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## Fred Barney, Oral History Interview pt. 1, 2005

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DB: We're here in beautiful Indian River, Michigan, talking to Fred Barney. Fred was an infantryman during WWII, serving with the 76th Division that was attached to Patton's Third Army. We're just about to talk to Fred about his WWII experiences which included some training at Eastern Michigan University. Fred, let's begin back at the time you were first inducted. You got your notice from a draft board, was that it? From the Meadeville, Pennsylvania area?

FB: Actually, I had enlisted in the reserves and that gave me one more fall of playing football at Youngstown College. It was a notification from the Army itself to tell me that it was time for me to go into active duty.

DB: Where did you have to go, to show up- do you remember that?

FB: Oh yes- I remember that well. We went to Cumberland Gap, Indiantown Gap might be a better name of it. It was right by Harrisburg PA- I lived in Needful, PA in northwest PA at the time.

DB: Tell me a little bit- when you left home, what feeling did your parents have?

FB: They expected it and all my friends had gone in and everybody- all young people were lining up to join and fight and they expected it and you know, my mother was like all mothers- she was worried about it...

DB: But they still had a sense of pride?

FB: Oh of course. It was interesting that when I got there, I had a bunch of us had had a big going away party the night before and I had one big hangover and I can remember going into that place and getting all the shots and taking all the tests, and I can't believe that later on I was invited to go into ASTP, because I had done well on some of those tests. I guess because also I had gone to college for a year and a half.

DB: ASTP stands for...

FB: Army Specialized Training Program...

DB: And that's what you got at Eastern Michigan?

FB: That is correct.

DB: Let's go from after you were inducted, you went to basic training where?

FB: I went to basic training in Texas. Most of us went to Texas for some reason, and there was Camp Caruthers, near Mineral Wells Texas.

DB: What time of the year?

FB: I went into the Army on the first day of spring and we did thirteen weeks of basic training which took us into June I think.

DB: Quite a length time in basic.

FB: Yes. That was interesting because almost all of us were young and I could remember we had obstacle course and physical training coming out of our ears, and I remember Harold Alban- he was from the Twin Cities, MN, and he was quite an athlete. I was in good shape, and we used to race over the obstacle courses and he could always beat me but I could always come in second. The rest of the platoon would be after that.

DB: If you were playing football before going in, you were in pretty good shape. There must have been some other platoons coming in that were not in very good shape.

FB: I can still remember a man last name of Chase, and he was 35b when he went through basic... that poor man- he just struggled and struggled- he had a terrible time and you just know why wars are fought by 18 year olds.

DB: I can imagine. Tell me- you remember your first haircut.

FB: Well-sure, we were in temporary platoons of a certain number of men, maybe 20-30, I don't really remember. We were marched around in our civvies for a while and then we were issued uniforms and put on, and each day at the reception center we would be marching around getting shots and so on, and off course when you march past another group you always have to razz them to a certain extent and they you because, well, the famous line was "watch out for the corkscrew shots." and so when we went into this room and they said "do an about face" and we just learned what an about face was, and did that, now they asked us to march backwards through the door. As we went backwards through the door, just kept on walking, we got a shot in each arm by the Corpsmen, and it was amazing how many of these big brutes would fall over in a dead faint from that.

DB: How was the food?

FB: I loved it.

DB: now at the end of- when you were in basic, are you put into units at that point, are you infantry?

FB: Yes it was infantry basic. That's right. And we knew - I knew when the train stopped- this officer came on board and he had the crossed rifles on his collar and I asked somebody "what's crossed rifles," and he said, "Infantry."

DB: At the end of basic, that's when they notified you, you were going to this, to the ASTP. Tell me about that- how you knew what college you were going to go, and how you got there.

FB: Well in the Army, you don't know anything. You're not told anything, all you know is that you have to hurry up and wait. And it's a series of that. I don't really know if they told me at the end of basic that I was going into ASTP or not- I've forgotten that. But there was time before school started in the fall and I was assigned to Camp Maxey, Texas, and assigned to drive a 6x6 and follow positions...

DB: What's a 6x6?

FB: That's a truck which has 6 wheels and all 6 are in drive. And whatever they needed...well, I was a truck driver. And so I did that until orders came through that I was to report to Ypsilanti Michigan and I think as I remember they gave me a leave on the way so that I had time to get home from a few days before I got there.

DB: Were you, at that time, a buck-private?

FB: Yes.

DB: So, at a certain point then, you showed up at Ypsilanti, Michigan for duty. Tell me about the dirty work.

FB: Well, it was unusual after all that basic training and all the physical activity; we were really treated as students- and we were assigned to a high number of classes. Our day started at about 6:00(am), and ended at ten o'clock at night, and we were assigned to do certain things all day. It was either class or military training or physical exercise, physical training, morning to night.

DB: Let's start with classes. What were the classes?

FB: well there would be all types of science, physics, math, calculus,

DB: Taught by military officers or by the faculty?

FB: Taught by Michigan State Normal faculty and they- the only thing that weren't taught by them were military science which were taught by our military officer there- Captain Weatherbee.

DB: let's talk about the military training part of it. Weatherbee was the captain that you were most familiar with there at that point?

