

Gordon King

101st Airborne Division

This interview is being conducted on Gordon King of the 101st Airborne.

Mr. King: S-o-b-o-l, that would be captain of A company until D Day, or before D Day was S-o-b-e-l. From what I heard after the war he was kind of a lone soul, an outcast. He died without much attention to his funeral or anything like that; and that was kind of sad because although he probably was not or would not have been a good combat commander, he sure as hell trained E company at that point.

He trained them well?

Mr. King: They'd all admit it, belatedly. They were all in danger of being court marshaled of course; Richard Winters, too. When he talked to the battalion commander, the battalion commander told him, "of course with this suggestion I could have you hauled away right now regardless." But the battalion commander Straiter had a little bit more sense than that. Remember, I said he was a foxhole commander that was able to pick men. So then they took it up to Sink and I think ultimately either Sink or somebody in division headquarters, which we did not have then so it would have been Sink's decision maybe to a corps commander and it was just a matter of a rubber stamp. But, they would let the status quo go, at least temporarily like a testing period. I think that occurred even prior to D Day. They fished around for various people to take over the company and Winters was the only logical choice. His war record started on D Day of course bespoke the wisdom of that choice.

Very good. I hate to jump around, kind of like to do things chronologically. You mentioned your quick release and your parachute to get to your Mae West. When I spoke with folks that have been in the gliders, they didn't receive any...

Mr. King: No parachute.

Well, that too, but they didn't receive any training: emergency evacuation from the aircraft or from the glider in case of a water born crash or something like that. Did they give the paratroopers, since you were crossing the channel, did they give you training on what to do in case the C47 went down?

Mr. King: Yup. We had all of that, at least in the 506th.

So the 506 was thinking ahead?

Mr. King: Some of the fellows do not recall it too precisely. It was probably not one of the actually from the aircraft, from the mockup aircraft, but we all had the rudiments of what to do; and that was unhook, unhitch, and get out the door.

And then inflate?

Mr. King: Exactly, right!

I ask that because the gentlemen that I interviewed yesterday said they didn't warn them not to inflate their Mae West until after they were outside the glider. It had caused some problems trying to get out the glider.

Mr. King: In other words, they did have rudimentary training as far as exiting the glider in case of water landing.

Well this gentleman cut a hole in the roof.

Mr. King: That was, I believe, an instruction.

The best way to get out, sure, through that canvas top. That worked out fine, but he said that they weren't briefed on exiting the aircraft. So once you inflate the Mae West, you couldn't move around inside the glider.

Mr. King: What's it going to do? If it's going, sinking down through the water the only way you're going to be is up through the roof unless of course it flipped and this it's the reverse situation would be a little more difficult because the floor was reinforced but you got the side.

You got the side panel, you could go through that. But they were trying to get something out of the tail and the glider was floating but they hadn't, they had already inflated the jackets. They couldn't get all the way into the tail of the aircraft. There was no room for them because they had that big inflated life preserver on, so.

Mr. King: But at least they felt safe.

A little bit; they felt safer once they got out the hole they cut in the roof.

Mr. King: I've been a white-water canoeist for years and, when you're looking at ahead what appears to be watery hell, you pull your straps a little tighter on your lifejacket. I've gone through some really bad ones. You'd scarcely think a man could survive. Your head stays out of water and you could even hang on to your paddle and always have like a 50 foot tow rope to help straighten your canoe out and attempt to ferry to shore once you're over the rapids, it's a two man system; one would hang onto the raft and angle it toward shore and a guy pulling it at the other end the back paddles with the cloth tucked into his life preserver and tries to angle it toward shore. It's called ferrying and using the current to take it to shore. All of the techniques are easily learned and similar techniques of course had to be used and practiced; just like a lot of things when you're joining parachutes and airplanes and people and water.

Water being the equalizer?

Mr. King: Water being the equalizer, but a killer if you don't have something to keep you afloat. Because of the loads we had back then, if you had your whole load on you and say lost half your life preserver, you'd slowly have gone under, regardless.

What year did you go into the Army, sir?

Mr. King: August of 1942.

Were you a volunteer, or were you drafted?

Mr. King: No. All paratroopers ultimately were volunteers. A lot were drafted but then some for the money, some for the opportunity, and some for the hope of glory before they died. Most, of course, a lot of infantries, of course they got the hope, and then died. But the \$50 was a big lure, doubling the private's pay at that time.

Was that the incentive that lured you toward airborne, or the adventure?

Mr. King: I had placed first among a group of 24 men being examined for the Air Force: Air Force cadet at the Wausau, Wisconsin Post Office. One thing kept me from pilot training: a 20/40 right eye. I was easily acceptable as bombardier or navigator, but I wanted to fly. So, I decided I might think this over a little, and on the way out the very aggressive recruit Sergeant, I think he literally grabbed me by the arm, and showed me a little pamphlet. I imagine several thousand other paratroopers saw the same one: "Jump into the fight." Wow. Wings: Silver wings. That was all I wanted at the time.

Sure. So that was all the incentive?

Mr. King: Right, and then the \$50 coming with it. Boy that was pretty hard to resist. So, he tested me for the qualifications. You weren't supposed to be over 6 feet at the time because of the size of the jump doors and they figured you wouldn't be, just add difficulty to the tall men to scrunch down, loaded, and get out the jump door of the old aircraft type C-53. The C-53 had a smaller jump door than the C-47 which had a larger door. But, Sgt Grandwis? as I recall, had his scale of altitude along the doorpost and literally took a book of whatever size off his desk which he used for his measuring instrument and put it on top of my head and pushed down, just hard enough down to make me 6 foot, just right. I suppose he did that for taller guys later.

So where did you take your first training?

Mr. King: My first training was in Camp Toccoa. This book here tells all about it; with the Currahees. It was outside the little town of Toccoa, Georgia. Currently, as far as they've been able to determine, means: Standing alone, or We stand, or The Hill Stands Alone, or he who stands alone. In whatever Native American tongue from that part of the country.

So you did basic in Georgia. Did your boat ship out in August, or did they hold you for a while before you went?

Mr. King: No, six of us went from Wisconsin right straight through. We all went out to Ft. Sheridan together. After about a week at Sheridan and a couple of shots they gave us a

drawing room in Toccoa. We were a little bit crowded in it because it was made for a family of four. Everyone was comfortable, and I do recall that two pairs of us had to sleep in beds rather narrow, but a lot better than some we had later. But, we arrived on schedule. When we got there, there was a six-by waiting. It was a GI truck, course we were familiar with them having had an opportunity to see them at Ft. Sheridan. I'm brand new you see this was the farthest I'd ever been from home. Only one of the six had ever been out of the Midwest. So the train stops, we disembark. Standing on the platform is a, shall I say, confirmed paratrooper. A gentleman who had been in the Army then already more than a couple of years but had transferred to the parachute troops. He was among the first of the 501 battalion until they began gathering these people up to start new units. We didn't know it then, but we found out later, Staff Sgt Paul Bockle, he was from Lake Smith? Wisconsin. So, I've never asked him since then, though he ultimately became my Platoon Sergeant, then my First Sergeant, then First Lieutenant. It tells you something about the capable qualities of Paul Bockle. We still think of him because of the trying time, all the combat, he was First Sergeant. But still I hope he considers me as good a friend, or anywhere near as good a friend as I consider him. I don't see how he can have as much respect for me as I have for him. We never had a son, but I had a name all ready: Paul. See, we had two girls, Ann Elizabeth and Jennifer Susan.

