

Sir for the sake of the interview can you state your name?

Mr. Harris: My name is Marvin Harris. I live at 1640 West Olive Street in Murray, Kentucky. I'm a native of Calloway County. I was born at Dexter which is a little town in Calloway County. It used to be a booming little town until the railroad closed down and then it pretty well closed down too.

You were a native here all of your life?

Mr. Harris: I have left and I came back. I am a native here.

What year were you born, sir?

Mr. Harris: I was born at Dexter, Kentucky, April 15th, 1924.

What branch of service did you serve in?

Mr. Harris: I was in the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment. That was part of the 17th Airborne Division.

Was that the primary unit you served during your time in the military?

Mr. Harris: That is the only unit I ever served in. I activated the 513th Parachute Regiment and deactivated it when the war was over. I started out with it at Fort Benjamin...my reception center was Fort Benjamin Harris, Indiana.

They are shutting that down; there is only a few people left there now. It's almost a ghost town.

Mr. Harris: It was comical. I got stuck at my reception center because I could type. I was typing up insurance and bonds and so forth for recruits as they came through. Then I graduated to a part where I was interviewing soldiers and asking them silly questions like, "What would you like to be in?" We had a quota that we had to fill a regiment with artillery and armor and all of that. So that is the reason you got assigned; there was a quota that we needed to assign so many people to. There was one guy from Bloomington, Indiana that came through. I asked him, "What do you want to get in?" He said, "I'm going in to the paratroopers." I said, "Why do you want to attempt the paratroopers?" He had it down packed. He had a long line of reasons. He was about like I was. He was going to win a war himself. Of course I was just a nineteen year old kid. How can you win a war typing up insurance and interviewing. So after he told me what he was going to do I went to my commanding officer and told him I would like to get out of this reception. He said, "Well Harris the only way you could get out is to volunteer for some part of the service that needs troops." I said, "Like the paratroopers?" He said, "You wouldn't do that." I said, "That is where I am going." He said, "Well you are going to have to go to the base doctor and get examined again." I said, "That's alright because I am in prime shape." I had just got out of high school and track and basketball. But I did, I

went to Fort Benning, Atlanta, Georgia, and started my basic training in the Alabama area at Fort Benning. It was 12 weeks of Infantry basic training.

What year was that?

Mr. Harris: That was in 1943. I went in the service of July of 1943.

I'm just curious; I'm going to get back to this. I don't want to leave this but before you actually joined the military you said you were born in 1924. So you would have been what 16 or 17 when the war started?

Mr. Harris: Yeah, something like that.

Do you have any recollections of the Depression and some of the impacts it had on the area?

Mr. Harris: Yes; most all of us it had an impact on us because we was patriotic. We were more patriotic then than we are now. I'll give you an example. The Air Force recruiting office came to the post office and I went over told him I wanted to join it. They said that I would have to take a test. I told them that was alright. I took the test and passed it and filled out a form for it and sent it in. I wasn't of age then so I had to have my parent's signature. I carried it home and asked my momma, I said, "Momma I need you to sign this paper." She says, "What is it?" I said, "I'm going into the Air Force but I have to have your signature." Well she broke down and started crying and that was the end of that. I told her I said, "Well momma I will be drafted." The draft would have waited until I finished high school and then I went in like I said in July of 1943.

What did your parents do?

Mr. Harris: Dad was a pastor. He was a Baptist preacher in rural churches. He started preaching when I was born. My dad and I were real close. He was always a good father to me. He was a good friend. I could just discuss personal matters with my dad that a lot of boys couldn't do with their parents. I have always appreciated that. He was always ready to give me advice.

I just got married about a year ago and I can't wait to have kids.

Mr. Harris: That is great. That is when you start living.

How many kids did you have?

Mr. Harris: We have two girls. One had a boy and a girl and the other had two girls. I got four grandchildren and two great grandchildren. So we are wrapped up with our grandchildren and great grandchildren. The grandchildren are grown and one has got two daughters herself. But it's great to have children.

You were seventeen you said when you tried to get into the Air Force. Did you have a job before you actually went into the service?

Mr. Harris: I was in high school.

So you went straight out of high school?

Mr. Harris: I was gone as soon as school was done.