FB: There are only a cadre of three men to take care of the group of us, and there were about 300 and we were divided into 10 platoons of about thirty each. So the captain was in charge- he had an assistant- Lt. Labeau, and then there was I think a corporal who was company clerk to do all the clerical duties.

DB: You were in uniform...

FB: Always.

DB: And you had rifle shooting practice?

FB: We did, this was all designed according to the facility that we had and the captain took care of all that- he was in charge of that...

DB: Was it an indoor range?

FB: That was an indoor range, it was in a small building that was called The Fieldhouse; it was the first stage of a series of buildings that were to be made as the Fieldhouse. This was a fairly small facility- as I remember it, some of it was dirt-floor, and the captain had set up a rifle range in there, and it was a combat type rifle range- not targets exactly: trying to simulate actual battle conditions, and so this scene was painted, and the captain would give fire order for us to shoot at a certain thing, and his description then once he gave that, he'd give the order to fire and at first, always someone would misunderstand and they would fire at something other than at what they should fire. But of course no one would admit that, so the captain, being clever and creative, he was a great guy, and he took it upon himself to paint these bullets different colors. So he would issue a certain color to each soldier and then give fire order so if there were some shots that went astray, all you had to do was look at the different colors- what was left going through the target, and he could figure out which soldier couldn't understand the fire order.

DB: How about his approach toward discipline? The story of the boots there...

FB: Oh he was a really great guy, and he did have discipline and you have to have discipline in the military, and I will never forget the soldier who showed up to formation with boots that were not shined well. And they were not easy to shine because the boots were called combat boots they were regular high shoes with straps attached to the top and they were made inside out so to speak. The rough part of the leather was on the outside making it very difficult to put the shine on the shoes. And this soldier made a big mistake- he came up out there and not only did he not have his shoes shined well enough, but he made some excuses, like, he "couldn't do it." and so the captain being, as you said, "creative," he took the boots off the soldier, and he took them with him. The next formation, he brought the boots back. One of the boots was polished like you'd see some dancer or something- really shiny, it was beautiful. He gave the boots back to the soldier, and of course he expected both boots from then on to be equal to that one that he shined. He must have stayed up all night shining that. Anyway, I really don't think that soldier ever got any any leave after that. I don't think he could ever get is that other shoe shine to match.

DB: When you were at Eastern Michigan, you were housed in regular dormitories?

FB: Yes- in Munson Hall.

DB: OK

FB: There were two dormitories only at the time- Eastern was small. There were very few men there...

DB: Other than your unit?

FB: Yes

DB: Approximately how many regular students?

FB: I would guess maybe fifty men, and then the girl's dorm was still a lot of girls of course

DB: What about the socializing between this unit of 300 young, active, Army infantrymen and the Ypsi coeds?

FB: Well, I think between the Dean of girls and Captain Weatherbee, they figured that out quite well. We were schedule Monday through Friday six to ten, and Saturday till noon- and then if you didn't get any gigs or tours or any other disciplinary action, you were free from twelve noon on Saturday until about 4 Sunday afternoon. The girls then of course were unavailable Monday through Friday. On Saturday, you could socialize but the girls had to be in by some ungodly hour like 10:00- very early, so it wasn't worth it. We would all head for Detroit as soon as we got a chance at Saturday noon- bus and train rides for free; we would get into Detroit and rides was free there if you were uniform, and we had to be uniform- we were not allowed to wear civvies at all. And we could go to all types of theater and everything free of charge. So we really enjoyed Detroit- I learned to really love Detroit at that time.

DB: Fred, tell me a little about the physical training and the athletics during that period of time while you were at Eastern.

FB: Well, we had extensive physical training of course. We couldn't let down after the basic and most of the calisthenics were driven by our student leader. Ten different platoons, each had a platoon leader selected from amongst the students. Also there was a student leader of the whole group selected by the captain and that a student leader was the one who was the student commander and he gave all the calisthenics himself and was very good. His name was Maurice Kennedy- spelled like Maurice but pronounced Morris. He was from another school in Michigan, had gone to college before coming to ASTP, he was from Indiana- a very competent young man.

DB: Fred, did this feel like college when you were there or did it feel more like a military experience?

FB: I think it felt more like both because you march from class to class in formation- the student leader would report to the professor and tell him who was absent. Those parts were military. On the other hand, once you get into class, it felt like a college class.

DB: And intramural sports? You had some of those with other schools?

FB: We had sports- boxing, wrestling, sports where we competed within our own group. We formed a football team and there were too many complications so we did not continue with that. That was with the idea of playing against other ASTP groups. We did play against other ASTP groups, for instance the one at University of Michigan, in football. So we did a number of those things, but there were a lot of different sports involved.

DB: Give me a sense of time- you started the program in August?

FB: The regular school year really started immediately after...well...just like college when normally start

DB: So this would have been September of '43?

FB I believe that's true.

DB: Leading up to what eventually turned out be D-Day?

FB: Yes

DB: During that period of time, I know there was some leave to go visit a buddy who had been wounded?

FB: I had gotten a letter from home that a fellow that I knew well at home had been wounded and was in military hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. I decided to hitchhike over there on Saturday when we got off at noon. A friend of mine went with me. We hitchhiked to Battle Creek and went in the military hospital and visited with him. He had been wounded in Africa. It was an unusual experience for us because when these soldiers who were badly wounded, some not so badly wounded would ask us what our patch was, we would have to explain that it was ASTP and they would say "oh- you've been sent to college while we went over and got wounded and killed!" They would really feel badly about that and they would let us know, and they had a right to do that, and it was probably good that they did it. We felt pretty low when we got out of that.