So was he your training Sergeant?

Mr. King: He was our Platoon Sergeant.

While you were training?

Mr. King: Good luck of all good luck. But there's a little story that goes with our arrival at Toccoa. When more of my friends were alive I and Edward Larshner were the last two survivors. Three were killed of the four of us who stayed in at 2nd. The other three died in this order: Joseph Archick radio operator, June 13th in Normandy keeping the Germans out of Carrington (?), George Seigrith from Wausau, Wisconsin, on or about the 21 of September in one of the battles for Bagel, and my hometown friend on Harold Lamrick on October 5th or 6th or over the, during the night in the battle for Alhuston, wounded like one day and died early the next or sometime during the night. Just long enough for his parents to get two separate telegrams: "Your son has been wounded", and one day later, "Your son is dead!" Later when I was wounded, not nearly so seriously as Tojo Lamrick, my parents called the Lamricks, though not neighbors, but friends new each other because kids were both in the same company: he in mortar platoon and I in communication. And then of course, the Lamricks began praying for me and my parents. Of course, as soon as I got out of the hospital I wrote my folks that I was fine. But you don't think of the agony that may have caused your parents when they got that first telegram and considering what had happened to the Lamrick family. All of these things remind, or should remind a soldier that the folks at home also serve.

How much detail did the telegram that your parents received go into about your wounds. Mr. King: I don't know. It seems to me they were a category on slightly and seriously. They also said just plain wounded in action and you can check that against the record.

That doesn't tell much.

Mr. King: It doesn't tell much, no. As a matter of fact, the guy who came over the night of the most serious part of the battle, for a few of us that were injured, a First Sergeant by the name of Chester McAdam and we called him Cheeseey. According to his report, Lamrick was not dead. Although he had evidently some shrapnel damage from counter battery fire on the mortars. See, they always caught hell since they started. Each side knew the other side, what the other side's mortars could do. They'd lay on so much, so fast. So he and another fellow were injured on that ____, but I did not know until the next day, perhaps even late that day that he had died. But I found out, it was either a logical supposition on the part of a 506th medic whether or not he had been the man who attended Lamrick, but they probably wrapped him up because his arm appeared to be damaged and all sorts of blood. Then they found parts of metal actually in his spine. That was the serious portion, although the arm was bad enough: it was almost blown off. So those things you don't know, but I have in the back of my mind, "if I can get a break tomorrow I'll go over there to the regimental aid station or wherever if he was still there." Because after that they would have taken him back to division hospital or else back up to the front of the line.

Sure, depending on what kind shape he was in.

Mr. King: Right, depending on what of shape he was in. Typically, in a tough situation like that a guy would hate to leave. They would bandage up a leg or an arm. Sometimes you'd see a guy with his arm in a sling, he'd still be there going right back up to the unit from the aid station. Well, there are an awful lot of stories about either, like Captain Vanderwort who'd find a way to feature John Wayne's art from "The Longest Day." They would not leave. A couple of doctors, at least I think Hugh Homer was one, had people literally partially carry and partially drag them to a place where they could set up an aid station and treat other people. Of course you've got morphine and I suppose you could give yourself a little dab to keep the pain down so you could work on somebody else. Learn how to deal with it and not worry about addicting yourself. There were a very many men who considered the welfare of others, the urgency of the situation and would not think of leaving. And a lot of them were medics.

Did you know at this point, no later you were evacuated from the theater, when you returned to the theater, were well enough to return to the theater, you went into a replacement pool and could go...

Mr. King: I went through that procedure.

Did you folks know that at that if you went to the hospital when you came back you might not be with the paratroopers?

Mr. King: This was not, I don't know if it was even programmed at the time, say at D-Day. As the war progressed, the units spread out they had to have some way I suppose of getting these people back.

But I knew that by the time I got there that was the last day and I took the easy way out. I didn't realize we were going to go out of combat so fast. But I was in no serious, no bad physical shape. But the last day, in moving out to the town of Noville, which Adams seriously contested when we first got there. I fell off just a, not fell off, but fell backward down a little hill just outside the village of Coboo. I was following Major Winters at the time because I was that particular operator assignment; typically exec or the S2 officer. My assistant, Ken Jessie, I think was the one that took the radio off my back. In any case, any operator who was not assigned at the time would quickly; rather everyone knew what to do and how to do it. So, they stripped me of that and left me my pack. See the assistant would have been carrying my pack, part of it at least. So, when the aid man asked if I, he thought he should send me back to the aid station I was shaken up, but that's all. Hell, I'd been shaken up worse than that a dozen times between D-Day and then, but my mind had been shaken up worse. Just, not long before our last attack, two damn good mortar men whom I had known almost from day one at Toccoa, a couple of fine men with whom I had slept in the same hole, Dusty Lawrence (Lester P, who's listed in the Killed in Action) and Harry "Hoot" Gibson. Anybody named Harry Gibson at that time was going to get the nickname "Hoot", and he did. A shell came in the hole with them and unfortunately it was _____. And that, my three friends, Joey Normandy, Zigler, and Lamrick. These were the guys I came in with. JJ Herpa had gone with the 82nd, and incidentally he made 3 combat jumps and got 2 purple hearts and I only attended his funeral a couple of years ago.

Is that right?

Mr. King: A very lucky man. The second one, Edward Larsen was seriously injured in a jump at Tocoa and I don't recall seeing him after that, but he told me he had returned and caught up with the outfit in England and attempted to get back on parachute duty but could not. So, being a sharp-looking, well-built paratrooper, they assigned him to guess where: chief headquarters where he spent the war working on, for instance, maps and documents and stuff pertaining to D-Day and knew ahead of time, although not my unit, what we were going to do. He never saw any serious action himself. So he was very appreciative of the fact that Verga and I had been looking for him all this time, since about 10 years after WWII when I hooked up with JJ and he then knew, found out from me that the other 3 were dead. Then we said, "Well, what about Eddie Larsen, from Rhinelander, Wisconsin?" Well, the first thing you do of course is go to the telephone book. He goes to the telephone book, living in Wausau at the time when we first starting looking to Eddie, then he moved to Tomahawk which is actually very close to Redmond and he probably made several few more trips over there trying to hook up with Edward Larsen. Danged if I could remember if Edward's name was Larsen or s-o-n

That makes it a little harder.

