

Melburn R. Mayfield

Interviewer: Could I get you to please state your name and date of birth for the camera?

Mr. Mayfield: My name is Melburn R. Mayfield and my date of birth is 24, August 1921.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Mr. Mayfield: In McClain County, Kentucky which is between Madisonville and Lynchburg.

Interviewer: What was the size of your family?

Mr. Mayfield: One

Interviewer: Just one?

Mr. Mayfield: One, I'm an only child.

Interviewer: What was your family life like during the depression?

Mr. Mayfield: Well it started the depression really the real depression came when we were living in Detroit actually a lot of people from that part of the country went to Detroit to work just before the depression hit. And we were there my mother, dad, and I were there in 1928 crash comes along in 1929 and we came back to McClain county where we had a little 50 acre farm and my mothers father my grandfather lived with us at that time.

Interviewer: Did your family ever suffer because of the depression or because of the rationing later as the war began?

Mr. Mayfield: I don't thin kit was any suffering as far as the rationing was concerned cause I wasn't here for that. I was in the Army training but we suffered but in a different way from a lot of people. When we left Detriot I left some young friends there and I was 7 years old and they had no place to go they just were there. We had a place to go we had a farm to come back to small enough to handle with horses and of course no tractors no mechanized stuff at all. But large enough to provide us with a reasonable amount of food pretty good food like country ham and stuff.

Interviewer: Did your father just work on the farm or did he have another job?

Mr. Mayfield: No my father was actually a bookkeeper and accountant but there was not much call for that sort of thing at that time. When we were in Detroit he worked at the bridge manufacturing company. But no he was graduate Bright Stratton Business College in Louisville.

Interviewer: What was it life like in Kentucky? Did you have a lot of neighbors that were kind of doing the same thing you were just farming?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes, yes I this was in rural Kentucky I lived about five miles from three different little towns. We lived out in the country and it was farming community we lived fairly close to the Western

Kentucky coal fields and one little town there was a coal mining town. And people there were getting rich they were making \$3 a day those who could work. And the situation was that almost everybody was poor so to speak. The only person I can think of I knew at the time that wasn't was the local rural mail carrier and he got a new car and vehicle and this kind of thing because he was on federal payroll. That's the way the depression was.

Interviewer: Were you old enough to have a job before you went into the service?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yes yes well I was not old enough to but I had one anyway.

Interviewer: What did you do?

Mr. Mayfield: I taught school. Yeh I went to college fairly early and ran out of money as some other people do and I took an elementary teaching certificate a two year certificate and I taught two years before I went into the service.

Interviewer: What kind of pay what was your pay like?

Mr. Mayfield: It was like nothing at all I think I made \$50 a month or something like that. It wasn't much.

Interviewer: It's better than nothing.

Mr. Mayfield: Well it wasn't really because we got paid every month the end of the month up until February and then the February paycheck was late and the March paycheck was even later and I got my final pay when I was in Europe three years later. The county see that was when the schools in Kentucky were ran by county rather than state. They got it all from the state. We were a poor county and the next county was Muhlenberg was loaded with coal and much better schools than we had but I couldn't go to school there I had to go to school where we lived.

Interviewer: What were you teaching?

Mr. Mayfield: I was teaching the first year I taught was a one room school. And the second year I taught was at an eight grade school I taught seventh grade. I resigned from that in April and volunteered for the Army.

Interviewer: How old were you in 1939?

Mr. Mayfield: I must have been 18.

Interviewer: 18 okay how aware were you about political developments that were going on in the war?

Mr. Mayfield: I can't say that I was very aware because I didn't I was busy with a lot of other things and it was a long way away. I was not as aware as I should have been. But there wasn't the kind of communication we have now or anything like it. Our the newspaper came from Owensboro by mail so there wasn't a great deal of even discussion of politics except for local politics.

Interviewer: Did your father and your mother ever talk about politics when you were

Mr. Mayfield: Not very much my grandfather was sort of a local politician. People came to see him before the elections which made him sort of a patriarch I guess or something like that. Because they wanted his influence which was pretty good. He never did run for anything himself.

Interviewer: So Japan and Germany and that since you never really kept up on events much they didn't really seem to be much of a threat.

Not much what I did what I was aware of was the fact Japan wanted to get as much iron oil iron as they could from this country. And I dragged out some old worn out farm infamously from my farm and sold those out of town I forgot a very small amount per pound but and then all of the of course went to Japan and came back at us.

Interviewer: So you just the only way you found out about events going on was through the newspaper?

Mr. Mayfield: Well yes mainly mainly radios were not all that common. Our school the eighth grade school did not have a radio and your going to talk a little I guess about Pearl Harbor here. Pearl Harbor bombing was on Sunday and I was out on a date somewhere and came in and my mother and dad said Pearl Harbor has just been bombed and we've lost half the Navy and all this sort of thing. So the next day when I went back to school to teach I rented a radio from a fellow there in town who had everything and took it out for my seventh grade class to hear the declaration of war. And it cost me \$2 of my own money a half of weeks pay. So that was our real introduction to it but I kept pretty close paid close attention to it I'll put it that way to the situation.

Interviewer: Your students were only about 12 or so how did they react to the news?

Mr. Mayfield: They were not particularly impressed they were interested to hear the radio just a lot of them didn't have a radio. And they there were two guys in my class who were old enough to be drafted when I enlisted that's in the seventh grade.

Interviewer: Being held back

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh, there were some very bright students in that class and there were some who were not so bright it was sad.

Interviewer: Did you approve of the way FDR was handling his office at the beginning of the war?

