

**Video Recording Log  
Veteran Wesley Matthews**

**1. Name and address of collector of interviewer.**

Name of Donor/Interviewer: H.F. Williamson  
Address: 300 N. Goodwin  
City: Urbana  
State: Illinois  
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Partner organization affiliation (if any): WILL AM-FM-TV

**2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed at is appears on the Biographical Data Form:**

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Wesley Matthews  
Birth Date: 12/16/1923

**3. Recording format**

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

**4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes):** 145 minutes    **Date of recording:** 02/21/2008

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

**6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.**

00:00 Introduction  
00:25 Beginning of war—working on farm—drafted in 1944—graduated H.S. in 1940  
01:35 July, 1944—sworn in at Fort Sheridan—exams  
02:25 Compiling service record—war bonds \$18.75/mo—expected to buy—he refused  
05:25 Assigned KP Fireguard of a Knight  
05:45 Camp Wolters, TX—basic training 8 weeks—11 weeks heavy weapons  
06:15 Infantry Replacement Training Center—told them cavalry replacement casualty was 2%—later discovered in ATO casualty rate was 3% per day  
07:03 December 16<sup>th</sup>—Battle of the Bulge—21<sup>st</sup> birthday—sent to Boston to board ship—10-day delay en route, Christmas at home—Fort Mead, MD—friends  
08:10 Training—cadences—trained for Pacific jungle conditions—sent to Europe midwinter  
09:30 Ardennes Mountains—foxholes—if you got trench foot you were court marshaled  
10:15 Camp Miles Standish, MA—Boston—trains  
12:15 Thomas H. Barry—Army Troops Transport—January 1, 1945—15 days zigzagging to Le Havre, France—sunken ships in pier—debarked, walked 4 miles

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- 15:00 In France near Belgium for 3 days—food, K-rations, cold coffee—on train, traded engineer for goat cheese, bread, wine
- 17:00 Living in old factory building—trading with locals
- 18:10 Truck across Belgium—very cold—near German border
- 19:15 Joined 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 395<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, L Company Mortar Section—light 60's, 80, 60 mm guns
- 20:50 Ammunitions bearer—45 lbs of ammunition and equipment—6 rounds on front, 6 back
- 21:20 Replacements—training—fighting to save own rear—carbine with 1 magazine—7 rounds, holds 15—begged rounds off of others
- 22:50 Didn't know if gun would fire—not allowed to test it
- 23:05 Wearing arctic's, carrying combat boots—traded combat boots for carbines
- 23:55 Sound phone to call ahead and tell when coming back to camp—someone walked up, guard missed the message—friendly fire
- 24:25 Carbine—2 magazines—machine gun belt—pistol belt—acquired 7 magazines
- 25:05 Cold weather—clothing—uniform—battalion surgeon told him over 100 men in battalion had frostbite—supposed to send them back but there were no replacements—given 6 pills of APC Anise
- 26:15 Bed rest with feet elevated—hospital in England
- 26:45 Last part of Battle of the Bulge—Battle Star—range, mop up line
- 27:15 Dug in, Siegfried Line—pillboxes faced wrong way—patrols every night—patrols wouldn't go too far—go down to hill, sit down, come back
- 28:10 31<sup>st</sup> January—another regiment attacked—German dugouts supposedly empty—16 mm mortar sent out—ineffective
- 28:55 Germans shelling road—went to Herzberg—cut across country
- 29:30 Guard duty, went into house—240 canons fired, plaster fell off of ceiling
- 30:15 Going to clean out bunkers—standing single-file battalion long—2 mortar rounds fired by Germans—men getting hit around him—not hit but had shrapnel holes in clothes
- 33:55 Spent night in foxholes
- 34:15 Went to Wanen, Belgium—Elsenborn Ridge—Battle of the Bulge—his battalion only unit of 1<sup>st</sup> Army that wasn't pushed out of position during Battle of the Bulge—field of fire under
- 35:00 37-mm canon—anti-personnel—deadly for Germans—attacked by 3 regiments of Germans—went back 37 miles
- 36:05 Worked for engineers during rest—went to small town in Belgium—tank battle near old stone houses—used destroyed houses to build road—done on half rations, pounding rocks all day—trucked back to battalion at night—doing double duty, everyone sick
- 37:35 Story about friend
- 38:30 “Mopping up”—Valentine's Day—relieved by another division
- 39:30 Putting up tent in forest—shelter halves—snow storm
- 40:45 Belgium—5-day real rest—half trucked, half walked—Belgians took them in—house heated by cook stove—ate pies and drank wine—there 5 days
- 43:15 Boots, shoes