Do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7th, 1941? Do you remember where you were and what was going on?

Mr. Harris: Yes I do. I was in school at Murray training school here on the campus of the university.

Do you remember your impression?

Mr. Harris: Yes, in fact that is when a lot of us wanted to get in. Like I say, we were patriotic then.

Before that time did you ever think that something like this could happen? Did you ever have any idea?

Mr. Harris: No.

What were your thoughts of the Germans and the Japanese at the time?

Mr. Harris: Well that was a low blow the Japs gave us, really. That was really low. We weren't prepared for it as everyone knows as we should have been. But it was a terrible thing. From what I hear the Japanese could have come right on through to us then if they had a mind to. But I am sure glad they didn't. But it shows what a great nation can do when it bounces back as quick as we did.

Did you really approve of the way FDR handled the situation?

Mr. Harris: Yes I did. In fact when he died I will never forget it. I was surprised. I shed a tear. I was overseas in Germany when he died. That is another story and it is pretty confidential. I told some people about it. The war over in Germany, the high points being sent to one place and all the replacements were sent back to the states to get the equipment and send it back to Japan. Of course I was engaged to my present wife now and one day it hit me, "You're not ready to go home." My heart was so hard. I shed a tear which surprised me. All I was taught in service was how to kill. All of a sudden I am going back to a little tender hearted country girl. I'm not ready. I just asked the Lord then, I said, "Lord either soften my heart or send me to Japan." He softened my heart. I'm awfully thankful to. I really prayed and really got serious I just prayed to the Lord to let me be able to go home or send me someplace else; which Japan was the only place. I had

to wait, I say France, waiting for them to ship me out; high points I was going to go home of course. Those kids with low points were already home and discharged before I got home. Anyway I stayed down there and I could tell them that it was working on me. When I got to the states for a discharge, I had a mouth problem. My gums were split. A Colonel paratrooper told me, "Trooper we are going to have to operate on you before you go home." I said, "Colonel I want to go home." He looked at me, he said, "Well I will make a deal with you. If you promise me you will come back I will let you go home for furlough. Then we will take care of your mouth when you come back. Later you will appreciate it." Which I did, I went home and came back and they put in a partial upper plate. He authorized my dentist here to put in a permanent one and he did. That Colonel did me a big, big favor. I have always appreciated it. I was just a kid wanting to go home.

You said you were drafted right after high school. Where did you actually go to for your induction?

Mr. Harris: Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

Did you take an IQ test there?

Mr. Harris: Yes.

Is that how you were slotted with the...?

Mr. Harris: I guess that had something to do with it.

When you did your more advanced training, your individualized training for your actual job specification where did you go from there?

Mr. Harris: You mean at my reception center?

You did your basic at Fort Benjamin Harris did you do an advanced?

Mr. Harris: Fort Benning.

You did them at Fort Benning. Was your job description infantry at the time?

Mr. Harris: Just Infantry; infantry basic training.

Well what was your impression just going into this for the first time?

Mr. Harris: I was thrilled. I was in top physical health and the hard training didn't bother me like it did a lot of them. We were mostly high school to college students. The whole outfit was mostly made up of that. A lot of us were in good physical shape and our basic was hard. We went through it with a breeze. There wasn't any problems. We ran 5 miles before breakfast many days and it didn't bother us doing that either really.

I need to play this tape for some of the guys who are in the military right now who are complaining about running pt in the morning.

Mr. Harris: Many a times we would run five miles before breakfast. I don't know if you want me to go a little farther in my training but after my basic training which was for twelve weeks, we went to a place called "the Frying Pan" at Fort Benning. It was a hut built in sand. They always said it was so hot enough it would fry an egg. I believed it after I was there awhile. We went to jump school from there then. It was four weeks of jump school training and building up our legs. We started jumping off of a 12 foot platform and then went to a little higher harness jumping off and the harness would catch us before we hit the ground. It was building us up for the real thing. Then we graduated to a fifty foot tower. We would go down with a parachute that was stationed on wires and just take you down. After we did that we would go back up on the 250 foot tower and have a free chute. You would jump off of it and you were all on your own. The reasons for that it is was teaching us how to land and how to roll when you landed because we used a chute that we hit the ground pretty hard. We use a 28 foot chute when the Air Force people use a 32 foot chute.

