

We are conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Everett G. Andrews from the 377th Parachute Field Artillery; 101st Airborne Division. This interview is being conducted at the 101st Airborne Division Reunion in San Antonio, Texas, the 9th of August 2001. The interview is being conducted by Scott Schoener and John O'Brien. Sir, if you could please start off by telling us a little about your background and how you joined the Army.

Mr. Andrews: I went to the University of Illinois starting in the fall of 1939. Langrant Colleges had a two year mandatory ROTC program. I went through that and your junior and senior years you could apply for advanced ROTC which I did and got accepted so I spent four years at Illinois in the ROTC. I was in the first group that could not go to summer camp to get your commission because the draftees had filled every camp up at that time. I was in the first group that had to go to OCS to get your commission. I finally got commissioned in November of 1943. I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and had to replace Officers Training School for four weeks for new Lieutenants. I got sent from there to the 100th Infantry Division on winter maneuvers at Tennessee and came right back to Fort Bragg with them. The Battalion Commander let it be known that he did not like 2nd Lieutenants so, several of us got wind of parachute school and put in for it and got accepted. We left the 100th Infantry Division and went to Camp McCall 40 miles away. From there I went on down to jump school and back to Camp McCall after jump school. We were on a field problem shooting 37-mm ammo at the time of the D-Day invasion. Ten days later ten officers from the unit were on orders for overseas as replacements to the; actually assigned to the 82nd. There were ten infantry officers, ten artillery officers and a packet of 500 enlisted men. We got processed through Miles Standish up in Massachusetts where we sailed from. By the time we got over to England, orders had been changed for the ten artillery officers not to go to the 82nd but to the 101st, specifically to the 377th which had suffered 75 % casualties. We got to the 377th and it was the same week they were coming back from Normandy. Of course they were way short of personnel. One of the duties that had to be performed as personal effects officers; I take care of all the personal belongings of the people that didn't come back. I was volunteered as the assistant personal effects officer but ended up doing all the work. We worked daily at going through the personal effects of all the men of the 377th that didn't make it back. I was also made the battalion post exchange officer which required a little time getting supplies from division PX and that was a daily basis to run the PX and then weekly to resupply your assets. When the mission to Holland came up they had so many spots to fill and I was still heavily engaged in the personal effects and the PX so they decided to not put me on the manifest. I stayed with the base camp and finished up the personal effects and closed out the PX and then we had to move the base camp for the division over to Mourmelon, France. We got there the same time as the division was pulling back. I was quite disappointed that I didn't get to make the Holland mission. We were restricted to the area for five days. At that time I met a pretty, young English girl. We got off restriction and stories started to come in about how cold it was, people getting killed and wounded and living in the rain and the mud. After a while you get over being disappointed that you weren't there in the mud and that you could go to London about every day.

Sir, let me ask you a question about the period of time before Market Garden. The 377 had not only lost 75 % of its personnel but almost all of its guns also. So you are talking that at a very short period of time having to rebuild a unit completely.

Mr. Andrews: Yes.

What type of training did the 377th do to be proficient as a unit in such a short period of time?

Mr. Andrews: Well there was no jumping that I am aware of between Normandy and Holland as far as training. In the 377th we went on a lot of night marches out through the fields and stuff just to get used to moving at night. I recall that the grass was quite wet out in the country and your feet would get wet. But I assumed that that was the training they thought that they needed from lessons learned in Normandy.

Did the batteries do any firing or exercise any?

Mr. Andrews: I don't think that there was any live firing. I was in Headquarters Battery. I had friends down in the firing batteries. I don't recall discussion that during that time there was any live fire training. It was a matter of training gun crews and fire direction personnel to get them ready to be able to perform a mission.

Do you think the training in the United States that the individual replacements that were coming over were well-trained enough to step into a unit and with that minimal amount of training become proficient?

Mr. Andrews: I don't think that they were qualified when we got over there to go right in on a mission. There were NCO's and there were some of the troops that had been in the military for a little while before they went to jump school and they were probably more easily trained to get ready but I think it was the training that they got after they joined the batteries that made them a cohesive unit and to get to know people. Basically their training of course was an asset for the integration into the units over there.

The individual replacements that came over to the 377th, did they come from units at Camp McCall? For example you came from the 467th?

Mr. Andrews: All of the ten artillery officers I was with all came from the 467th at Camp McCall. We picked up the packet of 500 enlisted men at Fort Meade, Maryland, and as I recall they all came from Fort Benning. They were artillery, infantry, engineers and probably medics across the board. I imagine most of them were infantry and there were quite a few artillery men at times.