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- 43:55 Training program—firing mortar—volleyball—changed Army Corps
- 45:00 Speech—Germans in hole, time to rout them out
- 46:15 Went to Stolberg, Belgium—in mansion with ballroom on 4<sup>th</sup> floor—broke chandelier
- 47:10 In trucks—discovered girls watching them—played songs from U.S. on Victrola—fined \$65 for fraternizing in German territory
- 48:00 Crossed river Rur to Düren—dozers to clear roads—fire on road—running with machine guns—took German POW
- 50:45 Bergheim on Erft Canal—fire fight—back in battalion group—artillery in big ovens—240's, 155's, 105's—attached to 7<sup>th</sup> Armored—tanks—I and K Companies
- 53:00 Dove into open grave—Air Force came—3 P-51's bombed and strafed top of cliff—Germans dug into higher ground of embankment
- 54:07 Dugout—German private and corporeal—trip wired boobytrap—6 POWs—BAR supposed to deliver them to HQ—took them around the corner and shot them all
- 55:45 Took town—running down cobblestone streets—burning German money
- 58:30 I Company discovered bank—bazooka fired on vault—town more or less secured
- 59:05 [Tape transfer]
- 59:26 Mortar squad ended up in house of music teacher—had jam session
- 01:00:30 Civilians—never ran into “real Nazis”—people would not admit to being Nazis
- 01:01:15 Left town—driving in trucks—fire fight—dug foxhole—strip mine going across Cologne Plain—more fire fights
- 01:04:05 1<sup>st</sup> Army same instructions: proceed to Rhine River—hit river 4 miles from Dusseldorf—bridge blew—German tanks appeared—tank—machine gunner—mortar—rain—retrieving ammunition
- 01:08:30 Germans dug tank trap—Americans set up mortar—3-4 miles to Rhine River—“Germans putting rolls and barrages over it”
- 01:10:55 German farmhouse—27 German tanks firing—took cover—his company lost about 40 men
- 01:13:00 At midnight went to hollow—medics wing was field hospital
- 01:15:00 Going to attack another town next day—barrage cut off—no one told cannon company—at 4 a.m. rousting Germans out of houses
- 01:16:25 Potluck meal—searched houses—chickens, potatoes
- 01:17:15 Trucked to another field next day—battalion awarded distinguished unit citation for Battle of the Bulge
- 01:17:50 9<sup>th</sup> Armored crossed bridge—put in trucks and taken up river with headlights on—“liberated lap robe”—went by truck to Ringen overnight—walked to Ludendorff bridge—Germans firing and bombing bridge—told to walk not run
- 01:20:35 His battalion went left and plugged hole between 77<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> Lightning Division—2-3 days—antiaircraft—Quad 50's
- 01:21:30 Half-tracks
- 01:22:20 Moved out—found building with alcohol—HQ—problem controlling alcohol consumption
- 01:24:25 Going uphill—dug in under tree—screaming Mimi's—saw man hit