Mr. King: Christmas 1995 I believe was the time because I believe it was the time that my wife had her operation for cancer, and this coming Christmas she will be considered cured because it will be five years and she's doing just fine. That was about how you related these things, in memory. (At this point of the tape there is a lot of laughter and

background noise to understand the interview.) _____ about D-Day they were right on that part of the schedule and I said I would like to know if there was anyone named Larsen in the class. So, I don't remember if I knew before I left for school and it seems to me _____ called me at home and said one of the young men had a grand uncle that recently returned from California who had paratrooper training, had been a paratrooper. (there is more background noise that I can't understand. But he gave me the address and the phone number. I called the number and a lady answered. I said, "Is Mr. Edward Larsen there?" He didn't have to say more than four words. "This is Eddie Larsen." I knew _____.

So that was in 1995? So from 1942 to 1995; 53 years.

Mr. King: JJ was alive, down in the _____ Veterans home _____ Eddie Larsen is alive and living there right now. Naturally she says, "No." _____. So we got together as quickly as we could. _____ ight? I didn't have a clue how he would react, if he would recognize Edward Larsen or not. So we go down to the Veterans home, greeting the people in various stages of repair or disrepair a lot of them, they were all vets or I think, I'm not certain about the regulation, but possibly dependant of a veteran also. In any case, shaken hands and Hoorah and battling the breeze on the way in, JJ's still in his room and Irene is there waiting. I don't know what she did to prepare him, but when we walked in I introduced JJ to Edward Larsen I knew for a fact he recognized him. "Eddie!" Eddie of course _____ JJ after that long a time. Eddie was in a machine gun platoon, JJ was in mortars. Lamrick, Seivert, and JJ were all in mortars. When JJ went to beef up the 82nd, going to Sicily, he got the job of a 60 mm birdhunter. Naturally, he'd been excellantly trained by then Lieutenant YJ Cox, of Mascogie, Oklahoma. He was our war time commanding officer and another tremendously capable and wonderful man. He put a mortar platoon together with such names as Sleepy, Tojo, and Slim. I don't know what they called John D Halls and Bryce _____ but I do know they were both killed with Major Winters on D-Day attempting to knock out the _____ equipment.

When you jumped on D-Day you were a radio man or battalion exec?

Mr. King: The battalion exec. The jumped like you might say, you could say in the linear order behind him but actually he's hiding. I intended to stay close to this very capable and utterly apparently fearless man. Of course he wasn't, he just controlled it well, that's all.

I don't think anybody's fearless. It's just a matter of how we control and how we handle ourselves.

Mr. King: Park was as good a man as I've ever known who could do that and never risk my life. Alternately for Lieutenant Lewis Nixon, my memory says that I was probably in both nets or they were briefly concentrated through one set. The regimental S2 and the command net were one and the same for that time. It was pretty well torn apart like that. You're softballs falling through a spiderweb. Two planes of regimental headquarters company, both bearing mostly communication men were lost under Sherwood. So, until about noon on D-Day I was not able to contact another person in that net.

In the Command Net?

Mr. King: Yeah. I don't recall. I once was pretty sure and of course closer to the event if it were 1st or 3rd battalion. Then, we could not keep in touch. We had sporadic contact with probably 5, 6, 7 miles between us. Ultimately, by that evening the regiment had been reequipped - Resupplied from the beach. It seems to me that the next day, everything started off quite well because when we got in trouble quite early the next day at the village of Verville I was able to talk directly to Colonel Sink over the tanks. He was the person who authorized the resource, so I had to get him. Could have been Horton, could have been Straiter, could have been the recon officer who hollered across to me where I was squatting as low as I could get trying to fit my body behind a tree that was not much wider than I was, and stay there. He hollered over to send in the big boys, so we had our kind of makeshift code: kidnapped beaver would have been Colonel Sink. It meant an officer was kidnapped. Ours was kidnapped white beaver, Straiter. So, first thing I told the operator: Kidnapped Beaver. I remember that the next person who talked was Sink himself, so I told him, whoever told me, they need the big boys out, or words to that effect. It wasn't very long, just minutes when they came clanging up from our left. Some of the reports and I think possibly that was and northward and on to Rodesa say the tanks returned from farther down the road toward Dead Man's Corner. But they did not. They all came up from my left, they were all wearing swimsuits.

So they were fresh off the beach?

Mr. King: Fresh off the beach, or in reserve for us possibly, within a quarter mile. But when they came clanging up, slowly and carefully they already knew where the action was from the way the troops were aligned and where the paratroopers were coming down into the village, and came up with their turrets pointing sideways to their left. But we do have some discussions even with my friend Richard Falvy and Bob Williams and all the guys who were all within 100 yards of me at the time as to how many tanks fired, and how many rounds they fired. Falvy and I are pretty sure it was not more than 2, and possibly only one. It certainly was not more than 20 rounds and maybe not more than 10. But we found out what 75 canister shells can do to troops behind one rather meager hedgegrove about 200/250 yards away. Wasn't long when the laundry was up on their side and the shooting was over and what were left alive were running.

So this time you were facing German infantry?

Mr. King: Infantry Paratroopers; six paratrooper regiments.

Now when you and the exec went into Normandy, did you land anywhere close to your objective when you jumped in?

Mr. King: I think the map says it's close to 8Km/5mi just on the side of the village of Verville and it took Lieutenant Nixon just moments to find out exactly where we were and I think it was off our enlisted maps but of course he would have had an expanded

map in this case. So when the little farmer told him it was from Verville, he knew right where we were, where to go, and how to get there and of course what was in the way.

How quickly was the command group able to put the 506 into action? You were 2/506?

Mr. King: Right. The second battalion had in two parts one of the best assemblies. Two groupings had roughly 30% of the battalion per group. There were stragglers of course scattered all over Hell and Creation. Some had been seriously wounded and some killed. But if you have that much cohesion and that much command structure of your own unit, anybody else that comes in is just gravy. We had a few boys from the 82nd, and I imagine a couple from the 502 and some from the 501 and here in there an odd face that you didn't recognize, but they all knew who was in charge. They would fall right in and take their place. They quickly became combat effective. For instance, some mortar men of headquarters second, helped Winters with on the guns. We were all trained infantry men, we knew what to do. All you had to do was some slight direction and an officer responsible for the orientation? So, it was an excellent thing that they did at the cost of Colonel Edison. Still annoyed at how many men Easy Company had killed in that engagement. But headquarters second lost two big mortar men. They were great guys as well. They had cool heads and proved that they had courage to spare to get at those guns. The mortar platoon lost a couple of very effective operators when those boys were killed. And there's a strange story that I can't figure out. I have access to a copy of the morning report. Donald D. Eckles was known to us at Sinks headquarters that night to have been either fatally wounded or killed. I think that we all assumed that it was in conjunction with the others because we also never found their _____ and Winters knew that. I think immediately those bodies were gathered up or accounted for sorted out in a pile or whatever. Whether or not word had come from somewhere else about Eckles I wouldn't know. I wouldn't have a clue because we just assumed that he had been killed with them and Semi-C Erwin had been killed in the plane. So that destroyed the mortar platoon, that deployment. _____. Eddie Lamrick _____

Sure, absolutely that baseplate.