Mr. Mayfield: I didn't really have enough facts to approve of or disapprove of anything. I guess I could say I'm a democrat and yes I approved of it. But that's just true because I was a democrat. So I really looking back on it and I thought something about that when I was writing this thing here, I really didn't have the facts in fact we don't have the facts now very hard to get facts from anybody. The only facts we can get is FAX the rest of it is hopefully one way or another.

Interviewer: When did you enlist?

Mr. Mayfield: In April of 1942.

Interviewer: Did to the induction center?

MR. Mayfield: I went to radio school. What happened was this I went in as what, did they call that, anyway I was not on active duty. They had a civil service test and families around the various counties to see if you would get a chance to go to radio school. I had messed around with building radios when I was in high school and was kind of interested in that sort of thing. So I went to this place took the exam did pretty well on it and got into radio school almost immediately in Owensboro, Kentucky. There weren't any real teachers of radio then these were just people who were amateur radio people who knew something about it and tried to get us to know something about it. Which they teach wasn't really teaching it was unfortunate.

Interviewer: Why did you pick the Army? Did you ever consider the Navy or even the Marine Core?

Mr. Mayfield: No I didn't I probably I would guess that the reason I picked was that my father was in the Army in WWI and I had heard a great deal about the Army. I never heard anything about the Navy or Marines or anybody else and so I had this opportunity to go to radio school and continue on and things like so well and so I took it.

Interviewer: So that's is that pretty much you went in to the Army thinking about radio school and

Mr. Mayfield: Yes yes very much.

Interviewer: What was it about that that intrigued you?

Mr. Mayfield: Well I was interested in almost anything that was exciting in terms of the knowledge and all and as I said I had built some radios and all when I was in high school. And I liked that sort of thing I liked mathematics and that was I think that's what got me into it just the liking of new stuff.

Interviewer: That was pretty much at the time that was ground breaking technology that they were making with radios wasn't it?

Mr. Mayfield: Well not so much radio but radar yes. Of courser that's where this was to lead if indeed you did well.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic training?

Mr. Mayfield: At Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Interviewer: And when were you selected for more specialized training?

Mr. Mayfield: I guess we finished radios school in August of 42 and went to a little higher level of radio school in Lexington, Kentucky which lead to pre-radar school which lead to radar school. So at the when I finished each course you went on to the next courser or you didn't go on to the others.

Interviewer: So you did you did most of your training in Kentucky?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes

Interviewer: How long were you in training?

Mr. Mayfield: Let's see I finished the radar school at Avon signal depth was always close to Lexington in I think in March of 43 and went on active duty it says on the item over there April 1st. April fools day of 43 active duty.

Interviewer: So as a radio man when you were kind of that were you separated from all of the other recruits in the mainly were in the basic infantry?

Mr. Mayfield: No in see I went from there active duty I went from enlisted reserve to active duty and the active duty part was going to Fort Leonard Wood for basic training just like everyone else. When I came out of that then I went to Camp Murfee, Florida to radar school cutting edge radar not the old radar the latest stuff and that was pretty exciting.

Interviewer: What was your impression of your fellow recruits?

Mr. Mayfield: Pretty good they were pretty bright.

Interviewer: Were most of them from Kentucky?

Mr. Mayfield: No they were from everywhere. The first ones that I was with were Kentuckians but the radar people were from various places.

Interviewer: Was this the first time you were ever away from home a great distance? Were you that far from home at that time when you still

Mr. Mayfield: Well you mean by myself?

Interviewer: By yourself.

Mr. Mayfield: Well we lived in Arizona for awhile. But I was two years old then we lived in Detroit but I had been away to college of course which was 85 miles, Western Kentucky. Yeh that probably was the furthest distance I was away without the family particularly the Camp Murfee, Florida.

Interviewer: What was your training like?

Mr. Mayfield: Which training?

Interviewer: Basic training.

Mr. Mayfield: It was a whole lot of physical work a lot of brow beating a whole lot of getting you into I guess getting you mad. It was not particularly pleasant it didn't have it was very different from civilian life I'll out it that way. It was hard work all though I was accustomed to hard work. It was thankless work there were so many so many jobs I mean that were in my opinion then and now useless. You had people just using up their time and time is about all they have in this world and I didn't like that but I knew it had to be done. So I was probably as unhappy as the rest of the trainees.

Interviewer: How good was your training though did you feel like it was preparing you for the task ahead?

Mr. Mayfield: I didn't know what the task ahead would be working in radar one way or the other see I was in the signal core I knew wouldn't be in the fighting with guns I would be fighting with electronics so I had no way of knowing if it was good or not. See I went through basic training twice we'll come to that second time later on the second or third time the Army lied to me I don't remember.

Interviewer: Lied to you how did they lie to you?

Mr. Mayfield: Well when we went into when we finished the first round of radar school and took our basic training and then went into the second we were promised when you graduate from this you will be a second lieutenant. Well some guys even went so far as to buy uniforms I did not. And about two weeks before we graduated the Army decided it needed more infantry people or somebody or other anyway before all that happened they changed they changed their mind about things and I can understand that now but I couldn't then. But it was pretty disappointing because some of us who came out of radar school with what is known as a T5 ranking which is a so called technical corporal in those days rather than a second lieutenant there's quite a difference. And that was my first great disappointment.

Interviewer: I guess you were pretty mad?

Mr. Mayfield: As a matter of fact there were a whole of them bunch pretty mad. We worked awfully hard on radar we were also mad because we would probably never see radar again either. So let's see what did we do after that we must have done something. Oh I know what happened shortly after that I was drafted for engineering school they decided they needed a bunch of engineers more than they did radar people so I was drafted into engineering school.

Interviewer: And when was this?

Mr. Mayfield: When?

Interviewer: Yes

Mr. Mayfield: This it must have been the fall of 43.