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- 01:27:04 Saw spec coming in—hit while laying on back—pushed down—shrapnel went all the way through leg—cauterized wound
- 01:28:45 Lost 50% of company in friendly fire—company retracted—squad said would come back for him—made litter out of field jackets—hopped downhill between 2 men through brush—others stole Jeep for him
- 01:31:30 Aid station—surgeon—shock tent
- 01:32:55 Captain called him waste of time because so much blood loss—ether—surgery
- 01:34:25 Air field—went from Paris to England—C-46 or 47—take off by series of hops
- 01:35:30 Train across England—old English hospital
- 01:36:00 New man in experienced troop—infantry replacement training—horrible method—newly trained boy going with more experienced men who went through Battle of the Bulge—treated well, gave suggestions—from ASTP, transferred to 99<sup>th</sup> after ASTP disbanded—Louisiana Maneuvers
- 01:38:15 Mortar section—friend Roger section runner—distance between squad level and CP—food and rations—CP had better food
- 01:39:45 Went into Army 165 lbs—came back 120 lbs
- 01:40:15 Hospital in England—Kirchner wire drilled through knee—developed case of Osteomyelitis—bone rotting—smell—Penicillin shots
- 01:43:15 Doctors thought he wouldn't survive
- 01:43:45 Paul—another replacement—got gangrene, amputated leg
- 01:45:45 Osteomyelitis—part of 1 leg muscle left—nerves, blood vessels, hair messed up
- 01:47:00 Hospital—another patient—requesting music for intercom
- 01:49:00 Overflow group—got caught with English girlfriends spending the night
- 01:50:45 Train to Scotland—went on U.S. Aquetania—3<sup>rd</sup> biggest passenger ship—troops taken out on lighters because ship too big for port—took 5 ¼ days to get to U.S.A.
- 01:52:00 Halloran Hospital, NY—June, 1945
- 01:53:00 Went to Bruns General Hospital, Sante Fe, New Mexico—temporary doctors—former TB hospital—waiting for orthopedic surgeon
- 01:54:00 Major arrived—goal to get everyone out of bed—broke his leg trying to bend his knee—denied breaking leg, left him with broken leg—someone forged a signature so he could get an X-ray, but then no one would look at it since they hadn't ordered it
- 01:55:15 Surgeon said he would give him bone graft—cut the bone in 2 and put him back in bed—blood ran out of his leg and through 2 mattresses onto floor—got 5,000 cc's of blood transfusion
- 01:56:35 Skin traction—shoe traction—frustration
- 01:57:50 Trying to bend leg
- 01:58:00 Framework hammock for leg
- 01:58:30 Surgery to break leg—Osteomyelitis, broken leg—bone graft—given full-leg brace
- 01:59:00 Gave nurse \$20 to get a pair of shoes in town—left as bed patient carrying brace

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02:00:00 Lamy, NM—train—went through window into compartment—went to Galesburg to Mayo Clinic

02:00:45 Laying on litter at night at Galesburg station alone

02:01:20 [Tape transfer]

02:01:30 Moving from NM to IL—could only get transferred for humanitarian reasons

02:02:25 Wrote letter to Senator Brooks regarding horrible treatment at hospital—Brooks asked for Senatorial investigation of hospital—hospital was due to be closed—IGs came—he refused to make official complaint because they were due to send him home in 10 days and he didn't want to ruin it

02:05:00 Train to Galesburg, IL—taken to hospital

02:07:25 Went home on weekends on Greyhound bus to Springfield, IL

02:09:00 At hospital 3 months without therapy or treatment

02:10:20 Going back and forth from hospital to home—went from brace to crutches to cane—performing his own physical therapy

02:11:20 CDD certificate—VA—examination and exit process—last day, discharged—hitch hiked to Springfield, IL

02:14:20 Fishing

02:16:00 50% disability unfair—handicapped in too many ways—should have been 60% or 80%--learning to do things with left hand and extra tools and aides

02:18:20 Hospital did what they should have in England—should have done more therapy in NM—nothing at all was done in Galesburg, IL

02:19:10 Was his dream to run the first 4-minute mile when he was young—prevented by injuries acquired in War

02:19:45 Wrap up—Walter Reed hospital and Iraq War—Army hospitals have always been bad—Congress, Surgeon General's fault—people slack off in big bureaucracies of any kind—should have trained replacements as units instead of individuals—McNair erred in saying the Sherman tank did not need to be improved for WWII—took 3 American tanks to take out 1 German tank—guns, bazookas

02:22:25 Accepted war as daily life—civilian misunderstanding—way veterans look back

02:24:25 Can't really describe it—[Wrap up]