Mr. King: Carbon baseplate. _____. They were good. _____. They dropped an awful lot of heavies down those pipes. That of course was to the great benefit of the rifle companies who may or may not have had a clue as to who was putting rounds all in front of them, literally on the money.

It must have taken several days to _____ by foot.

Mr. King: Actually I think the third day we were down to bullets just across _____ and more or less they knew what happened at the time there that the 506 lost the division reserve. We even had a chance to shave and clean up. Then the shooting started on June 11th, at a culvert across from 502, across the causeway. We could hear all of that. Of course they told us what was going on and there you are. Pretty soon orders came around to stand by and it was just a question of when you were going to go up. By nightfall, we knew sometime well after dark we were going to cross the makeshift walkway, under the

bridge, notot between the anti-tank posts. One man at a time and to me that was one of the most phenomenal feats of the war, which was seldom mentioned. By and large, the entire 506 regiment virtually surrounded Carrington in single file. As far as I know, neither side fired a shot. Knowing who we were shooting at, it was quiet. A lot of guys had blacked out their faces, helmets were in the pack sacks, put on knitted caps. Another item that some people remember, and I remember extremely well: we were supposed to tie a foot and a half or a couple feet of white cloth on our rear end on our pack, just to be a little like a deer's tail. Like a little flap so the guy couldn't, because it was a devious route. Going up past _____ and then partway along the road again then down the hedgerow then along another little trail and past a couple of buildings. It was very confusing. A guy steps around a corner only 6 feet in front of you, where in the hell did he go? It was not pitch dark, but it was dark. This actually did enhance visibility to the point where I think it contributed at least a little bit to the successful move because sometime, somewhere in there had to be some German awake, although from the battery they had taken they did pull back into town and were not really, kept up with the outposts at night.

Are you familiar with the cat eyes that we use on the back of our patrol caps in the military now? (I say we, I'm retired) So this white tail was maybe the predecessor to those cat eyes on the back of the patrol caps to be able to follow.

Mr. King: Yes to see the guy ahead. I imagine it was a technique used more than once.

This is the first time I've heard mention of it being used.

Mr. King: Oh, we did the F out of it. I have such a clear memory of that that I will stick with that observation until I croak. Whether this was a regimental order, I cannot say. All I know is that I'm quite sure other companies did it at least. The second battalion and I know head second did it totally. Because the non-comms like a second Sergeant or platoon Sergeant came around and checked everyone's pack on the march and jiggled it up and down. "What's that rattle in there?" Some of the guys pulled the oldest pair of socks he had over their shoes, and I was one of them.

To keep you feet quiet.

Mr. King: I had a bad enough clunking piece of iron on my back without banging into a rut or post going over something.

Oh, the Radio, sure and the antenna.

Mr. King: And be damned sure, you didn't want to turn the squelch all the way down because then that's a battery drainer. So you turn it to where it stops squawking and a little more. I had several of those kinds of evenings, later in the war; including the recovery of the British who came back across the Rhine _____. It didn't take long for us to come by the knowledge, especially in the daytime, that the tool we were carrying was enough to draw a sniper's bullet, maybe even an 88. They knew, just as we knew that

something on the back was an important part of a crew served weapon or better yet a communicator or a flame thrower. Get Him!

Get that radio operator and get the guy standing next to him because he's in charge.

Mr. King: I have a couple fellows still living who will verify this story for your purposes; Otto Sykes and Richard Falby, two of them. We were not being harassed, going down the road shortly after daylight. We watched the B26's coming down the beach. One got hit and we saw smoke disappear and ultimately according to the record, it went down. You could hear the crunch of the bombs and we thought "Gee I hope they aren't bombing the 4th division." But it was time to move just ahead. In any case, it gets a little bit brighter and we pass a cratered crossroad where there's a dead German on his motorbike. And that was, all of us that passed that way, our first memory of D-Day. It has a particularly poignant application for Richard Falby because he happened to be walking close to Major Horton who said "Get down there and stick him to make sure he's dead." Falby would take his trench knife or his bayonet and stick him and make sure he was dead. Or anybody could look down in that hole and see that guy's still dead. Rigor Mortis had no doubt set in. But finally the Major relented and told the men it was a joke. I suppose or to see if Falby had it in him, and Falby had it in him. He didn't have to test him. If it was somebody who needed sticking, Falby had been good with his dukes in the athletic club. He was a hell of a nice guy. He was a great guy to work for. He was my radio chief going into Normandy. In any case he didn't stick him. Not long after that the sun was beginning to glisten through the trees. All this while I can't get anybody with my short antenna so I got a 10ft long whip which actually is affected my walk. I try to walk constantly in a crouch because I don't want to have this thing up above. Everybody did it. It would stick up above the level of the hedgerow and sometimes you could stick up where the ground was higher on both sides or on one side, the threatening side, whichever that may be; and damned if some screwball, a German sniper or maybe one of our own men thinking I was German from a couple or 250 yards away began shooting at the antenna.

It was the only thing sticking up above?

Mr. King: It was the only thing he could have seen. He could have seen the antenna flashing. When it's moving like that it's going to give a little glint from that post but the man would almost have had to have a scope on his weapon to see that. It was sporadic fire, but enough to make a couple guys say "Get that Goddamned antenna off!"

Did you notice when you were in those type of situations where people tended to move away from you and tell you, "Hey get away from me with that radio??"

Mr. King: Oh yes, because, depending on the situation sometimes you'd want a little more volume and the squawk itself when everybody's trying to be quite, especially at night. Oh, you wouldn't want that to happen. So, you'd really have it tuned down; probably the handset turned to ear to pick up the slightest sound. But it wasn't long when people picked up the idea that you could draw fire the same way as a machine gunman or

a mortar gunner or even maybe a tank. Oh, that stuff could draw fire. But depending on circumstances: for instance, you have tanks and they don't, or they can't see your tanks and can't see your mortars, that's when you were great. It takes of course a little bit of combat to figure these things out, what works best and when it works. But the main thing is you have to have some kind of communication. It wasn't long and after that, it didn't take people long, just a day or two and you had the feeling I'm a pretty damned important person in this operation. Everybody would take more care, do the best you can, stick on the CO's or the XO's butt. I was just so damned lucky to work with Charlie Shuttle and Winters himself. None of these people even have a recollection of my presence. I don't know if that speaks good or ill of me. But I like to think that it speaks well.