Interviewer: So you were still in the states during this time?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yes yes I along with many others went to the University of Missouri for the engineering work and we were supposed to come out of that with an engineering degree and

Interviewer: You didn't

Mr. Mayfield: No we got through the first 9 months of accelerated work and that's when they really decided they had to have infantry people and they sent a bunch of us to the infantry. So I was a private again all over.

Interviewer: So were you did you actually you actually did gain rank and you were knocked back down to private then?

Yeh well the rank the only rank I had was corporal but it was just another one of those things they said we need engineers you're smart so you go be an engineer okay. That's what got me into physics as a matter of fact I was in a physics class with a group that all of them had had physics except me I had never had any physics had never had any other science for that matter. And it was tuff going and that's what I like writ down as a hard headed Kentuckian decided okay if I'm going to have to do this know I'm going to do it right and I did that was long after the war. So we went to the infantry and I spend a good deal of time then learning how to fight with guns, bayonets, judo and that sort of stuff. I felt I was getting pretty good training then juts a awful lot of marching we were doing 20 miles a day everyday with pack and rifle and all this kind of stuff. That was of course at fort actually at the University of Missouri I got some very good physical education training from the couches there they were the ones that gave us our PE as it were and that helped a great deal when I got into the infantry. And we would out we could out walk many of the infantry. So that was worth something.

Interviewer: Did you have any contact with civilians during your training did they help with you training especially with your radar?

Mr. Mayfield: No my contact with civilians was when whenever I could get away from camp long enough to find some girls somewhere or something like that. No mostly the Army people stayed together now there were some places along the way where you'd find a little town particularly down in Alabama where they would have those little USOs and you would meet some people there and that was nice. People in rural south were very pleasant and very easy to get along with and I appreciated that.

Interviewer: What kind of equipment and arms did you train with?

Mr. Mayfield: Well just about any kind of firearm that you could think of except for the ones that I eventually used. Let's see I had expert metals in rifle, pistol, light machine gun, carbine I think there was one other of yeh mortar.

Interviewer: What did you wind up using when you guys were in combat?

MR. Mayfield: Well when I was in combat I was part of forward observer rather radio operator forward observer and we used 105 mm cannons.

Interviewer: Wow big difference

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh very different thank goodness I never flew some at all I was I was a radio man I had many months of radio and radar training and ended up carrying a radio around Europe.

Interviewer: Where were you sent after your training?

Mr. Mayfield: After which training you mean?

Interviewer: After you're basic?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh the second basic well I was we shipped out several of us shipped out as what you would call casualties we were sent without being attached to any organization of any kind except just the Army. We went to Europe and at that time we were one way or another separated out to go to this company that company that division or whatever and I ended up landing Omaha beach thank goodness when I landed for the June landing. And was eventually sent to the 7th Army 44th division which New York's own division virtually everyone in it was from the Bronx lower each side and so on. And because of my radar background I guess they decided I should be a radio operated forward observer. I had never seen the radio that they had it was the SRC300 which was weighted about 30 pounds I carried it around I finally just gave up carrying any kind of weapon that radio was enough to carry.

Interviewer: Did you carry a pistol on your side?

Mr. Mayfield: No no we weren't allowed to have pistols only officers could have pistols.

Interviewer: Let's go back a little before you landed at Omaha. Were you stationed in England at all?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes we were in England oh maybe a week and then we were three days on the English Canal because there was a submarine scare and we were so crowded on this boat that one guy could lie down and another guy would lie this way with his knees up over the guys legs like this that's how bad it was. That was three days and then we came right off the ship and had to climb that horrendous bluff at Omaha beach. And it was about all I could do with a full pack a lot of people didn't make it.

Interviewer: How many is that you came in after the actual landing?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes so the first landing was in June this was in September. There were probably 10,000 cross white cross markers for graves on top of the bluff there and that was not a pleasant sight either.

Interviewer: Okay after that where did you go?

Mr. Mayfield: Well we we went to some kind of holding place and then we were placed where we were going. That's when I went to cannon company 71st regimen.

Interviewer: Okay did you have any contact with the French people there?

Mr. Mayfield: Not very much, not very much we were pretty much in this big enclosure sort of thing and we had peanut butter and white bread and water for two or three days couldn't get the food just couldn't get the supplies up there fast enough. The men could get there so much faster than they could get the supplies that's the way it worked.

Interviewer: What about you're other allies the English and the French the other soldiers did you ever were you ever working with the English?

Mr. Mayfield: No

Interviewer: No

Mr. Mayfield: No I had more contact with German civilians than I did any other any other foreign group.