They always get it better don't they?

Mr. Harris: Of course there was a reason for that though. We didn't want to hang up in the air too much if you had to jump in combat. You had to really hit and roll to keep too much shock from being on your ankles. But our boots helped a lot. We had parachute laced so tight that it helped support the ankle. That was quite an experience. But what helped us was we had a guy whose instructor was an officer who we called Flash Gordon. He got up on top of that 250 foot tower and had his parachute in his hands and just jumped off and threw his chute up in the air. It kind of helped us you know. If he could do that we could do it. He was a handsome man. They said he had more women than he knew what to do with. Parachute schooling was hard too. It taught us discipline. If a person wasn't fit for the school they tried to wash us out. That is what we learned later really. We lost 40% of the original number started through parachute school.

With people getting injured?

Mr. Harris: Well a lot of people couldn't take orders like they gave it to us. Sergeants were instructors at the jump school and they were really tough. I'll give you a good example; some officers were going through jump school and as we were going through. These sergeants as I say were the instructors. One day a Colonel, a P38 plane came over and well he looked up at this P38 as it came over. The Sergeants said, "Colonel on your feet. Take your piece (which is your rifle) and hold it over your head and run around this jump field until I tell you to stop yelling I am a P38, I am a P38." A full Colonel! Both sergeants gave him orders to do it. A lot of things like that will wash you out. Another thing that will wash you out, when you got into planes some of them just couldn't jump. It was just more than they thought. In fact I had a buddy of mine that told me, he said, "Harris if I hesitate in that door, you know what to do. Give me your boot!" But he didn't. Some of them were booted out too. They tried to wash out what they didn't want.

So you made the cut?

Mr. Harris: You had to be tough. That is what I was told.

I know that they had these Louisiana maneuvers and I know that they had maneuvers for you. Were you involved in any of those?

Mr. Harris: We were in the Tennessee maneuvers. We went from basic training to jump school then we went to advanced airborne command training. That was tough too. From that we went to expert infantry training. The one that is qualified got that right there (points to a medal). That was expert, you had to have a high grade to be called expert and they gave you that. That is all it is just a rival. Of course this is a combat badge. If you were in combat you were issued that. My outfit made the highest grade of any outfit that ever took the test. They said that it was because we were young, from high school and college boys, tough and mentally fit for it too. That was at Fort Bragg. From Fort Bragg we went to Camp McCall for more training; more individual training, hand to hand combat, extensive bayonet training, and stuff like that. We had bayonet training even in basic training. We got serious with it with the hand to hand fighting. At the end of each phase of training we were promised furlough. In all of the different phases we never did get it. Camp McCall went in to Tennessee maneuvers. We were supposed to have gotten furlough before we went in to that but we didn't get it. When we went into Tennessee maneuvers we went in to Camp Forest Tennessee then and then we all got our first furlough. We were happy too.

Let me ask you sir, when did you actually, first of all did you feel like you were prepared for combat after all?

Mr. Harris: Yes I did.

When did you actually leave to go overseas?

Mr. Harris: August of 1944.

So the European D-Day had already happened by the time you got there?

Mr. Harris: D-Day happened in June. That was at Normandy. So we missed that. We went across on August of 1944 on a ship of Wakefield at Camp Miles _____. We left from Pier 1 of the Wakefield ship. When I finally did get to come back home I came back on a Wakefield at Pier 1. We went across unescorted, all by ourselves.

Really? You didn't have any destroyers with you?

Mr. Harris: no we didn't have anything. We zigzagged every 7 minutes. When we got out so far some bomber planes came over and stayed with us a little while. Then when we got closer to England some of the bombers would come over and try to stay with us. What they were trying to do was site submarines really. Then the German submarines were just

about all taken out by August of 1944. We had a fast ship though. We were faster than submarines could travel.

How many were on your ___?

Mr. Harris: On the ship, about 15,000. It was a luxury liner ship converted to a troop carrier. It had about four deep every level.

What accommodations did you have? Did you trade bunks with someone?

Mr. Harris: No, you had a hammock. It was a bunk assigned to you. You kept the same bunk going all the way across.

How long was the voyage?