It probably speaks very well. If you were dependable and there when he needed to speak and radio was right at his heel, then that's a good man.

Mr. King: I like to think that this gentleman asked for me because I had worked with him frequently, and for Straiter too. I'm proud of this. We were on maneuvers for some years. Ever since he was _____ to go on, and so was Straiter. I had worked with Somo for training at least two jumps, and I don't remember if it was the last two, but I'd have to say it was two of the last three, if not the last two in England. That was a kind of a precarious situation. I found no fault with Somo either in working for him as operator or as jump master. He was OK as far as I'm concerned.

This was during the training jumps?

Mr. King: During the training jumps. But this guy was a prince, and everybody knew it. _____. But had I been with him in Holland, it might have been a different story because then he didn't come through.

He didn't come through Holland?

Mr. King: No, he was killed at Auphusen on the same day or just prior to the death of my friend Lamrick. You see the mortar platoon was no respecter of birth certificates and Tojo, having high cheekbones and kind of slant eyes, was naturally "Tojo" to the guys in the mortar corps. But I did quite well myself. I had a short crew cut and I was known as a Kraut; the local Krauter; the platoon Kraut. What if somebody said it during combat "There goes Kraut" and forgot to put in the modifier "a Kraut", I'd have been shot.

That could be dangerous. Sure could.

Mr. King: No, it was in good fun. Some of the other nicknames were of course politically incorrect and I won't repeat them for history. We'll let that die. There's my second in command Charlie Shuttle. He was one of the best men in the whole damn regiment has his picture in here not as all as far as I know, and that's Roy J Cox. He just died April 25th, company commander. Ken, by his own volition, coming back to take care of "his boys" at Bastogne. He got his ass blasted again when he jumped on Colonel Sink in a ditch and he would not admit to doing it to protect Sink, but any man who knew

him at headquarters second knew otherwise. In fact if he saw machine gun fire he probably would have put himself in between that gun and his regimental commander.

That's what I hear. I hear that not just from the history books, but I hear that from the men that served under him. That is why we, this project has been so important to us to get the reflections of the men. The Colonel have written their books and the Generals throughout history have it written down. They have their after-action report. It's not that those are not valuable. They are extremely valuable. But, it's the reflections of the soldier.

Mr. King: We can enlarge on that and emphasize it, and maybe even make a little correction here and there. Some people tend toward self engrandishment.

It's natural and as time goes by memories soften. People tend to remember things better than they were. They remember their own performance sometimes a little better than it was.

Mr. King: Definitely. I try to keep a rein on myself to make sure that what I say jives with the written record. I've checked other people against it and sometimes they come up a little short. Even the chronology: battles were placed one before the other - the cart before the horse.

Sometimes we do and mistakes are made. We have to be very careful and check your facts. From an historical standpoint we know that's not done, not so much by historians, but by authors of this book or that; who are particularly writing of their own personal experience.

Mr. King: Indeed and interject an awful lot of it like... Oh, many of the immediate post-war stories by both officers and men, even well trained men, wouldn't begin to be able to solidify the word. Of course they put in all the words they could and enhanced each action just perhaps a little bit more than what really happened.

Do you have any particular reflections from Market Garden and Hell's Highway?

Mr. King: It was a rough road. Strangely, there were some very easy times as far as combat was concerned, but muddy, rainy. Good memories, though somewhat dangerous like having to sneak out at night and not knowing if there was a patrol on your side of the dike on your side of the upper Rhine to get to the jam factory or the store that had a supply of _____ in the cellar, or tomato juice. I remember the night it was my turn to go and get the tomato juice. You wait till after dark and go quietly and carefully. Each one of us had a little Phillips Squirt flashlight. You know, a little generator and work that sucker, but not where anybody other than yourself could see it. But still, feeling your way down the cellar stairs and getting to the bottom and wondering if you should try a flick or not. "Who's down there?" Hope you're the only one there. Just come back with the tomato juice. That's all anybody was concerned about. Come back with a few bottles of tomato juice. It was a kind of prize. Eventually it ran out of tomato juice. We were

there several days and we ran out of tomato juice. I think we had the same problem with the jam factory. The Germans wanted the jam too.

You couldn't blame them.

Mr. King: The Dutch know how to make jam, as well a lot of other good dishes which I found out since.

You were in Market Gardens in a miserable time of the year. The fall weather could be extremely rough.

Mr. King: Foul Fall.

Then of course when the division went into Bastogne, it was the same thing, a miserable time of the year.

Mr. King: We were under-equipped and under-clothed. In fact, we wished we had some heavy underclothes.

That's been a common thread, and I'm not precisely sure. You were pulled. After Market Garden, the division was moved back to the rest area and Marmalade. You were taken from the rest area hastily to be trucked up to Bastogne. What happened to all your equipment? Was it just that it hadn't been replaced since the losses?

Mr. King: Right, it hadn't been replaced, or thinking actually that we were going to have quite a bit more time probably, at least past Christmas in the situation to re-outfit and get all the stuff and then the Supply Sergeant has to get all his requisitions and then the stuff has to be shipped up. Of course, the time of year that it was and everything, there was no real sense of urgency to any of this and I imagine some of the rifles hadn't really been thoroughly broken down. The crew served weapons clearly hadn't been thoroughly cleaned. Some of the boots were probably in pretty rough shape, combat boots. So, when the order came to get on the trucks, blessed was he who had quickly cleaned up his equipment and replaced it as thoroughly as he could or pulled whatever he had out of his extra barrack bag and got it in shape or having an extra OD shirt or a couple pair of pants which you'd wear both at the same time when you got out later. A German overcoat was highly prized, especially if it came off one who didn't need it anymore. I suspect some were taken off live bodies while they were being marched to Drier. The same happened of course for our own troops who didn't need it anymore either. So that was saved by the living. It's the way the dead serve the living.

So you trucked up in great haste in to Bastogne?

Mr. King: In careful haste, I would say. They were excellent drivers. You would wonder how the guys would feel their way up there. As far as I know, I can't say for sure, I don't think any of the 506th was lost more than briefly. It seems to me the column was pretty good sized. The first battalion was in action, so that said something about the skill of the

drivers who got to the edge of Bastogne at least. We stopped short of town. I have the distinct recollection of walking through the town and what would appear to be an entire squad of the keystone 20th division coming back, that was Lamrick, that I knew him because theater. By then I already had a pretty good reputation.

That was the Bloody Bucket from Pennsylvania; the Pennsylvania Guard.

Mr. King: Of course, that happened to other good troops too when they were certainly overwhelmed. And thinking you're the last survivors, you want to go and find some more friends before you turn around. But, some of our sharp leaders figured a way to reestablish their morale and put them in taskforce Snafu, which you've probably heard. As far as I know, each and every one of those fellows who were previously intent on going to the rear were just as intent as we were about facing the other way and going to the perimeter. So all it takes is the right type of people in the right place.