DB: But Fred, at that point, did they sense that your time was coming?

FB: No.

DB: Was there an awareness on the part of all of you who were in training in this program, that ultimately there was an invasion of Europe was going to occur?

FB: No- we didn't think about that. No.

DB: During this time in Europe, the fighting shifted from North Africa where the Allies had won, into Sicily and into Italy and into the, as Churchill would call it- "the soft underbelly of Europe," you were still back in training, but there was still a kind of a sense that somehow, somewhere, sometime, there would have to be an invasion.

FB: I think that I was just not mature enough to look at things in that light. I often think back to my maturity at that period of my life and I compare with my company commander Captain Jack Farley, who was company commander once we were sent to the 76th Division. He was only about 4 years older than I was, and yet he probably was 15 years more mature than I was. I can remember I decided I wanted to go to OCS. SO I applied and I got an interview and I can remember they asked me a number of things about current events. One of the questions they asked was "What's the name of the Vice President?" I didn't know the name of Harry Truman.

DB: He was not the Vice President!

FB: Who was it then?

DB: That's a footnote question right there.

FB: I didn't know it, and the questioner said "do you really think you should be an officer when you don't even know the Vice President?" And I said "No Sir."

DB: That ended it.

FB: That ended it, and it was one of the better things that ever happened to me. Officers were out in front, officers were killed, and I was too immature to be an officer- there really wasn't any doubt about it.

DB: So later on, maturity made you aware of that?

FB: It took a long time.

DB: Before we move off from your time at Eastern Michigan in Ypsilanti, it turns out that down the road- it wasn't the last time you were going to be here in Ypsilanti. You came back here, and ended up graduating.

FB: That's true. After the war, I had a big decision to make. Did I want to continue with engineering or did I want to go into physical education. So I came back and interviewed at both the University of Michigan and at Eastern, and ultimately decided on physical education, as did two other members of ASTP- Ray Daniel and Bob Kyle.



DB: Had you been friends with them?

FB: No. I didn't know either one of them in ASTP. We came back and three out of the three hundred- and all three of us graduated.

DB: Fred, this was originally to have been, or at least you thought it was to have been, a full year of college, but it was cut short. Your orders came in before it went that final full year, correct?

FB: It was. In late spring, of '44, we were supposed to go until the end of the school year and get a furlough and then come back and be reassigned into the divisions. My plans were to get married at that time and my future wife had set up the schedule and the church and made all the arrangements at home- a church wedding, and unfortunately, the people in Washington D.C. did not know about my plans for a wedding, and they didn't considering that at all. What it was based on obviously was that they finally reached a decision as to when they were going to have the invasion of Europe. I'm sure they just worked back and had to make decisions as to when they were going to move troops and somebody said "Oh my God we have to take these ASTP guys and get them into division." I'm guessing. But that's what happened.

DB: Your orders came through about what time?

FB: Probably April sometime.

DB: And your orders came through saying where you going.

FB: Well, we didn't know that. Like I said- we didn't know *anything*. They just said "pack up." They don't tell you anything, so we packed up and they said "ok we're going to get on this train." So we got on the train, and we have no idea where we're going.

DB: Are the rumors flying? Does everyone start making bets and conjecture and figure we're going to end up on a ship for Europe?

FB: Well, we really didn't have much money to bet. The whole army life is like that. Any time you're withheld information in a group, there are going to be a lot of rumors. So yes, there were a lot, but they're meaningless, really.

DB: So when the train stopped?

FB: The train stopped. The train pulled right into Camp McCoy, WI. There were sidings right there. We got off and looked around and said "Where are we?" We found out, and assigned us to barracks...

DB: College was over and now you were back in the Army full time.

FB: Yeah, and you know, army life is such that you form such close relationships with other soldiers, and then you get moved and you never see them again. We got off that train and the only ones I ever saw again were Bob Kyle and Ray Daniels, when we came back after the war to go to school at Ypsilanti. I never saw them again- none of them.

DB: Tell me about your training in Wisconsin. How long did that last? What were you doing?

FB: Oh we trained there until late fall, so we were there about 6 months I guess.

DB: Were you replacing other soldiers that had moved on?

FB: The Division had been formed in Virginia- the 76th Division- had been formed in VA, had been moved at least once before coming to Camp McCoy WI, which is close to Lacrosse. They had just finished winter maneuvers up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. They came back from that and they had orders for all of the privates and PFCs to be taken out of the Division and sent to England. I talked about close relationships: a lot of soldiers who were corporals and sergeants had close relations with these privates, and said that they wanted to go with them, and they did. So it took some of the non-coms from the Division also. They were sent to England and they were the first replacements to replace those who were killed on D-Day. So they got into action -a lot of action- on D-Day plus 2 and 3 and 4.

DB: And you, in turn, were replacing them with the division in Wisconsin.

FB: That's true. We were all buck privates, and we were replacing them in the various units of the Division that...a division at that time was probably 13,000 men. It was divided into three infantry regiments, and a lot of supporting units such as artillery, medical corps, intelligence, artillery, supply, a lot of those different companies were with us.