Interviewer: How did German civilians react?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh they were fine they were very friendly and very pleasant and of course they didn't have too much choice at that time. Oh they treated us as we were part of their people and we had no problem with the civilians at all at least I didn't and I don't know anybody that did in my outfit now beyond that I don't know. But quite frequently you would go you would find a wounded soldier there one unable to fight and he was always one who was wounded on the Russian front we didn't have anything to do with that. Of course who knows but it didn't matter because we weren't fighting civilians it turned out a lot of civilians got hurt. But it was very interesting from several points of view there were some people in this outfit who were very bright I got acquainted with a young fellow the youngest one I guess he was barely 20 years old. And he would get letters from Major General Beakler he has an uncle who was a major general and he was like I was a private and he was a very brilliant young man and very funny he was just as funny as can be. And then I fell in with another guy who was two years older than I who was Captain of the chess team at Rucker's when he was in college. And then there was a guy down at the guns see they were separated from in quarter jumping where we were a guy down there he was the brightest one in the bunch he became a Roads Scholar and spent his whole career teaching at Brooklyn College in New York very very bright young man. The four of us as far as I know are still alive the young guy that I told you about and then the older fellow who was at Rucker's and I were three radio operators and radio operators maybe lived a week or two that was the average time that they lived. But for some reason there for many many days we never got hit with rivets and it was miraculous, The chess player excuse me yes the chess player became a real estate and insurance man after the war took a degree in economics in the . The (the tape stopped) took some degrees in engineering and he's a retired professor over mechanical engineering from the University of Texas. I am a retired professor of physics and other things here and the Roads scholar as far as I know, the last time I talked to him was a couple of years ago, is still teaching he hasn't retired. But when we got back this is just an addition to the side when we got back to this company when we got back to this country they didn't have anything for us to do a couple of working personnel and we got a chance to see the records of our company. The average IQ was barely over 75 very very low and there were a couple of us again with an IQ a little higher than that so it was kind of tough dealing with those people. But we got to where we were street smart too and that helped some but the thing that we had to do was to figure out some way to keep from going crazy. SO the three of us three radio operators got together and formed a little group called the imagination relaxation association. And what we would do would be think up crazy things that we needed and the first one we thought up was a pocket rocket socket and that was a little device I made this one up a little device about like this that you could put a thing a very small mortar in and fire it but you carry around in your pocket that's a pocket rocker socket. And then Peter thought up the imagine fox hole.

Interviewer: I think I've heard of that.

Mr. Mayfield: Have you?

Interviewer: I think I've heard of something along that line in a cartoon of some sort.

Mr. Mayfield: Anyway those were the sort of things we did and one rather gross kind of thing we did it was gross war there was a dead German lying up there frozen stiff as a board and he was there for weeks I guess we were there in that area for two weeks his mouth opened and he had the whitest teeth you ever saw in your life and we got wondering how did they get his teeth so white and we thought well maybe they sent a patrol men there every night to brush his teeth then we decided no they couldn't do that because then they would catch him we finally decided that they had a very long tooth brush were very clever with it from where fox hole and they would brush his teeth. Those were some of the things we had to keep out minds off of it. It was if you know you forget after a long time just how you did feel. I think I felt that our greatest enemy was the weather. I after I got back here I made sure that I went to a warm place to graduate school I went to the University of Florida I had the same offers from Vanderbilt and University of Arizona that I had from the University of Florida but I didn't want to go to Vanderbilt it was too cold up here. I've been cold ever since. It was cold wet and one thing we did we had a very fine mess Sargent and we'd give quite a bit for his recipe for pancakes. Because about one every two or three weeks he made pancakes and everyone would get up early to get in the front of the line so they could come back for seconds. I ate thirteen one morning just wonderful but he made them up and let them sit over night then cooked them the next day so it was great that part.

Interviewer: Okay that was pretty interesting thirteen and wasn't full.

Mr. Mayfield: Kind of I didn't weigh but 128 pounds.

Interviewer: After you came over in Omaha and you started out where were you next stationed?

Mr. Mayfield: Went to a little where our part of the operation Cannon Company was located and two or three of the other companies nearby near Emmer Mill France. And we were there for oh a couple of weeks I guess I didn't know how long the 44th division had been in that area because I joined them the other guys were already a part of the 44th they trained with the 44th the ones I mentioned to you but I didn't. So I came in the only one that was added to that company any that time and it was there that I went up to the front lines for the first time. And we went up there with the forward observer that I was with that was a real nice guy but tuff he was the light heavy weight boxing champion of the division. But he was smart and he could see and you would go up there find a place where you could hid and then take your binoculars and look out as far as you would see see if you could find any of the enemy or where you think the enemy might be. And do you want to hear all of this?

Interviewer: Yes yes continue.

Mr. Mayfield: What you do is you have coordinance and you have the coordinance where you are are coated the others are not so what you would do you would call in coordinance where you thought where you wanted the shell to hit and then you would tell them to fire one round of smoke there were six guns six cannons and they would fire one round and when it would hit smoke would come up and then you would call back and say 200over 100 left which means that's where it hit it hit 200 yards too far and 200 yards to the left. The people back at fire patrol where they had the slide rulers that's what they used so they could figure this out were then the next you would say fire for effect and they'd fire all six guns. And if you caught a whole bunch of people r a big building to take out you would say zone fire

middle which meant you would fire raise it five mm fire low it five mm fire and that would be 18 rounds that you would shoot in there.

Interviewer: What was the front like from your vantage point?

Mr. Mayfield: Well I was there in not a whole lot of different places the first time I went I as I started to mention there a while ago, we got up there and just as we got there in came a bunch of mortar fire we were in a bunch of woods. Well we were not hit but here came these guys back that had been hit and this one guy his clothes were just torn in rags and he started pulling off his clothes and he got off all his clothes and he wasn't hit anywhere. There was one little bruise on his shoulder where maybe a piece of shrap meal bounced off. You now he thought he was half dead.

Interviewer: I bet that was a shock.