Mr. Harris: It was 8 days. It was a fast trip.

I just talked to a gentleman and his was ten.

Mr. Harris: That is also a fast trip. Usually 15 to 20 days convoys took. That is what the submarines dwell on.

Did you see combat soon after you arrived?

Mr. Harris: We were in England 3 or 4 months and did some more extensive training and we jumped every so often. When we went to England they flew us over the White Cliffs of Dover. Our pilot came over the speakers and said, "Troopers you are now going over the White Cliffs of Dover." They flew us to France across the channel. I don't even know where we were landing in France. It was just a landing strip is all it was; it wasn't a town or nothing. Then we got in those little French trucks and went to a camp.

What date was that; what month?

Mr. Harris: What month? I couldn't tell you.

Was it in the fall or winter?

Mr. Harris: It was in the fall.

Now the Americans hadn't made it to Paris yet at this point. I know they made it Paris in late November or early December of 1944 so they were still on their way to Paris?

Mr. Harris: Are you talking about the Germans?

The Americans.

Mr. Harris: Was Paris captured by the Germans then?

Right that is what...

Mr. Harris: No it was liberated because some of us went to Paris on leave. When you were in the service time and defense didn't mean so much to you then. In fact places, when we traveled we traveled at night. We didn't know what was out 2/3 of the time because they would put us in trucks and take off.

When you traveled did you travel as a unit with the 17th? So you traveled from the states to Germany with the same people?

Mr. Harris: Yes, I traveled with the same outfit.

Was your unit a cohesive type of unit in terms of camaraderie?

Mr. Harris: Oh yeah, we trained as companies, as divisions and as a regiment in our combat strategy and so forth. We were a close net regiment.

I know that before the war there was a pool of officers, enlisted and noncommissioned officers who were active duty before the war ever started but as you moved closer to the war I know that our numbers mushroomed. For my reading I know that they were scrambling to find good officers and enlisted. They had some of these 90 day wonders from what I have heard. In your unit did they have a lot of seasoned veterans?

Mr. Harris: We had veteran's non-comms and we had some veteran officers and some 90 day wonders. We all started together and trained together from start until the ones that got killed or whatever.

What were your impressions of some of these 90 day wonders? Did they work well?

Mr. Harris: Well really some of them were just great and some of them were just 90 days wonders. They weren't prepared to be an officer. You don't prepare yourself in 90 days to be a good officer unless you are a good fellow to start with. The best thing about that though is they got training as we got training from basic right on up. (tape cut off and came back on). We had West Point graduates also as officers older that we were as regular troops. But they were good officers. Like I say some of those 90 day wonders was good officers. They might not have been to start with but they got very far. If they wasn't they would not have made it because officers didn't make it just like a regular trooper didn't.

Now I know that from what I have ready and talked to some of the other veterans that is it right to say that some of the paratroopers were able to do things that the average soldier was not, for instance the way you gloss your boots and the way you cut your hair?

Mr. Harris: Oh yes, we were pretty cocky as they called us. We had reason. For the for the infantry march a 28 cadence per minute. We marched at 32 cadences per minute. We had to be a little better than that. We had to be tough to make it but sometimes we wanted to show it too. At Fort Bennett there were armored stations there. Sometimes the paratroopers and the armored would get in a tangle, in fights. Well they issued us jump knives. You had a knife and push a button and the blade would come out on it. They took every knife from us. Every one of us was issued a knife and you just push a button and that blade would jump right on out. Then they took every one of them from us.

What kind of rations did you receive when you were out on the field training?

Mr. Harris: Well do you mean training or the war itself?

Let's talk about both.

Mr. Harris: Ok, in training we couldn't complain about the food. The fed us good when they could. Sometimes we would be too far from the kitchen and it wouldn't be as hot as we would like it to be. But the food was good, we couldn't complain at all. In combat it was a different story. We had parachute clothes on that had pockets all over it. We would put K-rations, that is better than C-ration. A C-ration came in a little can. I never did like corned beef hash and that is most of what we got. It was cold weather over there and the grease was about that thick on top of it. You could eat the grease or rake it off and spoon it out just like it was. That was C-rations that we didn't like too well. A K-ration was better and it had a little variety in the package. The best I remember it had a cigarette, maybe a little chocolate bar, a little piece of cheese and something basic to eat. It had a variety and we liked that. So we filled our pockets full of K-rations.

