

Video Recording Log
Veteran Gerald Yaxley

Name of Interviewer: Harriet Williamson

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Gerald Yaxley

Birth Date: 12/05/1923

Recording format

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 89 minutes **Date of recording:** 09/11/2007

Location of recording: WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

Recording log:

00:00 Introduction

00:56 Background, family, education

05:00 Father worked at factory, got him a job doing shift work

06:58 Mother told him to get an education—went to Penn. State one semester

07:20 Draft notice—expected it—friends also getting draft notices—physical in February, 1943

08:30 Inducted in February, 1943 at Fort Niagara, NY

09:17 Troop train from Fort Niagara to Yuma, Arizona—joined 4th Mechanized Cavalry Regiment

09:50 Basic training in February, 1943—Camp Young, CA

10:50 Regiment moved North to Camp Coxcomb, Arizona—training for tanks to go to Africa—training for 4 weeks

11:38 Basic training in medical detachment—did not end up a medic

12:02 Sent to Army Special Training Program (A.S.T.P.) in June, 1944—there for two weeks, then sent back to Arizona because not cut out to be an engineer

15:00 Back to Mohave desert to Hume, AZ—joined 104th Timberwolf Division—infantry

15:40 General was Terry Allen—flunked out of West Point, took over division in 1942

17:05 Arizona—basic training again—different than Cavalry training—no tanks, bayonets, hand grenades, rifles

- 18:45 104th Division moved from Camp in Arizona to Camp Carson, CO near Pike's Peak—there with 10th Mountain Division, skiers—wife's cousin was in 10th Division, was killed in Italy
- 20:15 At Camp Carson, CO for several weeks
- 21:10 D-Day—day off—listened to radio commentary about invasion
- 21:35 Training—easier because he was a country boy—tougher, healthier
- 22:40 General Allen—trained for night raids in CO—no rifles, just bayonets, pretty scary
- 24:05 Left CO after 4-5 months, went to Camp Kilmer, NJ—staging area sending infantry to Europe—took a train to a ferry in New York City
- 25:00 Went on U.S.S. George Washington—stacked 4-5 men deep, got top bunk—good stomach, not sea sick—job to swab the deck fore and aft
- 27:00 August 26th to September 7th, 1944—Cherbourg, France—there about a month
- 27:40 Germans still on Guernsey/Jersey Island—bypassed them—would sneak in nights to cut American gas line—stood guard at night to protect
- 29:11 Germans invented Buzz Bomber V-2—launched around Antwerp, Holland toward London
- 29:55 104th Infantry Division sent to Holland with British, Canadian troops—2 weeks, took over lots of land
- 30:30 English would take tea every afternoon in tanks—British did a better job of destroying the problem before sending in their men—Americans more aggressive, more casualties—lost first combat—Company I lost 3-4 men a day—liberated many villages
- 34:45 Went back to Europe in 1994—people were very grateful
- 35:14 Local resistances—would tell Allies where Germans were
- 35:35 House-to-house fighting—shoot first ask second—easy to blame soldier
- 36:45 Motto for division: “Nothing in Hell can stop the Timberwolves”—not heard often
- 37:12 In Holland until November when accomplished mission—sent to Aachen, Germany, which had been taken over the week before—relieved men that were there—Division was considered green—Siegfried Line was a quarter of a mile away—anti-tank, dragon's teeth, pillboxes
- 41:00 Describing German pillboxes

- 41:35 1st Platoon trained to take pillboxes—went to Siegfried Line with dynamite to blow them up
- 42:50 Story: German man fighting for American forces went to pillboxes to try to persuade officers and soldiers to surrender—got about 40 soldiers to surrender—awarded medal
- 47:30 Mid-November, several divisions made a big attack—2,400 bombers strafed 20 miles of Siegfried Line—Allied forces advanced about 15-20 miles East—taking small villages
- 49:08 Intelligence G2 division told them to take Potzholm because there were not a lot of Germans there—they were wrong—attacked when crossing field, 8-10 casualties, some taken prisoner
- 50:15 Jumped in artillery hole and stayed there—hit by shrapnel from mortar—broke ribs, hit lung, got lodged under spine—lifted his arm and air rushed out—took 8 soffel pills which you were supposed to take if wounded—saw friend on tank, who came back for him later at night with a stretcher
- 59:00 Taken to headquarters, loaded into ambulance—taken to Liege, Belgium, field hospital 15 miles away—school converted into hospital
- 01:00:25 [Tape transfer]
- 01:00:45 [Second tape introduction]
- 01:01:30 Continuation—field hospital at Liege, Belgium—there about a week—shipped to Paris, France—there until after 21st birthday—flown to Malmsbury, England near Bristol—there at least one month—rehabilitation to learn how to breathe with one lung
- 01:03:00 Shipped to France to join 24th Smoke-generating Battalion—drove jeep
- 01:03:45 Mortars—“stove pipes”—shoot shells that would create smoke—blind enemy when Americans crossing open field
- 01:05:28 In combat 28 days total—some friends in combat 185 days total—in infantry you either get killed, wounded, or taken capture—very lucky to make it all the way through
- 01:06:05 Reunions—104th Timberwolf, 4th Mechanized Cavalry
- 01:07:00 A lot of WWII veterans dying now
- 01:07:48 24th Smoke-generating battalion—T5—Technician 5th Class—start, shift, run jeep
- 01:08:20 Private First Class, then T5

01:08:40 Epergne, France—small village, champagne capitol

01:10:03 Drove jeep for Captain after war—occupying peacetime France

01:10:55 Learning French from French girls

01:11:10 M-16 rifle—30 caliber—second day of combat was hit by tank—took friend's rifle who had been injured and removed from battle field

01:13:50 Correspondence—no, parents did not know for 2 weeks he had been hit, did not write home—engagement, wife

01:16:20 In war, both sides lose—negotiation is better

01:18:15 Lower class are the ones that get killed—not fair

01:20:25 Wrote about WWII service for unspecified organization in Washington, D.C.

01:21:15 Back to states January 6th, 1946—married May 20th, 1946

01:22:25 Bought 18-foot trailer in NY with wife, received BA from university, taught junior high one year

01:23:55 Life effected by war? Knew no other way

01:24:15 Classified 20% disability—lung repaired itself

01:24:45 Wife, religion, family

01:26:20 Son in Marines, died in drunk driving accident in 1981—death of a child

01:27:23 Grandson also in the Marines, fought in Iraq

01:27:45 Counting blessings, optimism

01:28:00 [Wrap-up]