The right kind of leadership also.

Mr. King: I think when those fellows saw paratroopers coming up they began to have a little surge of confidence. That's what we were there for. As far as ourselves, we had all that was possible to put in soldiers, despite our bedraggled and worn down condition. I have never felt, and I think a lot of people have never, with the exception of certain not really serious incursions into the line by temporarily overwhelming German forces with the ability of our artillery to concentrate and get help even when you didn't think there was any help. Most of us don't rate Bastogne as our toughest battle except for the weather. I would say that the times in Normandy and some of the really serious sectors, like a couple of battle for Bagle and Fuson, and even starting earlier at the canal, were brief and more intimate with the other side. It was more intense than at Bastogne. I don't know if this is a widely shared opinion, but it's mine. The main factor in that was simply that the unit on your left, the 501st or the 502, the unit on your right, the 327th and the guys in the TD's were a hell of a platoon.

So you had the division there, even though ill-equipped, you had the division massed.

Mr. King: We had cohesion.

You had cohesion and you had the whole division. You knew both flanks were dependable, well trained combat soldiers. And that gave you confidence, I'm sure.

Mr. King: Exactly.

So the toughest thing about Bastogne, you would say, was the condition being the weather.

Mr. King: The conditions and the shortage of food, although not starvation shortage, I did have one little incident that I've told many times over the years. When we first got there, we had sufficient K rations we thought to last until we got the next load tomorrow.

Well, there wasn't any tomorrow, and there wasn't any tomorrow after tomorrow, so I was back out in my little mitten on top of my fox hole, digging for my canine crackers; dog biscuits. It was the worst and roughest and most fibrous of the biscuits. It was the most bland, or you could say most natural grain tasting, as if you were chewing oats off the stalk in the field. So naturally you just learned not to bury them or throw them away because you don't know. But you'd just stack them over the top and cover them with snow and branches. Because the _____ were out there.

They were digging around for those biscuits.

Mr. King: Yeah and maybe even a K can of meat and hash or something and scrape off those scraps. If you have less and less food you're more of careful with it. But I don't know of anybody who got so hungry that he suffered, and I certainly didn't. I've never been, I love a good meal, but I've never been a person who had to have it "now" and of course our training had taught us to keep your brain full, a couple days on one canteen of water. Go a couple of days on one box of K's per day. We had a long way and you do what you have to do.

Staying warm at Bastogne, how did you manage to keep yourself from freezing to death?

Mr. King: We covered the holes.

Cover the foxholes? Dig in and cover up.

Mr. King: There you are depending on the perimeter guards and trading places sometimes. I remember nights I slept all night; maybe not all the night, but a good part of the night with the set on the parapet and close to the paddy staff or close to company headquarters. Of course the perimeter guard was responsible for your safety. Because those slumps may come sneaking in a snow suit quietly and start rolling grenades down holes. Of course you go to sleep with that thought, hoping it doesn't happen and pulling your little cover of brush and branches even over the hole hoping it will snow a little bit so you disappear.

So there is no hole for anybody to see?

Mr. King: But still anybody that's looking for that knows what he's looking for: a little unusual mound of the dirt that's been thrown out. It's like looking for the hole where a woodchuck has his mound somewhere out in the hedge there. That's what we were; woodchucks. But once in the bottom and cuddled up we had...

Did you have any Sterno, candles, that you could put to get a little heat going?

Mr. King: We always had some little thing that you could start or even the wood scraps, a little fire. We had a little kitchen hut cut out of the side. And then were going to _____ reserves, then we would set up our SER284 too, so you double the size. Then we'd add like 4 other guys and run an 8 x 8 hole dug out, roll a log over and just an entrance, it'd be

like an underground cabin. We made our stovepipes out of cans end to end. Crimp one end and set the cans one on top of the other, pretty soon you'd have a stovepipe. Lots of different things came in cans. What'd we have? Those opportunities, for a few days at a time, we'd live pretty well. _____ and also aerial resupply and then best thing they did for us was making a resupply available.

Opened the road back up, huh?

Mr. King: But as far as Patton rescuing the 101st, he got a lot of undeserved praise for that. We'd be there, Patton or no Patton.

Would you care to expound on that? "Patton or no Patton"?

Mr. King: Patton is, I should say, quite well known as having no love for paratroopers. He said they're overpaid glory-boys. Possibly because they infringed or impinged on honor he felt was due his fast moving mobile tankers. They were good, but he and his army had received undue credit. And one of these, I'm sure the record bears me out. His army was not the first into Germany. I do believe it was General Simpson in the 9th. Because at that time, the 3rd Armored Division, the first into Germany, was attached to the 9th.

General Simpson.

Mr. King: But, Patton had come across France, fast. Having the publicity that he always had following him, naturally as soon as tank platoon got into this thing in _____. My brother was driver of 101st. He had to appear in American papers and also possibly _____ that Patton's tanks were _____. Not so. Look at the truth. I'm sure you'll find my report a lot more accurate than most of the newspapers. I'm sure my brother's report is right-on.

Most people never heard of Simpson.

Mr. King: Not flamboyant enough. Most people never heard of Bill Lee. He was the father of the US Airborne. Guess you know what good Generals made the army.

I personally am familiar with William C. Lee. He was a fine commander.

Mr. King: If you at all attuned to the airborne, which you can't be anything other than attuned to that fine gentleman.

My last 8 years were from 101st.

Mr. King: Just one look at him tells you "That's a man." Any job he had he would have done extremely well. Did you ever read Jerry Autries book? "The Elite of the US Airborne?" Oh, talk about wonderful history. It's in that book. It's there for you to read.

There are copies of old telegrams between himself and Boy Brownie. Well known to each other, and became good friends when Bill was sent over to England for D-Day planning for use by the airborne troops. See he did _____. He was so eager to go.

This is my reading list, there are several books.

Mr. King: Don't forget "Ishmael" by Daniel Quinn. The leavers and the takers. Oh, I gave the professor the other one too. "Insights into Early American History: the Story of Joseph and Molly Brant" written by a good Canadian writer: Alfred Silver, who did the Red River stories. All Americans should be required to read "Keepers of the Dawn" by Alfred Silver and Oliver Wistwell by Kenneth Roberts and they'll get a slightly different look at the American Revolution. These were Gung-Ho patriots.

We'll leave the mercenary tendencies of some of our founding fathers for another time.

Mr. King: Yes, and of course there's the school that says "Oh, all they're trying to do is reveal all their private lives and trying to denigrate those people." No, all we're trying to say is, "They're human too." This is the history of our country. There is as much bad as there is good in much of what we did. The happenings were nothing more than demolition of the buffalo is something that is a credit to us. The way we treated the Red Man is something that should be a credit. People are afraid to face their conscience is all. Of course I can truly say that I didn't destroy any buffalo and I have yet to do away with my first Red Skin, although I highly admired Cox. He was our own personal Damned Red Skin.