DB: Were you assigned to one of those types of companies at that time in Wisconsin?

FB: Well when you get in the Army and after basic training, you were given a number which describes what you are qualified to do. So, when we went there, we each had basic training for artillery or whatever. So we were assigned according to that number that we had. I was infantry so I was assigned to infantry, as were many of us, but I never saw those men again.

DB: The training in Wisconsin- was it pretty rigorous/

FB: It was very rigorous.

DB: More than basic?

FB: Oh yes. We still had all the obstacle courses, all the calisthenics and so on, but what was added was the forced marches.

DB: Tell me about those.

FB: Well, forced marches were usually about 25 miles, and they came after a day's training. You would have training and then go to mess hall for dinner. After dinner, you would get into uniform which would be fatigues, helmet, you would be carrying your rifle, bandoliers of ammunition, gas mask, full field pack which had all the extra things that you might need, including a tent shelter half and so on. So you had a lot of weight on you. We would do those twenty-five miles in oh, six and half to seven hours, and come back and end up in the middle of the night sometimes.

DB: Would you camp out then?

FB: No. we'd go in a circuit, and we'd end up back at camp.

DB: And then up the morning at the same time?

FB: No. we would get a break there, and that was easier, of course, than combat because in combat, you wouldn't get that break.

DB: We'll get to that later. Now, Fred, tell me a little bit about...at this point, you had a stripe- you moved up to Private-First Class? Tell me about that.

FB: That was early on in the training with the division.

DB: But then something happened that caused you to lose it. Tell me about that.

FB: Well that's true. I was a, obstreperous young man, I thought I knew a lot more than most everybody else, I guess. I guess I had some resentments perhaps, I don't know. Anyway- I was in intelligence section, and that sounds impressive, and it really wasn't that. Our job would turn out to be in combat when they would require us to set up observation posts to observe enemy, and to deliver messages or any type of liaison work. So it was a small company.

DB: You were assigned that during training in Wisconsin? You didn't know it was that kind of assignment beforehand?

FB: Actually, I was assigned to a rifle company to start with, and that was I Company, and then they took me out of I Company and transferred me to Headquarters Company in the same battalion because they needed to fill the spaces with men for this intelligence work. And we were billeted in with K Company because we were a small company and K company had space for us in billets there, and what happened was that I came out of the door of the barracks and the first sergeant of K company and remember we're both in the same area, and there was a piece of paper on the ground right next to him, and he said "Soldier- pick up that piece of paper!" And it was close to him, and he was curt and I was a free thinker, and the combination didn't come out very good.

DB: What did you say?

FB: Well I told him to pick it up himself. And those of you who know- first sergeants; they are next to God in the military.

DB: So he didn't take it very well?

FB: he did not take it very well. He turned a lot of different colors, and it was not more than a few moments that my captain called me in to talk with him, and I remember exactly what he said. "Barney- what is the matter with you? Don't you know that first sergeants are next to God?" that's where I got my information. He said "well you have to take off that stripe, and you have to court-martial. He said "This is a court-martial." And so I learned a little bit about the law, according to the Army. And so, he dressed me down pretty good, and I did respond stupidly. I told him that I didn't think it really mattered very much because I was going to get killed over there anyway. So did he want me to go along with him over there or did he want to put me in the brig and then I'd have to miss all that combat. He was a very mature man, and he overlooked that. He said "well in addition to losing your stripe, you're going to have to be confined to quarters for two weeks. I will tell you when that starts. It does not start until I tell you."

DB: As it turned out, he was really a little but on your side at that point.

FB: Yeah he was. I didn't know that. But he...

DB: Shortly thereafter, you all got orders to...

FB: we got orders to ship out and we shipped out to Rhode Island, then we left Rhode Island in a very large convoy...

DB: Can you tell me- let's get our time-sequence correct: that would have been summer of 44?

FB That's right. It was summer when this happened- that I got court-martialed. And then we shipped out probably at the end of October to go to Camp Miles Standish. Then we left there and we got on board ships on Thanksgiving Day, 1944. A week before that, when we arrived in Camp Miles Standish, and the captain called me in. He said "You know you have to be restricted to quarters." I said "ok," and he told me the date that it would start and as it turned out, the date that he gave was Thanksgiving Day. What happened was, was that I was restricted to the ship all the way across the ocean because it took exactly two weeks- 14 days.

DB: So everybody else was as restricted as you were?

FB: That's true. That's true. You understand- I'm not really proud of this. It's something that happened.

DB: I'm sure you're not alone with this too. But it seems like you had a really good repartee with this captain- he was generally...

FB: And thank God, you know, because I was able to see him again. We went to a '76 Division reunion. It was back in Camp McCoy, and I was able to be with him- I have pictures, being with him, and I told him the story...he didn't remember it. He had a lot of problems back then. I kept in touch with the man, and he just died a year ago.

DB: your ship landed in Southeastern England?

FB: that's true- Dover, as I remember. We landed and then we were sent to the southern shore of England, around Bournemouth which was a resort area and it's warmer than most of England because the Gulf Stream comes by there and you can even see a few palm trees...

DB: It would have been about the first week of December that you arrived. Were you there in England very long before you shipped out to the continent?

