well evacuated. We went up to a little place and it was actually a day or so before the war ended. We were in this little town up in Austria where we heard about the war ending. Then we moved from there into Berchtesgaden where we stayed for about a month or so. Then we went back to France again.

Were you really surprised when you found out that the war was over or did you pretty well know that it was over?

Mr. Fulsom: We figured it was pretty well over, yeah.

But of course everybody thought that too with the bulge. You just had to wonder maybe what else Hitler had up his sleeve. Of course now you are in Germany so that is a big difference.

Mr. Fulsom: We had a nice stop in Germany and of course we weren't allowed to fraternize with the German people. We were still their enemies as far as that went. We had a company party once up in Berchtesgaden. They brought a bunch of girls up to join the party and they had food and drinks and all this and that. It was a pleasant affair.

So you just didn't have the opportunity to have much contact with the Germans at all.

Mr. Fulsom: No.

Looking back on the experience, is there something that you look back on that just makes you laugh or smile or something that you just wouldn't trade for anything?

Mr. Fulsom: Oh yeah, different things that came up like the good times. You had your fun times and you had your bad times. I think the good times outlasted the bad times because I made it back home again.

When you finally came back home you ended up going back to ...?

Mr. Fulsom: Steel plant.

Were there a whole lot of women there when you got back and working still?

Mr. Fulsom: They had pretty well let go by then. I think that soon after the war ended and the men started coming back that the women lost their jobs. They went back to their housekeeping chores.



Also I wanted to ask you, after V-E Day many of the veterans in the European theater believed that they were headed toward the Pacific theater then. Were you under that impression as well?

Mr. Fulsom: Well the high point men, we weren't worried about it too much. I had eight. I think I was lacking three points of going home with the first bunch. They took a group of men from our division I guess and they would have been headed for Japan but the war ended. They went home instead of going to Japan so they got an early out where I had to stay behind another month or two and wait for the shipping. We had gone up to Camp Pittsburg when we had left our division in \_\_\_\_\_, France. We went up to Camp Pittsburg and that is when the English shipping was on strike. So they sent us down to Laharve down in Marsas from Laharve. We went down to Marsas and we were there for about two or three weeks and finally we got to come home. That was the end of my overseas experience.

Have you been back to Europe since?

Mr. Fulsom: No, I never went back.

Oh you haven't?

Mr. Fulsom: I would have liked to have gone but I bought a new car instead. It would have been a nice experience though from what I hear. The Dutch people treat the Americans really royally.

Well Mr. Fulsom I appreciate your time. It was an incredible story. Was there anything that you would like to say that I didn't cover or I just didn't think to ask you a question about that you would like to add?

Mr. Fulsom: No not that I can think of offhand.

I thank you very much!

Mr. Fulsom: Thank you I hope I gave you enough information to make it worthwhile of your time.

You absolutely did!

(End of Tape)

This transcript was completed on May 16, 2009.