You've got a chance right here.

Mr. King: At that time, political incorrectness was unheard of. Those terms of course were held by the receiver in highest regard. Like, Cox knows what we meant.

Oh absolutely. Political correctness has come to a point now where it's hard to speak straight with anyone for fear of offending anybody, and I don't see it.

Mr. King: I don't see it at all. Never did, don't now.

And my mentors at the University don't see it.

Mr. King: No. It's time for the tide to begin turning. Let everyone grow a somewhat heavier skin as all the fellows did when they were working on all the big WP8 projects; the mixed and the honkeys working side by side. Don't let it hurt your feelings; grow a little thicker skin. The thing you try to do is of course, whatever they call you, if it is denigration, just do a little bit better. They'll swallow their words ultimately.

Absolutely. How about reflections from Bircchesgarden? The 506th did quite a job there, rounding up Nazi prisoners, leaders, and whatnot.

Mr. King: Colonel Sink and the gang; Indeed they did. _____ relieved a different company. Sink, he took over these later, after Winters. But any one of these gentlemen could have been my company commander without any complaint on my part.

That's great.

Mr. King: Can I interject a little story about this guy?

Absolutely. This is Captain Joe McMillan?

Mr. King: One of those 41 old geezers went over to repeat the D-Day jump in 1944. Uncle Sam didn't want to touch us with a 10 ft pole. So Colonel Niel Begine, former French soldier who in fact is a member of the Legion of Honor of France, corresponding somewhat to our Congressional Medal of Honor, secured all the help he could from the French Government and from French work parachute clubs making sure we would not go over there wanting for anything. A guy named Don Brooks from Atlanta saw to it that we had an appropriately painted, with British colors, C47 from which to jump. So we were all set to go and Continental Airlines gave us a free ride. We were discussing among ourselves, "Who shall do what?" I had had a good deal of parachute training and jump master training. I was also a somewhat experienced skydiver, although we had two more experienced in the crew. Each of us knew jump procedures excellently both from the standpoint of a military manner and skydiving, which we thought was even better. Dropping a wind indicator, primarily, to get a precise indication from opening altitude.

Unfortunately, that's a luxury that a combat jump can ill afford. You can't overfly your drop zone and say, "OK, here look."

Mr. King: Right, but for this free run it was easily possible. They could have taken a smaller plane up and gotten the drift. But when we got to the airport the first day, lo and behold, Wyatt Unkledun. He had provided to get a service to us in 10th special forces group, Europe. The best the country had. So, these guys run us through some field ops, and they're good. They're all experienced jump masters a very capable men. But, we were a little bit peeved because we had planned to be jump masters ourselves, knowing we could handle it well. We had plenty of experience all of us. Maybe not as much some, maybe more than some of them. The unit had 1600 jumps. Those were hard 800 and something.

That's a lot of jumps.

Mr. King: No rookies. You bet. No rookies. It's just they got years. So, we didn't know if we should acquiesce to their leadership at all. We could have told them "OK, tell Uncle Sam that we don't need you. We're going to run this show ourselves." Colonel Begine is a fine organizer, a lot of people there. Richard Falby came over to me when we first got over to the little building where they were going to brief us on the drop zone. This is the 10th Special Forces. He said, "Gordon, do you know who's in charge of this unit?" I said, I hadn't a clue." Richard says, "Joe McMillan, Jr." This guy said, Joe McMilan, Jr.?"

Well, we've got to do some rethinking. Maybe these guys know what they're talking about. It's Joe McMilan, Jr. He said "I think we ought to go along." I said, "You're right", and we spread the word. Because we knew from _____ and Bob Williams _____. But this guy _____ He'll do. Although I had some serious reservations that they did any better job than we could have done, I don't think they did actually, as far as jump mastering. But, it all came out well. Had I been doing the jump myself I would have taken the winds aloft into consideration _____ and would have had the aircraft going a lot farther to the left. This was not only my observation, it was the observation of every other jumper with skydiving and recent military experience on both aircrafts: the C47 and the Twin _____. Of course you don't want to jump right over the crowd in the stands, but we could have followed that route. Instead, our aircraft, at least when I exited, was largely down the center of the drop zone. As soon as my parachute opened I realized that it was barely cutting the length, telling me that the winds aloft were not 5 mph, they were more like between 15 and 20. So I killed altitude all I could as fast as I could with tight turns and still landed beyond the railroad tracks, which were the Southern/outer most delineation or Eastern most delineation of the drop zone.

What town was your drop zone close to?

Mr. King: HumphrieVille. It was right where one of the jumpers, Raliegh Duff had landed. He could still show people the indent where his foxhole had been, close to General Gavin's. Raliegh had been a path finder with aid of one of the men, and set up his Eureka, bringing in the best drop of the 82nd Airborne Division.

So, you dropped at the 50th anniversary you jumped on 82nd territory?

Mr. King: 82nd territory.

Right, I heard you mention General Gavin.

Mr. King: It was at a perpendicular approach. We were flying from South to North and they were coming from West to East. But the river was the same river. The railroad tracks were the same.

The chutes were better in 1994 than they were in 1944.

Mr. King: We had those little great ram air jobs and that saved me from both the railroad and the river. These things you could pinpoint enough to land in knee deep muck.

Sure, coming out of the T 10, you might have been swimming.

Mr. King: Which I did and prepared for that too. You were always prepared. But it was actually a ball and the only person in serious danger, we had one injured, Harold Draper from Florida, who had to open his reserve and he just landed hard. He could have hit a vehicle, he landed among the vehicles because coming straight down instead of _____ and going downwind. And actually the outer pilot may have adjusted

somewhat (the French pilot) himself because these people had a more appropriate route, close to the front of the crowd. Had we exited in that position most of us would have landed closer. Of course, an old exhibition skydiver like myself heads for only one thing in a jump for the public, and that is the microphone.

Now, on VE day, you were still at Birtchesgarden?

Mr. King: Yes.

VJ day, were you still at Birtchesgarden, or how did you pull that off?

Mr. King: Oh, no. We may have been in Juanicee.

They were talking about reoutfitting you folks and sending you to the Pacific.

Mr. King: We had in fact received that word, but the guys with any reasonable number of points weren't that much worried. Because the word was, whether or not official, already then out that the high point guys want have to worry. Like all the guys who had been in Normandy and possibly anyone who had seen any combat at all, might have been out entirely. But the 101st was definitely yes, and we knew that. We were told that. It was likely that we were going.

So on VJ day, I would imagine there was some considerable elation that the division was not going to be sent.

Mr. King: I don't know if that's an adequate adjective, but in any case there was jubilation.