FB: It was after Christmas. We had to get our vehicles and did a lot of organizing.

DB: Tell me about the vehicles.

FB: Well, we had got our orders to head to the west coast of England, and I've forgotten which port it was, but we went there and each of us were assigned to a certain vehicle and we were taken on to these ships which were called LSTs- Landing Craft Tanks. They have the front of them - the front would drop down and you could drive a vehicle out but you had to drive it through the water. When we came out, we were told to follow the vehicle in front of us. So we did.

DB: The ship landed where?

FB: The ship was in the harbor but it would just pull up to the shore- not at a pier, and it would drop the ramp down onto the ground.

DB: OK- so these were new vehicles coming from the States?

FB: Exactly.

DB: Ok so they were coming in on LSTs and you had to drive them off the LST's to get them back to the base.

FB: So we had quite a long way to drive on the left side of the road and as we started, it worked ok because you could see the vehicle in front of you, and we were still alert and so on, but after it got dark, you know, in combat, you couldn't have any lights. If you had lights, you surely were going to get strafed. So the jeeps and all vehicles had all peep lights- shaded so you couldn't

see them from the sky. That's what we had to follow. And on the left side of the road, and you could hear up and down the line, horns sounding to alert the driver in front of them that they were going to sleep and going off the road. So we had to stop. It was a two-day trip. We had to stop and we stopped in a English Army barracks there and I was glad I did not belong to the British Army because we slept on bunk beds but they had no mattresses- they had the metal strips cross strips, and that's what we slept on. But you know- that was pretty good compared to what we got later.

DB: You finally then- I'm assuming then at this point that you had been totally trained in all the weaponry at that point- everything from grenades to rifles to heavy machines- VAR's?

F: No- I did not- I was never qualified in BARs, in mortars or machine guns- only rifles and carbines, and also explosives.

DB: So you're about as prepared and ready as you can get to be shipped over to the battle that's now raging in Europe. About what time- that was after Christmas, before New Year's?

FB: That's right.

DB: And it was a brutally cold winter...

FB: It was- it was a lot of snow.

DB: Tell me about the trip across the Channel.

FB: Well, it was surprising number of ways- it was surprising how rough that channel was. It was a very rough trip and we were back in LST's again going across the channel, and I drove this Jeep onto the LST and stayed with that so that some of our men were in LSI's which is Landing Craft Infantry, so I was separated as we were all in- if we were all in - if we were in a vehicle, we were separated from the rest of our unit. We were issued extra rations which we were supposed to carry and we were given orders that we could not eat those rations unless we got direct orders to eat them. And so you might know what happened- I got hungry and I ate them.

DB: These are the old K-rations?

FB: The K-rations.

DB: Explain what that is.

FB: The K-rations is about the size of cracker jack box and you open that up and there is four cigarettes on the top, and there were some crackers and if it's lunch, you have cheese- a little can of cheese. If it's dinner, then you have a can of some type of ground meat and then you have a small candy bar. And I think you have something that you mix with water if you want to make an old drink.

DB: You weren't going to starve but it was not...

FB: It was not heavy but it was an efficient thing.

DB: So you ate yours when you shouldn't have...

FB: Yeah- I shouldn't have eaten it, but I was separated for quite a while and so I lost my stripe again- another courts martial.

DB: But that wasn't your fault though- not that one.

FB: I don't know...(laughs)

DB: They didn't care though eh?

FB: no- but what I really got out of it was a pretty good...I got pretty good at sewing...

DB: Taking the stripe on and off?

FB: Yeah I put that stripe back on once we got the continent.

DB: So once you got to the continent- the trip to the continent took about how long?

FB: I think it took 6t to 8 hours

DB: And then you landed where?

FB: We went up a river and so we went in to I think reams, and we got out there and the guys he had come across in the LSI's and they got a luxury ride in 40 and 8's- you know what those are?

DB: No

FB: Well, a 40 and 8 is a railroad boxcar with designed for 40 people or 8 horses. And when you talk about facilities, there are no facilities for anything- that includes sitting...just 4 walls a floor and a ceiling. This was in January of course and they were frozen, and then we were in the snow. We had snow to sleep in.

DB: At this point, the Battle of the Bulge had erupted about a month before, in the early part of December about the time you landed in England. Was the 76th Division part of Patton's Third Army?

FB: No

DB: When did it get shifted over to Patton?

FB: Right when we landed in France we went right to Patton's Third Army and there was a push then where the Germans were pushed back out of Belgium and back into Germany.

DB: It was when the Bulge had stopped and you closed that bulge and began to push them back. So when you're crossing- when you got to England, did you know about the Battle of the Bulge? Did you know what was going on? As a foot soldier, were you able to kind of have some sense of the bigger picture at all? You knew what a terrible battle that was?

FB: Oh yeah- yeah.

DB: I know that the cold weather at that battle was one of the most ferocious parts of it, as much as the fear of dying from shells and the warfare. Do you remember the cold? Were you better equipped than the troops that had been in the front line the month before?