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh I realized then these guys ain't fooling. So that was in some woods we operated out of a farm onetime farm building and so on and other time we walked up and down the front line for two weeks and never saw a rabbit move and then we would when the infantry would move forward we would follow them we were in some other location. But the front line was a ragged sort of wasn't a line at all it was the territory wherever the enemy happened to be. Quite often they would hold up in churches, cathedrals, big buildings wherever they could or sometimes just houses. See a lot of the houses particularly rural were built barn and house all in the same building and they got kept the cows and sort in the barn and piled the refugees were right out the front door in big stacks but it was kind of strange but that's the way they operated their farms. And we often stopped at a farm house and asked for eggs and they gave us eggs because we didn't get any eggs the food that we had was mostly C-rations except when we would be stopped at a place for awhile then we would have real food. We were not relieved for a long time we were up there for a long time because partly because that's when the Battle of the Bulge took place and we stretched out to cover a three division front the division was roughly 15,000 men. The three division front to the other two divisions could go to the Battle of the Bulge and so it was not a here we are and you return and this sort of thing it was whatever happens happens and some good things happened and some didn't. I think that probably the most interesting capture we made was the city of Manhine some say Monhine. That was as nice city is was a pretty place big pretty big and they surrendered by telephone. They didn't want to fight they wanted to just get it over with and one of the battalion commanders was name McKey and he moved so fast little guy but her moved fast whenever he moved anywhere he was known as swish McKey and he had it painted on his jeep swish. And I happened to be up there with another forward observer with him one day and we were just at the edge of Manhine and they were supposed to have surrendered but here we are we're walking up there and somebody starts shooting so we all hit the ground and I looked around to so if the coronel had been hit he took off swish it was amazing.

Interviewer: Let mw go back one second you were saying earlier that you were a replacement in the 44th division how did the other soldiers treat you as being a replacement?

Mr. Mayfield: Well like was from the Deep South and they were from New York.

Interviewer: And you said they were all from the Bronx right?

Mr. Mayfield: Not all of them but most of them. There were oh maybe four or five of us who were from someplace other than New York but it was it was strictly a you can't fight city hall sort of thing so what you did was just sit tight and be sweet. Didn't bother us particularly they were helpful fortunately my jeep driver was a Texan and he could drive a jeep any where at all and he did and that was good I don't know how he got in the outfit but he did.

Interviewer: Well the reason I asked was because I read in several places that when new recruits would come in to a unit green that a lot of the veterans weren't willing to get to know them or train them because they always figured they would be the ones to go.

Mr. Mayfield: Well see who was going to train me? Nobody's going to go up there and show me how to operate a radio on the front line so I didn't have that to worry about. I knew as much about fighting as they did in fact I knew a whole lot more about it but I got to know some of them pretty well and they were just ordinary guys off the street. And they always waited for us to come back because we usually brought back some souvenirs I brought back 13 pistols one day and gave them out guys in the company. And of course they didn't get up there and didn't know anything about it until we were over run on New Years Eve the company was and then they found out about war. But the rest of them hadn't been up there neither had the company commander or anyone else. So it was you know.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of souvenir trading going on between the soldiers?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yeh the Germans as we were going along capturing some city or another the Germans had turned in all their camera and all their guns so you'd see a pile of cameras as tall as this table or a pile of pistols that big they you'd see some old nice old lady with tennis shoes on however they weren't warring tennis shoes and you'd notice that pretty heavy handbag she was carrying and you'd stop her and say I forgot what the term was for gun but you'd say let me see that bag and sure enough there would be a pistol or two in that bag. And that happened all the time the souvenirs' were not I don't think we did very much stealing as far as I know we didn't I saw one guy steel a watch from a guy who was not a German and I could have shot him myself but I didn't. I didn't like that sort of thing but a bunch of us did break into a bank.

Interviewer: Did you? Should I shut the camera off real quick?

Mr. Mayfield: Brought back tons of German money that was six months out of date. I've got some hundred thousand mark notes still left over as souvenirs.

Interviewer: That's a great souvenir to have.

Mr. Mayfield: Well I guess my best souvenir is this came later on after the war was essentially over because that's when the entertainers started coming. But I happen to have with me an American five dollar bill and Lillie Marlene no that wasn't her name Marlena Dietrich came she sang Lillie Marlene so Marlena Dietrich came and entertained and she signed my five dollar bill and then who is that little short

guy that is about my age played all kinds of roles? Mickey Rooney also signed that same five dollar bill so that's my biggest souvenir.

Interviewer: When you were up on the front line you said you weren't armed you were an observer was there any times when you came under fire when you were up on the front?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yes indeed quite often as a matter of fact we went up one time and asked the infantry guys who were up there all of the time about a pillbox you know what a pill box is?

Interviewer: Yes

Mr. Mayfield: A pillbox was over here and we thought if we could get up there it was on higher ground if we could get up there we could see better and we were in some tall weeds tall as this table or higher. And was asked was anybody in the pillbox and they said no we haven't seen any activity there at all in the last two or three days. Well we said were going to go up there and set up and see if we can help you out a little bit here so we got up fairly close I would say within a hundred yards and we were fired out with a German 88 which was the best weapon in the war and they had been for most people over in Europe. Direct fire at us well it didn't take up long to get back in those weeds and I they fired two or three more times and we got a hold of the company and knocked them out. Well the guy who was the forward observer for a bronze star for that and 35 years later I got my bronze star for it. So but that's the way things were.

Interviewer: So was there actually a German observer in the pillbox?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh there were a bunch of Germans in there.

Interviewer: Okay was the 88 located right there?

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh it was right in the pillbox they fired right out of there. We couldn't see it of course the 88 mm and the Germans used them for antiaircraft guns sometimes, terrible weapons.

Interviewer: What did you think about the Germans the German soldiers do you think were you impressed by their

Mr. Mayfield: I think German soldiers as a whole were better prepared, more experienced, tougher than the Americans. Certainly early on until all of the tuff ones were killed off but we were not a war like country and we hadn't been in a war since WWI. And what won the war for us the war in Europe was American production we had better stuff we had better everything except guns and tanks. That is the one gun and tanks we eventually got the big tanks rolling but all we had were those little Sherman's they were tin cans compared to the tigers. And the one thing I was afraid of in the whole business was the tanks scared me.