They were just coming out of jump school at Fort Benning and routed up to the ____?

Mr. Andrews: Yes.

The reason I was asking you is because you had had a full military career as a Lieutenant Colonel as an artillery battalion commander. From that perspective and looking back to your days as a 2nd Lieutenant would you have jumped the 377th at Market Garden or would you have demanded more training time?

Mr. Andrews: Oh no.

They were ready?

Mr. Andrews: I think they were ready. They had about a month to go; the last week of July they came back from Normandy which gave us six weeks to get the units together. In Headquarters Battery, in the communications section one of the officers was a commo Sergeant for the division artillery that had been commissioned in Normandy, a 2nd Lieutenant, and he came back. The communications officer of Divarty was sent over to the battalion as a Battalion communications officer and he had been an instructor at a communications school at Fort Sill before he joined the 377th. I felt privileged to be with people of that caliber. Basically my duties as a communications officer wasn't much left to do because many of the enlisted men had come back from Normandy that were in the communications section. So they were well-trained to start with. I was just sort of out on the end of the totem pole.

Did being airborne do you think contribute to the rapid cohesion of soldiers coming in to a debilitated unit being able to be put back together?

Mr. Andrews: Absolutely. I think the adrenaline always went sky high when you associated your activities with the Airborne. There is just something special about those people. Although once they got on the ground their missions were very similar to the non airborne units of course and that is how they were to function. But I think a lot of their missions were maybe accomplished with greater zeal than other units.

Since you were in communications and I know you didn't go on the Market Garden Operation but it's been said that part of the plan was to have the forward observers from the 377th shoot for British artillery that was supposed to be supporting the division?

Mr. Andrews: Yes, I am aware of that but I was never exposed to it.

Do you remember any discussion, any after-action type comments, apparently the communications didn't work within the communication community? Did people talk about that afterwards?

Mr. Andrews: Unfortunately, I just can't answer that because I just never got associated with that or any conversation. I joined the main body of the division in Mourmelon, France, at the end of November when they came back from Holland. At that short period of time until they went to Bastogne, I think could possibly be considered a real critical time getting the troops organized in the units again and getting them equipped and getting them back in the right frame of mind. Some of us troops were in the pass program in

Paris. They didn't have all of their weapons issued and they didn't have all of their field gear and all of a sudden you are loading up on the trucks and going. There were officers in the infantry that got on their trucks in their _____ having just come back from Paris from pass. That is the way they went in.

Aside from the pass program was there a lot of training that went on during that period of time of reorganizing or was it an administrative reorganizing?

Mr. Andrews: As I recall in my unit we had a lot of close order drill going on in platoon and company formations and we were doing a lot of that. I'm sure that in the firing batteries that they were working on their fire direction activity because that had to be an ongoing thing. In the Headquarters Battery we were sort of administrative; I would have to say, getting the sections organized again. It was helter-skelter getting ready to go into Bastogne.

Can you describe your movement to Bastogne?

Mr. Andrews: The division was given a transportation outfit that had 5 ton trailers that were loaded with equipment and loaded with infantry just loaded with troops standing up. I recall when I went I was laying on top of the equipment in the supply trailer. I lay on top of that going up. It was getting cold at that time to but not as cold as it got. I admired the two soldiers that were driving. We drove all night and they stayed right with it. I just thought it could have been a disaster if they dosed off and stuff like that. I guess they were sort of pumped up, they knew they had a job to do. But we did get up there.

Were you with headquarters battery at Bastogne?

Mr. Andrews: I was with headquarters battery at Bastogne. I know the Colonel sent me out to the drop zone for the first resupply drop to help bring back some of the artillery bundles. I got to see all the resupply drops. One of the things in the history of the 101st is the C-47 isn't misbehaving that crash landed. That was right by our CP. We got to watch that. Our CP was right behind the 463rd Christmas morning activities when they had the tank battles and we got to see that close enough to see it well but not be directly involved in it.

What did you see, can you describe it?

Mr. Andrews: By the time I got to where I could watch it, the tanks were all knocked out or stopped and some of them were burning. A mess section from C Battery of the 377th went down and I guess out of curiosity they got hold of a tank that was still operable. They drove it back to the 377th area and parked it right by battalion headquarters to show them what they had. The command section ran them out immediately. They didn't want the airplanes to spot and come down and take out CP. That was an exciting time. It had to be for the 463rd. Of course those tanks came through the 502 area up at the Champs. They were having a hard time on Christmas. The 502 had a hard time at Bastogne all the way through, it was a rough time.