FB: No, we weren't, and we had heard so many stories about the soldiers who had been in that battle getting trench foot. They were losing limbs from that and it was frightening. We thought that they were going to issue galoshes to us, and so when two 6 by 6's- a workhorse truck of the Army- it carried soldiers, and carried munitions, and gas- everything. It was a well-designed vehicle, and they all had cables on the front so that if they got stuck, they could winch themselves out. SO anyway, these 6 by 6's backed up and unloaded and one of the things they unloaded was liquor rations for officers. That was kind of silly because there was so many places- all you had to do was go in any place you came to and there as a lot of wine and anything you wanted and so you didn't need that. What we didn't need even more was necktie. George Patton had decided that we were going to have we were going to wear neckties every day and be clean shaven every day. This is in combat and we're sleeping in snow. I don't know- that's the order that came down. A few of us tried to follow it, almost none, and anyway that was the order that he sent down.

DB: Let me ask you something. When you were going over, either on the channel to England, or when you began to get closer with driving that Jeep towards the front lines- did you have a sense of fear? Were you worried that you would not measure up? You had so far never had anybody shooting at you in anger. How did you feel about that?

FB: You know, I it's hard to say because I don't think I had a lot of fear and I don't know why. I was certainly no hero- I was certainly not as brave as many of the men that I served with, but I didn't have lot of fear and I don't know why.

DB: Do you remember the first time that you experienced the first that you were under some kind of incoming fire?

FB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.



DB: Tell me about that.

FB: We were... I need to set the stage because we're getting into the combat that the 76th had which was primary combat that we had and it was at Echternach Luxembourg. Luxembourg is tiny country that had a contiguous border with Germany. That border is the Tsar River, and so Germany is on the west side of the Sauer, and Luxembourg is on the east side of the river. Echternach is a fair size city and when- by the time we got there, there were no buildings that were left intact.

DB: None?

FB: None. Zero. And there were no people there. Rubble. The city went right down to the water's edge. The Sauer River was not a big river but this was in February and early February and it was high. It was a fast running river. On the other side of the river, into Germany, you look up a hill- quite a...it's not a real steep hill but it's a fairly long hill and it's fairly high. That whole hill...(interruption)

DB: So you were just talking about the hill that overlooked the river on the German side. Pick it up from that part.

FB: It was all mined, and these fortification went all the way down into the ground.

DB: Repeat that because the tape ran out. You said that at the top of the hill, there were pillboxes?

FB: Yes they are pillboxes. They are fortifications, they are strategically located so that they could cover one another with machine gun fire and of course cover the slope.

DB: This is after the Germans have essentially lost the Battle of The Bulge? They are in their defensive posture at this point?

FB: No doubt about it.

DB: You're coming up against...you're coming into their homeland?

FB: That's right. These pillboxes were immense. They were living in units where a large number of men...like I say they were down into the ground 3 floors, and they had all kinds of materials there and ammunition and food and water so they were independent of each other but you could get from one to the other through tunnels rarely, but mostly through ditches. \

DB: So let's get back to where you were, at Echternach. First time to experience serious fire.

FB: We were approaching Echternach and we decided to stay overnight- camp overnight- and we were coming down kind of a ravine but there was an open area there and we decided to stay there and so we started pitching our shelter halves and so on, and being green, that is- inexperienced, some soldier made fires because it was cold. That was a pretty good target. The smoke from those fires...this was daylight, and the Germans were pretty good at hitting us. So we got zapped right away with artillery and there were a number of casualties right there.

DB: Fred would that have been the first time seeing the body of another American soldier having been killed?

FB: I think so.

DB: Did it shake you up? Or did you just accept it?

FB: No, when that happen then you have a different feeling- you realize that this can happen to you. Before that, you're invincible at 19.

DB: So tell me more- I imagine the officers that those men put those fires out pretty quickly.

FB: Oh they didn't have to be told. It was there that I had my first close call. I had three of them and you know I've always joked about them because there are some funny things that happened. But just recently I looked back and I thought- man that was close, and I never really thought about them that way.

DB: Tell us about them.

FB: One is as we were coming into Echternach and it was a few days after the artillery barrage that I just explained and we had our command post set up in a basement in Echternach, and I had delivered a message to another unit and I was coming back to this command post and as I was coming in, and I was driving a jeep again- by the way, jeeps have windshield but they were folded down, and this one had its windshield folded down...

DB: Why was that?

FB: Well, reflection. And we had camouflage nets rolled up. It was a roll that it probably would make about 7 inches, and it would go all the way across the Jeep, and it would lie on this folded down windshield. So it's right in front of the driver. SO as I was coming into the command post, the shells started landing and they were landing all around. I jumped out of the Jeep while it was still going, so I ran into the basement without getting hit. So when I came out...

DB: how long would a barrage like that last usually?

FB: I think varying amounts, but that one I imagine was maybe a half hour or something like that. So when it was over and they stopped firing and I came out, there was a hole in that

camouflage net- right in front of where I had been and it was a good size- maybe 3 inches across. When I dug in there, I pulled out a piece of shrapnel which was probably 3 inches or so- they're just very scraggly sort of pieces of metal- that's the type of thing that cuts up a person pretty badly. I didn't really think much about it, you know? If I had been sitting there, I wouldn't be sitting here. I had two others, and I didn't really think about them. The second one was by Trier Germany. We had captured tired by this time, and I was driving along by the river- the Mosel river, which goes right by trier, and there was no action- no shelling, no explosions- fairly calm evening it was- it was not dark yet however. As I was going along there were houses on both sides. There was one where there was no house- an empty lot. I was not real close to it- probably like a city block, city street, and there was an explosion. It had to be a mortar because mortar shells make no sound coming in. I immediately thought that I was hit in my ear. I reached up to feel what had happened to me and here it had merely blown an onion in my ear. It was a garden where it exploded and it blew out onions...it just wasn't my time- it could have been shrapnel as well as an onion of course.