Interviewer: Did you ever see any German tanks?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yes I saw one very interesting thing from a hill a couple of 43 miles away I saw a German I mean a tank battle of Germans and Americans and it was like watching a football game they

were just fighting it out. And of course we won but it was scary and this bothered me more that going up to the front. We I did have one very scare incident at the front right near the end of the war are you ready for me

Interviewer: Go ahead your fine.

Mr. Mayfield: We went up right after New Years Eve the Germans the mass all thousand of soldiers and some artillery and stuff near where we were and we walked up and down the line where we were for a week and didn't see anything and we were trained to see and hear but we didn't nobody did so New Years Eve everybody was celebrating this was New Years of 44. Well New Years Eve of 44 New Years would have been 45. And just at midnight they had planned to fire one round from each gun out towards the German line and they did and no more had they done that no sooner had they done that then we heard them come back and the Germans came right on up the hill in columns of four and shouting and screaming and shooting and carrying on. They must have been high on something I don't know what but they ran the cannon company which was always just three or five miles behind the line. Imagine the range of a cannon the same mileage and they were always in front of the line but that was scarry to a lot of people because most officers were drunk. And they were pulling each other out from under the bed we were in a house that night. Curling up that's basically what I wrote there and so the next day when we went up to the front I went up with two forward observers and the Germans had been driven back by then and we got in a fox hole where we could see but we didn't know until we got in there that there were blankets in the fox hole and we hadn't been in there five minutes until a shell came into the fox hole we heard it coming. You got to where you could hear an artillery shell coming and you'd know whether it was going to be close to you or not. We heard it coming and we all three knew this is going to ht where we are and it did it hit right in the end of the fox hole but it was a dud. And we thought how stupid can you be because here we are in a place where somebody was killed the night before and obviously it was zeroed in by the mortars of the Germans. So we just pure luck because it would have killed all of us.

Interviewer: Did you get out of there fast?

Mr. Mayfield: Swish

Interviewer: So how long did you stay on a line were you able to pull back for breaks?

Mr. Mayfield: No we didn't get any breaks until the war was over well it was accentually over let me put it that way.

Interviewer: So you were continuously on the front line as an observer?

Mr. Mayfield: Well as a radio operator.

Interviewer: Right

Mr. Mayfield: I don't know 204 days strikes me as begin the right number now that's not what it says in the in that little journal but that was edited by somebody else and I think it just a mistake because I

talked with one of the other guys and he also remembered 204 days which was an awful lot of time. We did have the safety factor of pulling back at night because you can't see anything at night. And most of the time we were able to after we got away from this first place we were able to find a house somewhere where we could hold up for the night and most of the times we would be there for a week or one time three weeks but then sometimes we would be moving everyday. But did that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yeh what did you do with you free time or did you not do anything?

Mr. Mayfield: During the free time I tried to stay out of the way of anybody who would give me a job. What a lot of us would do was play cards and then a lot of us some of us would sometime set around and read poems and stuff Omar Kiang was a favorite of many of us and that was about it. We would watch the guy sit over the card and play chess while he was writing a letter to his fiancé and never look at the board and beat anybody who came in.

Interviewer: Was this the chess captain back home?

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Mayfield: He was a sharp guy.

Interviewer: Did you ever write any letters home?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes I wrote letter home frequently I wrote to a lady I knew from my days at the University of Missouri quit frequently se wrote to me almost every day. And I wrote to my folks frequently to keep them let them know I was alive when I wrote the letter anyway. But it was difficult to do because you would sometimes go for a week and not be able to wash your face and your hands were dirty sore all this kind of thing. Shaving was a real problem you'd try to heat water in your steel element which wasn't good for your element or the water either. It was staying clean was difficult a hot shower was as I have often thought when was that I brought to back when I was working since the war here I am taking a shower and wishing I was back in bed but in the war

Interviewer: Right we take for granted our hot showers.

Mr. Mayfield: Yes goodness yes

Interviewer: So did you ever get any mail from your family?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes oh yes some packages my mother would send some little pecan cupcakes and things like that. We all got mail from time to time.

Interviewer: How did you find out about the process of the war going on like over in the Pacific did you ever hear any things about that?

Mr. Mayfield: Not a great deal there was and still is a newspaper called stars and stripes and we got most of our news from that. We didn't have any we had all these radios but no radio that would get us any news. And we didn't know very much about what was going on anywhere else until nearly the end of the war and then the officers started talking about well were going to be shipped home pretty soon then we will have 30 days then we will be going to Japan. And it will be a whole different war a whole different way of operation and they described it to us to some extent. But there was not much discussion of that because we had our own war to tend to. We did have three weeks in Germany actually in Austria where we ended the war where my company did. Had a German bunker that had a swimming pool and a bunch of stuff and one of the guys at the time I was something of a photographer and we made sets of pictures and we had taken along the way and we made set of them for everyone that wanted one in the company 30 pictures we made and I ended up without any I give them all away. But that was kind of interesting we didn't have any work to do because we had a bunch of Russians I guess they had been captured by the Germans they come in with Germans but they couldn't get back to Russia so they did all the cleaning up and KP and all this sort of thing. So we had this one guy and I had three weeks there to just spend out time processing film and after that printing the pictures.

Interviewer: What was your opinion of the Russian soldiers that you met?

Mr. Mayfield: What was what?

Interviewer: What was your opinion of the Russians that you met?

Mr. Mayfield: Oh my opinion was I didn't meet but a few maybe a half a dozen was that they were very solid and solemn people they didn't talk very much but they went about their work they did and seemed to be happy doing it. I really had no way of knowing what a person was really like and that was my contact with the Russians.

Interviewer: Let's go back to your combat experiences just for a moment. What was the closest combat you were into with the Germans or their allies?