I would imagine so.

Mr. King: I got Yellow Jaundice, drinking water from the old Calvary Camp well. We had been cautioned to alazone it generously, and of course I never disobeyed a caution like that. The fact that it tastes like you were chewing alum/aluminum?, but I still got it. And that was, I always felt that was probably the closest I ever came to death. I had such a high count of yellow in my blood, whatever they called it. The ichturn? index. And by the time I turned yellow, I was starting to feel better. When I got to the hospital the people who took my blood came back to me and said I was supposed to be dead.

The color of your shirt.

Mr. King: Your kidding me because I was already almost that yellow. Oh, golly, my eyeballs were yellow for almost a month and a half and it's the feeling when your liver malfunctions, you feel so low you don't feel like doing anything. To breath. You can move around alright, but it's all desultory and slow and no food, no pests_____. You don't want to eat. But one thing they did have for a remedy. That was good portions of ice cream, whipped cream. I've always been able to handle those two things. So, I

recovered very nicely. And while there, two fellows from my home town: one was hospitalized himself. Fellow with my first name: Gordon. Gordon Barnia, and his friend Jake Clemmet. Jake is in his 80's and still living. He lives a half a mile west of me on Riverside Avenue. He is a Veteran of the 3rd division. He came to visit me and was I surprised. Jake was about as old as you could be and still get drafted. See, that's why he's in his eighties now. In fact, I think he was in the age group highest but went ungrudgingly and uncomplainingly because he came from an excellent family. A little story relating to him was that about near 1937, he won a foreign car at a raffle or chance drawing. It was some kind of event down at Riverside Park which is a beautiful park on the lower Wisconsin River, or lower on the Wisconsin River, I should say, below the city of Maryland. We all felt glad that Jake won the car because I think within the previous year, maybe even within the previous few months, his mother and his older brother Joe had each died of pneumonia.

Oh my. Bet he needed a little boost.

Mr. King: He needed a little boost. You bet. We said, oh boy, If anybody deserved to win that car, he should have. We didn't care if they rigged the doggone thing. I'm sure they didn't. The Lord said, "Ok, Jake, you've had enough."

When were you mustered out?

Mr. King: I was asked to leave the service, and I objected not at all.

You were ready to go home.

Mr. King: December 1945.

December 1945. Very good. Were you...I'm trying to get my chronology straight here. In the summer of 1945, you were in Germany. When did you pull back from Germany?

Mr. King: The dates might be in this book, but I can't.

The specific dates aren't really a problem, I'm just trying to figure how long you were.

Mr. King: Let's say after Juanine, then the breakdown for return to the States really began to speed up, by the points. Of course there was some moderate foulup in there and you'd hear that some 80 pointers or 70 pointers were on their way home already and you had 102 and we were still waiting, but that was to be expected with the numbers that were heading both ways. Of course most of us expected to go home with our unit, but the 101st was all cut to pieces. And all the point men went to various regiments and a bunch went with me to the 75th division. So I believe my original discharge says Baker Company of the 75th; whatever regiment of the 75th division. That disappointed me somewhat because I asked specifically for Camp Toccoa, Wisconsin. How come I can't get head sec with 506th there under 101st Airborne Division? Well when you came back and you were officially transferred and this is the only way you can keep records straight and blah blah.

So you're not going to squawk about it that much. You're going to take your discharge and go home. But it's got everything else on it: You know, parachute badge, combat infantry badge, and a resort, you don't really worry about it. And the presidential unit citations _____, you wouldn't have that. So it wasn't that hard to take, but I've always felt they should. On discharges they should have listed the periods of employment with the different deployments. And I think they do now.

No, mine doesn't. No sir. I have a 20 year discharge. My mustering out was with the 101st, that's where I was when I retired, but it doesn't list any other unit that I was ever assigned to.

Mr. King: Officers, I'm sure, have some kind of chronology.

We have a separate qualification record card. It's about so big, folds in half, it's green, and that has all of your assignments. But your actual discharge doesn't. No, it lists your awards, your combat tours, your final rank, and whatever unit you were with when you mustered out, where your hometown was, and the other pertinent data, but it doesn't give a chronology of your assignments.

Mr. King: Did I get two sheets, or was it on the back of the discharge? I think it was on the back of the discharge that has all that pertinent information.

See, the back of the discharge now doesn't have anything on it, it's just blank. But the forms are surprisingly similar.

Mr. King: They are. The Army changes slowly. Let's see, is this my first or my second. I don't even remember that. I have copies both from wartime and from the 82nd. Oh boy, the weather today got you good _____. No, not anything on this one. Nothing at all on it. Here's our new hunting license.

So what was your grade when you mustered out.

Mr. King: T4.

T4 from 101.

Mr. King: Right, then when I went back in the 82nd, I quickly made staff _____ in Pearson's unit.

I didn't know you'd gone back in. How many years were you out when you decided to go back in?

Mr. King: It was part of a year from December 1945 to the first of October 1946. I had some fun in the 82nd, the fun part being pathfinder.

How many years did you stay with the 82nd?

Mr. King: Two years; just one hitch. When I transferred over there, just to serve under Fredrick _____, used to call him _____ when he began at Toccoa. When I met him in town not too long after he'd become communication Sergeant we _____. That was my platoon here. I had to write a spec just to be of assistance to pathfinder platoon. Although I was acting First Sergeant when this was made, company commander Joseph Jenkins who had a Tech Sereant Treadrow transfer in as supply Sergeant. When he asked me to teach Sergeant Treadrow the ropes of the morning report, such as typing and other things, I think maybe Treadrow could type, but I taught myself typing just so I could do my own morning report. I didn't have a company clerk. The company wasn't all _____ But I saw the handwriting on the wall. Treadrow wasn't going to be the Tech; he wasn't going to stay supply Sergeant. He was going to become First Sergeant especially when I began teaching him the duties of the First Sergeant. I don't know exactly how it happened, but I think Captain Graves of the recon platoon needed a communications chief. Recon has a lot of special equipment radios and stuff of different types to maintain. I was planning to, or had in fact been officially transferred to the recon platoon just a day or two and I met Willy in town and I asked him if there was an opening in _____. Since I knew he was commanding half the platoon. He asked my MOS. I said, "Commo chief." He said, "We could always use guys like that, but you might not be promoted for a while." He said, "I think we have about 6 techs, a couple of masters, and staff doing like corporal's jobs." I said, "All right, let's get to work for you sir." Graves was peeved. I think he had sent his chief to haul my stuff from here to the recon company. No sooner did I unload when I ran into Willy. But, Graves being the kind of man he was, realized what bonds built in war mean, being one himself with bonds had been built in wartime. He said "Aw, _____" Anyway, he had shipped all my stuff from there over to pathfinder, where I lived happily ever after.

For the next two years.

Mr. King: Well, almost.