What we get now are the MRE's. When I went through basic training they gave us MRE's. I thought they were pretty good for little meals but you still get people that say, "It's not moms cooking."

Mr. Harris: Most of us came from mom's table right into the Army's table. There was a lot of difference. But we survived alright. Our cooks, I will say this, overseas when they could get to us they brought us food. But so many times they couldn't. They couldn't get to us. They tried to get it hot to us but by the time they got to us it wasn't so hot. But they tried and we appreciated that too for anything, it was cooked. It was good because like I say C-rations and K-rations....

Where was your first experience with combat?

Mr. Harris: We just crashed our way into it. They just didn't push us in I guess like some outfits was. A lot of places we would patch holes they called it. If the line would get weak in one place they would take our regiment and reinforce us until we got some combat experience and then we would take the initiative ourselves and some other outfit would be in reserve. I was a machine gunner.

Those guys had a hard job.

Mr. Harris: When we were shooting for a rating I wasn't too good with an M1. That is a rifle. I was rated marksman. But I took that 30 caliber air-cooled machine gun and I could do anything I wanted to with and shot expert. One of the officers told me he said, "Harris I thought you were smarter than that. He said, "You know what you are going to be." I said, "Yes sir, I do." Of course I was, I was a machine gunner. You know in actual combat when a machine is firing is combat; the average life of a machine gun is about three minutes. The first reinforcement that we had, the First Sergeant got me off of the machine gun. He said, "You have pulled it long enough." But luckily I didn't have to _____ line and just really fire and keep firing. Everybody goes for the machine gun. You could do more damage and kill more people than any weapons you got going. Artillery could probably do more of it. But machine guns could kill so many people. I guess if you built ammunition that was coming out and I forget now how many rounds fire per second. But you could wipe out a lot of troops.

Was this the predecessor to the 50 cal?

Mr. Harris: Yes. Of course everyone guns for a machine gun. If you see a machine gun firing somewhere everyone is zeroed in on it; mortars, artillery, riflemen and everything else. Just like I say, it can kill too many people quick. That is the reason at firing position a gun will last about three minutes. It reminds me of an experience at Camp McCall training with a machine gun. I think there were about 27 machine guns from all of the outfits. We had to practice in sectors. You would line up a sector you fired on. You did not go past your sector and the other fellows got theirs. This Lieutenant instructor, he was pretty excited anyway and he said, "I don't want anyone to fire unless I give the order is that understood?" Of course we were down on the machine gun. It so happened that a big jack-rabbit came hopping along. Well everybody had a sector even if they didn't have a sector then; all 27 machine guns opened up on that rabbit. You seen meat flying everywhere. I thought that Lieutenant was going to have a heart attack. We didn't get anything live to shoot at and here came a live animal and boy we opened up on it. The Lieutenant didn't enjoy that at all. He swore and cussed up a storm.

I was stationed in Germany for a couple of years and some of my friends were tankers and they would practice with both machine gun and tank it but on the range a deer jumped through. We had the infra-red sights. My friend said he could see it so they all turned open on this deer. They got in a little bit of trouble after this one.

Mr. Harris: Of course we were in snow a lot of the times in Belgium. That is where the bulge was. It was very uncomfortable. In fact I got frozen feet. At one time my outfit was going to go on furlough for a little bit of a rest period. We were relieved. I couldn't walk too much and I stayed in a little village. I don't know how I got in contact with this elderly couple but they took me in. They took my boots off of me and cut the laces off and had this lotion that they put on my feet and up all the way to my knees. My biggest concern though was that I would be reported missing in action. I told my buddy I said, "Don't you let that happen." They said they wouldn't and they didn't. I stayed with this

couple a good bit until after I could walk and everything. In fact out of this one village there was one boy who was 21 years old that the Germans didn't get. They just cleaned this town and took all of the eligible men and some of them were women too back with them when they retreated. When I got able he wanted me to go wild boar hunting with him. I said, "Yeah!" I had my M1 and he had a carbine. So we went wild boar hunting. The first day we got track of them and the second day we caught up with them. We killed a big boar. He had a mule. So of course we went back to the village and got the mule and a sled. We went back and put the boar on a sled and brought it back to the village. To make a long story short, they dressed that wild boar down and the whole village turned out in celebration because they didn't have any meat. The Germans just stripped everything they had. We had roasted wild boar meat and the whole village turned out. We had a ball. I will never forget that for as long as I live. This couple was so good to me.