DB: Did the Army accept that as legitimate wound?

FB: For some reason, they balked at giving me a Purple Heart.

DB: What was your third close call?

FB: We developed what we called "marching fire" which was a different sort of a maneuver. It was... it looked the same as a civil war maneuver where everyone lined up and marched in line. The difference is the (inaudible). The difference is that then, you had to stop and reload and everything and they marched side by side. The marching fire that we developed was to spread out so that one shell could not hit too many men, and we would just keep firing. We'd walk ahead towards where we knew there were German soldiers, and we would just keep shooting so fast and we didn't have any target we just shot.

DB: So it was just laying down a field of fire?

FB: It was- that's a good way to say it, and they didn't dare lift up to look or out a hand up or anything. So you could attack that way and get away with it except for the fact that Germans had a wonderful weapon- they had a number of wonderful weapons. The 88mm rifle was probably their best. It's a field artillery piece but it's used as a rifle too- is used as an anti-aircraft weapon; tanks have them- German tanks had 88s on them as a weapon, and what they were doing was- in this attack that we were conducting, they were using their 88s because they couldn't use small arms fire. They were using them both ways- both as an artillery long shot, and as a direct fire, like a rifle. I experienced a "whoosh" going by me and an immediate explosion on the hill behind me, and realized that they had shot a direct fire at some of us that were in that area and had missed all of us. If they hit one of us, that would have been a missing person's report because there would have been no body. That's what a lot of those reports were- missing in action, because there can't be anything but missing because there is nothing left of them. So that was a close call. Unfortunately for my LT, he got hit right there, right about

the same time from a long shot- you can hear it coming in, and when it hits it spews out shrapnel and he got hit with shrapnel. So I had to then I got him loaded on a Jeep and took him back to the rear.

DB: Fred, let's go back to the Echternacht because you were involved in the river crossing and the attack in the Siegfried Line?

FB: No- I was held back because I had to drive a Jeep across the river and the river was so strong that we could not put a bridge across because of the strength of the river and because the Germans had it zeroed in with artillery. The only way we got across the river was by boat...

DB: With Jeeps?

FB: No- what was done was they would bring these wooden boats with high sides and paddles and soldiers would, with all of the equipment and bandoliers of ammunition and hand grenades and everything they had to carry would get in that boat and they had to paddle it across and shells were coming down, and that's where we lost 60% of our men in that crossing. I was so fortunate...

DB: A lot of this fire was coming from this fortified pillboxes...

FB: No- the only thing you get from them is the machine guns- but they would have observers who would direct the artillery and mortars also. They would fire mortars from those areas.

DB: Did you observe any of this attack/

FB: yes, I was there. I was interesting but horribly sad thing that happened there. I was at the water's edge during the night and I heard someone talking, and they were some distance from me, but not too far, and it was so surprising that I thought I recognized the voice. I said "is that you Jeske?" I thought it was Clarence Jeske who had been with me at ASTP. I had not seen him since we left there a year before, and here we are in the middle of the night with no lights- you don't use lights in combat, you're dead if you did that. So I couldn't see him but I talked with him and we said a couple things that I can't remember what, and I left. They next day, I got the information that he had been killed right there. That night after we talked. I said that I had only seen two other ASTP members and that's after we got back to Ypsilanti, and I didn't see him but I talked with him.

DB: Did you end up going across the river in one of these boats?

FB: No- after it was secured, the engineers put a bridge up and I drove across.

DB: How long did it take- that attack? The duration of the 76th Division against that...

FB: About Three days. Once we got through, then we circled around and attacked another part of the Siegfried Line from the rear.

DB: And they weren't able to defend that?

FB: Right.

DB: Well, so your first major battle was right near the end of the Battle of the Bulge, but you were in all of the Siegfried Line battles- what was that battle called? The Battle of the Tsar?

FB: I'm not sure. I was awarded three battle stars, and I think Belgium and then the Siegfried line and then central Germany.

DB: After that, you went on into, first in towards Trier. What was your experience at Trier?

FB: It was a bit later because once we got across the Tsar and pushed eastward into Germany, then we circled around south and in fact we ended up in the north side of the Moselle River across the Mosel from Trier.

DB: Fred what about the day to day activities of the foot soldier? Can you give me an average day in combat if there is such a thing? Is the average soldier in foxhole most of the time, are they attacking most of the time? Do they get any sleep during a battle like the three days it took to take the Siegfried fortification?

FB: You don't have any control over what your lifestyle is. That determined by the situation. If you're being attacked you have to resist. If you're attacking, then you keep going until you reach your objective or you get repelled. The day to day- there is no such thing as a routine at all. The only thing is that you do try to get indoors in the middle of the winter if you need some relief from the cold, so you do try to get indoors and we did have sleeping bags and you get in sleeping bags...