Mr. Mayfield: I guess I don't know I one guy and I were got on observation they kept us there until after dark and when we came back somewhere or another and it was totally dark we missed where we were going and we realized we were probably going the wrong way but we didn't know until we heard some Germans talking.

Interviewer: Were you walking?

Mr. Mayfield: Walking yes carrying radios so we turned and went the other way. Now that wasn't combat not had to hand but I never was in any hand to hand combat I helped to cause the death of a whole lot of Germans and I'm sorry about that but there was nothing else we could do following orders you do what you had to do. We went along with the infantry one time and the we were in usually in rifle range cause we were protected pretty well by the terrain and that's as close as we got. I was shot at quite often but not at a with a bayonet on the end of the rifle was all.

Interviewer: How did German prisoners were there a lot of German prisoners coming in?

Mr. Mayfield: Yes an awful lot thousands of them one of the most difficult jobs I had they said one day we want you to guard some prisoners. Well what do you do how do you know what they are going to do and you'd have maybe three or four guards guarding 100 people? It's not much fun they were pretty docile for the most part they knew they were beat and in this particular and I remember one day I was shining in my cabin at the time pointing at a picture this old woman German woman was standing on a little bridge over a small creek and it was up higher than the rest and down here in the valley were probably 5,000 German prisoners and she was just looking down there and the expression on her face the whole picture of her up here by herself looking at these down here was something I wish I could have taken a picture of.

Interviewer: Was she sad?

Mr. Mayfield: Was she what?

Interviewer: How did she appear to you?

Mr. Mayfield: She appeared to me to be utterly defeated just defeated I think that a good a word as any. She was I think looking at what might have been in her mind but looking at what really was with her eyes and she just it was one of things that's emotional more than anything else and I wish I could have taken that picture but I didn't have a camera with me.

Interviewer: That's how it always is with me I' a photographer myself and I'm always saying where's my camera when I need it.

Mr. Mayfield: I wish had not quite doing camera work because I can see pictures where there aren't any and I can tell someone with a camera why don't you take a picture of that well it never turns out like it's supposed to. I did a lot of my composing in the dark room you can do that.

Interviewer: It's a very god skill to have very enjoyable.

Mr. Mayfield: Oh yes I did that while I was in undergraduate school. And then the first couple of years I taught I taught photography at Mercy University for the journalism class and that was kind of fun. They had a speed graphic there. There had never been a better camera than a speed graphic ever used one?

Interviewer: No I haven't the nicest one I've used is either a 4x5 or a Mosalone.

MR. Mayfield: Yeh the everybody uses 35 mm now which I like very much and that's what I use I've a Zeiss tenax but it's it doesn't work anymore just laying around for all of these years I brought it back but anyway the speed of it is so good and that's what the newspaper people were using in those days the early 50s.

Interviewer: Okay let's get back to the war.

MR. Mayfield: Your gonna edit this I hope.

Interviewer: No actually I was just going to turn it is its fine. How far did you get into Germany?

Mr. Mayfield: Let's see we got into oh I don't know probably we were maybe 40 miles into Germany then we turned South and went into Austria. And had the biggest snow of the year on the 15th of May. Isn't that terrible couldn't get away from the cold weather to save my life. But anyway we didn't get far into Germany we did get to one of the concentration camps which is a horrible thing to see but we ended up near Innsbrook Austria. The Australian Alps are probably the most beautiful scenery I have ever seen and I've seen most of this country and several of the European countries but they are beautiful and we really enjoyed seeing this.

Interviewer: How was Austria compared to Germany in being ravaged like Germany in the bombing campaign?

Mr. Mayfield: Austria was not in bad shape France was in bad shape very bad shape. We came back through Lahore and Lahore was just flattened like downtown Clarksville was when the tornado hit it was nothing. But the part of Austria that I saw was not in bad shape at all and of course Paris was declared an open city and it was alright. London got beat up pretty bad flood bombs and we came back through there too.

Interviewer: Where were you when you heard that Germany had surrendered?

Mr. Mayfield: You know I don't know I really don't I was in Germany. But I don't know where. What happened was this we drove right up the Siegfried line and stopped and they brought in the 1st division people to the were very experienced they had been all the way from Africa on up they brought them in and they then went forward and they then were there for the kill so to speak for the surrender. So I don't know where I was except I was near the Siegfried line somewhere.

Interviewer: How was the fighting around there around the Siegfried line?

Mr. Mayfield: It was pretty tuff pretty tuff because what they going to do might as well die as not they've got to go somewhere else so they they put up as much fight as they could it was you know to them.

Interviewer: Did you ever see any parts of the imagine line?

Mr. Mayfield: No I never did.

Interviewer: I recently did a paper on that.

Mr. Mayfield: Oh did you?

Interviewer: Yeh I haven't seen many pictures from that but I'd love to go over and photograph it.

Mr. Mayfield: You know why there wasn't many units don't you?

Interviewer: Yeh they just went around it.

Mr. Mayfield: Oh sure it's amazing how foolish bright people can be and not so bright too.

Interviewer: Well when you build a wall like that its kind of a dare I dare you to find a way around.

Mr. Mayfield: Walls go both ways. (The phone rings and Mr. Mayfield has to answer it)

Interviewer: Where were we?

Mr. Mayfield: You asked me where I was when the war ended.

Interviewer: Right so where did you go from there?

Mr. Mayfield: We rode the trucks across Germany we rode the ship across the English Cannel and spent a night in London and then got on the Queen Elizabeth and came home.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of celebration going on in England?

Mr. Mayfield: Not really it was I went you know like a tourist I went to several of those places like Piccadilly Circus and that sort of thing and while we were in Paris we went to the Follies this was on the way back of courser the war was over. Then we came on the Queen Elizabeth in five days the whole division 50,000 and

Interviewer: Did you cross on one of those I think there were two cruise lines like that?