That was in Belgium?

Mr. Harris: Yes. The old lady took me upstairs and put me to bed and put a thick comforter over me because it was cold. This is not nice but she said, "Now this is your mademoiselle." At first I didn't comprehend. But I just laughed. I didn't expect something like that; which meant to keep me warm and it did.

You made mention that your involvement in actual combat experience was in incremental progression. Where was the first time that you actually started filling a gap; at what location.

Mr. Harris: I couldn't tell you. Like I say, we moved at night and we didn't know where we were.

Did you ever jump in anywhere?

Mr. Harris: We jumped across the Rheine behind the German lines. That was after the bulge though. One of the big assignments we had at the bulge; everyone knows about the bulge; one of the main highways south of the bulge leading in the Germans were trying to reinforce their forces. We were assigned to block them from reinforcing; my battalion, 2nd battalion. They had tanks and everything else trying to get through. We had some artillery support. But the main thing we was using just bazookas which you would have to hit a track or something to stop them. I guess that is one of the first experiences that we had. We lost a lot of men on that because they were throwing everything they had at us trying to get through. The Germans knew then if they were blocked, they were planning to go back to France, if they didn't get through the bulge they knew the war was over. That is the reason they put all the effort in it and the allies put everything they had in it to block them. Later we regrouped after the bulge and re-forced with other soldiers that came in and we jumped across the Rheine River at Vestel, Germany behind the German lines. The allies were lined up on one side of the Rheine River and the Germans were lined up on the other side. Well neither side would try to break through because they would lose too many men and the damage would be too great. So they dropped us behind the German lines and when the Germans took off after us, the British broke through the

weak spot. The British laid a pontoon bridge across the Rheine River and Churchill tanks broke through to us and we rode those Churchill tanks for three days. The old saying was that they had to have their tea and crunch it, the British did. The British soldiers had to have their tea and so help me we would be running from the Germans but every so often they would stop those tanks and come out with a little pumped up (like a) Coleman stove and heat up tea. We had tea every so many times a day. We liked coffee, they liked tea. But we didn't stop from running to brew coffee like they do tea. But that actually happened. They knew they were safe. But their crossing was about to end in the war and we knew it too.

I'm just curious how many men did you lose on the first encounter with the tanks at the bulge when you tried to use bazookas; how many men in your unit did you lose?

Mr. Harris: I don't know. We had a battalion which was four companies which was about a thousand men. After we jumped into the Rheine we had a lot of prisoners that was ready to surrender. Of course we couldn't take prisoners, there was no place we could have them. So we just sent them back on behind us. Of course after the British Churchill tanks broke through the whole allied armies broke through too. They followed us up on that too. They knew the boys went over and instead of seeing crying soldier you would see old men and young men and sometimes you would see a SF troop that had been there with them.

What were your impressions of combat when you were involved? You said initially that you were very excited about getting over there but after your involvement with combat for awhile what were your impressions?

Mr. Harris: It scared the heck out of us. Some would not admit it but we were all scared. We didn't know what combat was. It's for real, it's for keeps. When you see a buddy next to you fall over dead, it's the real thing. It really put an impression on us. It made a better soldier out of us because we took all the precautions that we could. But it was rough.

Were you ever shot at?

Mr. Harris: At point blank, no.

Were you ever wounded in the conflict?

Mr. Harris: My mouth was wounded when a bomb exploded. It split my gums. But it was a small thing. I didn't pay any attention to it. That is when they had to pull all those teeth and cut part of my gum out and defect it and put in a partial.

Where was this that the bomb exploded?

Mr. Harris: Where was I at then? I was in Belgium.

Was that the bulge?