What were your assigned duties at Bastogne and then compare that to what you actually did?

Mr. Andrews: I was in the communications section and all the commo work had been done by the pros. I ran errands for the battalion; they sent me out on the drop zones. I had to draw the map of all perimeter defenses so they could see what they had when they got all the batteries defenses put on one chart. Then I was on the list to rotate through as an FO and finally got set up with the second battalion of the 502 at Longchamps which was a rather uneventful time for 4 or 5 days. There was no activity whatsoever except to be on the alert. But I did get involved in the 3rd of January activities at Longchamps which some of the books say was some of the hardest fighting that the division ever had; was on the 3rd of January in Longchamps.

Can you tell us about your participation in that battle?

Mr. Andrews: Like I was telling you before I probably have the shortest forward observer record on history. The fog lifted sharply right at just about noon on the 3rd of January and all of the sudden there were 12 tanks in the wood line across the valley from us. I went down to the F Company commander's foxhole and I sent in the command to fire on the tanks across the way. I guess while they were getting the firing data ready and things on the way he sort of ducked down in the hole a little and when they say, "On the way" you stick your head up and see where the rounds land. As I stuck my head up, I got hit and never saw them land.

What were you hit by?

Mr. Andrews: Fragments which is still in the jawbone. I thought the company commander had turned around and hit me with his rifle butt or something. It got a little bloody so they evacuated me back to the battalion medics and then on back. My FO'ing days were real rapid.

Did anybody ever tell you the results of that fire mission?

Mr. Andrews: Well I saw my artillery NCO several years later and I asked him what he did. He said he kept reducing range. When I left it was getting dark and in front of the battle field right in front of the front lines there was a lot of tanks and self-propelled vehicles were on fire. Actually I guess the Germans did break through the 502 and they had to get some of the 327th up to bug the line I understand. My contribution was limited that day and I got back to England and rejoined the unit when they were in _____. From _____ we went back to Mourmelon and stayed there until we went up to the rear pocket in April by the town of Neuss across from Dusseldorf and then we just sort of flowed with the battle down through southern Germany. We were in Timpen, Germany, when the war ended and on down to Berchtesgaden the 377th was in a town down in Austria called Unken, a beautiful place in a mountain valley. I was fortunate enough to make the division track team. So I spent the summer in Berchtesgaden with the division

track team. We went to the USAEUR finals and after that we went back to our units. My unit had moved back to France. We were in Ozoir, France from September on until the division was deactivated on the 30th of November. We were all set to be American guard of honor. Of course we had new boots and a white silk scarf and a big banner to hang from the Queen Mary and then just overnight things changed and it was the 82nd. But I did have a chance to go to the 82nd when the 101st broke up. I went from the 377th to the 376th. I came back with them and made a parade in New York and went right back to Fort Bragg where I volunteered to get out of Bragg and went Airborne. I stayed at Bragg for three years, over to Korea, back to Bragg, over to Germany, back to Bragg, over to Germany and back to Bragg and retired at Bragg and have been there ever since. You have to look back and think that a real fine part of your life was the time you were in the 101st Airborne Division. I think that all airborne channels have a tremendous amount of respect for the 101st Screaming Eagles. It was an extreme pleasure to be with them and to look back at the accomplishments of the division; even though you didn't really make a tremendous contribution. I was there. I still associate with the units at Fort Bragg. I go out to the Division Artillery Headquarters quite frequently. We have had some artillery reunions there that I have helped sponsor. The division artillery supports us in great style. The 377th was reactivated at Fort Bragg four or five years ago as a 155 unit and it's there. They recently had a battalion formal ball that they invited me to. I still keep my hands in it.

Are there any questions or observations that we missed that you would like to add?

Mr. Andrews: No, it was cold at Bastogne; I mean bitter cold. Sometimes the artillery people have a chance to be better prepared for it. You can dig your gun pits in and cover it with canvas and move around, you got your mess section there. But the infantry is out on the line in their foxholes. They can't move in the daytime. They don't come back because they get shot at. They get their meals before daylight. They get breakfast. They don't get fed at night until after dark. They are always on the alert up there because the Germans were patrolling every night in that bitter cold. Trench foot, frozen feet is not a pleasant thing. I just admire the infantry for what they went through out there in that cold weather.

(Tape Ends)