Mr. Mayfield: The Queen Mary no I didn't. No went over on a gurnard ship though the Maribo So it was a small ship and we changed directions every seven minutes to avoid the submarines.

Interviewer: Were you in part this is going back awhile but were you in part of a convoy?

Mr. Mayfield: No we were by ourselves by ourselves and we made it it was a very pleasant trip as a matter of fact it was good it was in September and it was very nice. But anyway coming back I guess the one big things I got out of being in New York's own division was we got a ticker day parade down fifth avenue and that was quite something to see but that was the end of that. But we got home and were waiting to go to Japan and they dropped the bombs and that was the end of that.

Interviewer: Were you pretty scared about the idea of going over and fighting in Japan?

Mr. Mayfield: I was not happy with it I had had enough war. I really was not seriously afraid at anytime this is the thing that surprises me when I think about it. It never occurred to me until New Years Day that they was going to hit me I just didn't think I was going to get hit and I didn't but I should have. I don't know why I didn't but I guess you can get a mind set if you work at it that I'm going to get through this thing one way or another and I guess that's what I did. I was unhappy a lot but not afraid. I have been a lot more afraid of physics exams and graduate school and don't know

Interviewer: I know that feeling. This is one of the busiest weeks of my like.

Mr. Mayfield: And I'm taking up all your time here.

Interviewer: No your fine. So after you heard about Japan surrendering what did you do then?

Mr. Mayfield: I didn't believe it I had seen bombs of all sizes I had seen the sky black with bombers and all this kind of thing and I couldn't believe that there would be a bomb that could do that. This was before I had really learned anything about science to amount to anything I had had one class that I had mentioned that was so horrible. But I couldn't believe it and it took me a few days to really believe it. But then I realized this you know this thing is going to be over we're not going to go and we didn't. And then we just sort of messed around over here they didn't have anything for us to do except for at Fort Campbell where by this time I had made real corporal I wasn't chief any more. And they didn't know what to do with me at Fort Campbell and finally they decided I could work at the post office while I was there. I went down there and the guy that was supposed to be in charge of the post office was a T5 well I out ranked him because a corporal out ranks a T5 but he was worried. I told him hey look I've been to war I don't want anymore war you do what you want to and tell me what you want me to do so it was kind of funny in a way. But then the day I got to Fort Campbell I went in to see the company commander and asked for a three day leave and he didn't know what to think he was shocked. And I said well I want to go home and get my car my folks were living in Southern Indiana then. Well he finally said I'll give you a weekend pass I said alright I'll take it so I went and got the car and came back. And we had a good time we came to Clarksville a lot I met a girl and dated her from Austin Peay and I've looked through every annual every yearbook that I could find and I've never been able to find her and now I don't know what her name was but I would know her if I saw her picture what she looked like then. But I never could find out who she was after I left and forgot. But then I left there and went back to Fort Benjamin Harrison where I had been inducted and got my folks back in Indiana at that time. Dad was working in at Indiana Arsenal that was why they were there. So I came back and stayed home for a little while and then started back to college. I had finished two years before the war. Went back got my first degree in English wondered what in the world I was going to do to make a living. That's why I asked you what you were going to do with your history. And had a friend who I'd known before the war we had been friends before the war and he said why don't you come on in physics with me and I said why not what else d I have I'll do that so I did. And we went through undergraduate and graduate school together. He went to Huntsville and I started teaching at Mercer University he got rich and I'm here.

Interviewer: You've done pretty well for yourself though. This is a nice office.

Mr. Mayfield: It's nicer than I had when I was vice president here. That's the truth.

Interviewer: What is the one memory that sticks in your mind the most?

Mr. Mayfield: It would be very difficult to pull out one memory because there were so many poyant moments I mentioned that poignancy while ago. That I think really it's not a moment it's a period of time. When I was in radio school and pre-radar I lived in Lexington, Kentucky and this fellow that I had known for a while that was an excellent musician lived in room and I lived in another with a bathroom in between that's where we lived. And as we couldn't talk about what we were doing it was confidential secret sort of and we played music he taught me to play the guitar and it was wonderful we just played an awful lot he died this past year he was 93 years old. But that I would say that music was wonderful and of course I made a lot of friends these two guys that are still living one in Texas and one in Florida much smarter than I I should have gone down there myself.

Interviewer: In Florida?

Mr. Mayfield: Yeh

Interviewer: That's where my parents are.

Mr. Mayfield: My wife is from Fort Myers. Where are your parents?

Interviewer: Their over in Ustus about an hour south of

Yeh yeh the most frightening thing that might be a moment. I was coming out of New York on a train coming home I guess came through St. Louis probably and we were going along pretty fast for a train and all of a sudden he threw on the breaks and we squealed for a mile I guess I thought it would never get stopped I thought I've been through all of this shot at almost every day come home and get killed in a train wreck before we get there. But I was scared then. There is another moment I remember too. Going through England on the way to the English Channel one of the little trains and it was about midnight and it was cold and everybody was tired and hungry and in came these they would be Red Cross girls here wherever they were anyway girls came in with these buckets of coffee. When they were coming by I stuck out my canteen cup and they pulled it full and took a big drink and just about choked it was English tea. It was awful that's a moment to remember I was not accustomed to English tea.

Interviewer: Well I don't have any more questions for you I think we're about done. I want to thank you one more time.

Mr. Mayfield: Well I appreciate it I've enjoyed talking with you.

Interviewer: I've had a great time.

Mr. Mayfield: I'm afraid you don't have anything historical there.