Mr. Harris: Yes. I was in a foxhole. I happened to raise my head out to be sure what was happening and that no one was coming at me. It wasn't an explosion close to me. They said it was an 88. If it would have been very close and an 88 it would have blown my head off. It just split my gum and I had a little scar right here (points to left outer cheek) and when I shave you can see it. But that is all that has ever happened to me and frozen feet.

Were you promoted?

Mr. Harris: I came out as a Corporal. One thing I failed to mention, when I was in a Tennessee maneuvers and we went to Camp Forest Hills, Tennessee, they pulled me out of F Company and put me in personnel office. Why I don't know? But I was to take care of F Company records, making payroll for them and keeping all records and all citations and all AWOL's. I stayed in there until we went overseas until we went in combat. Then they just packed those records up and I don't know where they went. We joined outfits. But I never did know why they pulled me out.

Would you care to describe some of your awards here?

Mr. Harris: This is a Bronze Star. This is a 17th airborne insignia. This is naturally a parachute. When we started out at Fort Benning, we were assigned to the 13th Airborne. That is their insignia. When we went from Fort Benning to Fort Bragg, they set us permanent with the 17th Airborne. This is the original parachute wings. This is my marksman that I made with the M1. There is the expert badge I made with the machine gun which I shouldn't have done. These three represent the Ardennes and the Bulge and Central Europe. I was in three major campaigns. You can have many battles in a campaign. There is a campaign medal with three stars on it. It shows that I was in three different campaigns. Then that is the good conduct medal. But that is about all there is. I wasn't a hero. I was just a soldier wanting to come home. But combat is hell. You don't know one minute what is going to happen the next when you are right up on the line. Even in reserves you could get hurt because artillery can come at you. I just hope we don't ever have a major war. It's too many lives lost. I don't think we will, I hope not anyway.

What about your impressions of the enemy? What are your thoughts? Were you impressed with the enemy?

Mr. Harris: In the Bulge, the enemy was well-trained. They knew what they were doing. When we jumped across the Rhine they weren't done; the troopers that we had at the Bulge. Like I say they were young kids and older men with few SF troops mixed in there with them. They knew the war was about over too. We did too. That is the reason they were surrendering. We used to tell them to move and to go on down that way because we couldn't take care of them. They were surrendering. I don't blame them I would too. In fact I got a little 25 automatic pistol took off of a Second Lieutenant German. He came up to me and he was trying to tell me something. He kept pointing to his shirt pocket. So I just took my hand and went in there and he had that little 25

automatic in his shirt pocket. The reason he was trying to tell me is if you take a prisoner that had a weapon on him most of the time you would have shot him. He didn't want to get shot naturally.

Did you ever capture; I know you said this German officer; did you have any other?

Mr. Harris: Yeah, we sent out patrols trying to capture people to find out what is going on and what is ahead of us and so forth. We would interrogate them. We had regular people that did that. We found a lot of our soldiers killed. They had P38's or Lugers all of them. That is a German pistol. They would ram it down their throat and pull the trigger. Of course that does things to you. We taught a lot of boys not to take prisoner; just shoot them on the side. I guess that made them; we did the same things with them. It was bad.

We are just about done here, Sir. I was just curious though and this is a question that I have personally. With all that you have seen and your experience done in the military before and the years you have lived after it and all of the people you have run into, what do you find now that is really important in life? If you have to say a few things that are really important in life what are they? Things that are of genuine value now that you have seen other things?

Mr. Harris: Well first thing we knew this war, World War II, was necessary. We had too. We have had other wars but we didn't have to. I have always appreciated that. There is no telling how many thousands of boys we lost over it but it was a necessary thing, I think. It will tell a lot of us that you don't have wars unless you have to. Like I said war is hell. It just kills too many people. I hope we never have another one. If we have World War III we will lose more people than we did in World War II because you don't line up battle zones. It will be a different war.

What would you to a person, especially me being on 26 and trying to figure out in life what is really important? What things are really important with all that you have experienced? What would you say are things that a person should really go for in life that are really important?

Mr. Harris: You mean in combat or personal life?

In personal life.

Mr. Harris: Number one would be education. Number two would be know what you want to do; major in what you want to do even if it takes your sophomore or junior year to know what you want to do, go for it. I've got two little ones now in college, grandchildren, a grandson and his sister. Both of them went to Union. That is about all I can think of to really go for; educate yourself.