DB: Was sleep deprivation a problem during battles like that?

FB: Sometimes oh yeah. Sure. If you sleep where you can- if you are marching along or whatever you're doing and you're stopped, you fall asleep. Sitting there, you fall asleep.

DB: What happens in terms of the bonding between the smaller units- platoons...is that as quickly formed? Is it vital to that soldier as Hollywood tends to make us believe?

FB: Yes- it certainly is. The bond between soldiers is about as true as any bond with anybody else except maybe mothers and sons. They're the only thing that you have to hold on to- your buddy. You've seen some of the movies which you've alluded to- they are depicting it accurately, I think.

DB: To try to get relief from some of this- you indicated some of the fellows ended up always on the lookout for alcohol.

FB: Europeans do a lot of making their own wine and so on, and they have something in their basement to drink- alcoholic. As you would attack the town and gain advantage and enter the town or a rural area or anyplace, the first thing we would look for would be eggs. If we could find some eggs and some way to cook them, we'd have eggs. The second thing we'd look for is wine. If you could get drunk 100% of the time, you'd have less worry, I guess. Most of us didn't do that but some did and it's an interesting story about two soldiers in our group. I had not worked with them before- the night that I was scheduled to take them and establish an observation post. Actually we were on the north side of the Mosel River- right across from Trier Germany. It was my job to take these three men out in the middle of the night and do it quietly so the Germans didn't hear us, establish an observation post and they were supposed to stay there during the day and report back to us information. I was to leave them there. So I drove as close to the river as I felt we could go without them hearing the motor. We all got out and walked toward the river, across the field, and as we were going along, I heard "BANG" and jumped down into a little crevice where I thought I'd be safe and after I hit the ground, I heard some laughter. From behind us. As it turned out, these two guys -I had heard that they did a lot of drinking- they had brought a bottle of champagne or some sparkle, they opened it and it popped and that's what I heard. They were well on their way I'm sure. How well they did observing, I never did hear. Bu it's interesting that once the war ended, then the of course we were in one spot only, so after the first raid of the basements and cellars to get the liquor, then it was gone. These two would do anything to get a drink. They decided that they were going to drink the alcohol that's in a railroad car -just like the tank cars that are on the railroad-

DB: Just raw alcohol?

FB: It's raw alcohol. So it was actually buzz bomb juice- stuff that they put into the buzz bombs that they sent over to England.

DB: Oh my heavens- the fuel. What they used to...

FB: Yeah- it was alcohol fuel. SO they drank it and I don't know just which cemetery they're buried in, but...

DB: It killed them

FB: Oh yeah immediately.

DB: How could they have been so stupid? The need for alcohol was just that great?

FB: Oh they were drunk all the way across Europe. They were never sober. I didn't know that at the time, but I was told later, but they had never reached sobriety the whole way across.

DB: When you would establish an observation post, how would the observation post communicate back to HQ- was it with walkie talkies?

FB: Not always- many times we would put a telephone line down- just lay it on the ground. During our training at Camp McCoy, the intelligence section had training in communications including radio and telephone.

DB: I suspect that a lot of your daily life depends a great deal on how much you respect your commanding officer and how much your CEO respects the men, and that relationship is awful important.

FB: That's true.

DB: Tell me about when Major Levy got...

FB: Major Levy is a story which I wish I didn't have to tell. Major Levy was in command of the third battalion of the 417th infantry. That's the unit that I was in- I was in battalion headquarters company so I got to see him a lot and to know what he's doing and to respect him a lot. He had the rank of a major. Now, the battalion command should be a Lt. Col. - that's one step up from Major. Major Levy was only a Major and never was given that extra rank. He did a lot of good things as we were training with the 76th in Camp McCoy, and was well-respected, all over. What I'm going to say is my opinion, but it's my opinion that the reason he did not become a Lt. Col. is because he was Jewish. It just seemed to me that no matter how good he was, it didn't matter. Someone above him decided that he was not going to get a promotion. Just before we got into the actual shooting combat, he was replaced by a Lt. Col. who had not been with us during training. We knew nothing about him. Then Major Levy was his assistant. When we got to the Tsar River and we attacked across there, this Lt. Col. was in charge of our battalion. A battalion is one third of the regiment. It was three companies there and once we got across the river, he kept his command post on the west side of the river. He did not go across the river with everybody else. He was conducting the combat from the backside of the river. Something happened which has been confirmed in person to me by soldiers of K Company who were in a pillbox that they had captured and it confirmed that what I had heard was true. The story was that this Lt. Col. was in radio contact with Lt. Mears from K Company in the pillbox.

DB: Lt. Mears was in the pillbox, and the Lt. Col. was on the other side of the river.

FB: That's right. That's right. The Lt. Col. was commanding and conducting the attack from these pillboxes on the other side of the river. So the pillbox they were in was covered by machine gun fire from another pillbox- they couldn't get out, they were trapped in there. They told this to the Lt. Col. whose name I've now forgotten, and he said "you have to attack. You have to get out of there and attack the other pillbox." Lt. Mears said "we can't- if we open the door, we'll be killed" and the Lt. Col. said to Lt. Mears "I'm giving you a direct order to attack." and Lt. Mears said (weeping)

DB: That's alright, Fred. People need to know. That's what this recording is all about too. He gave a direct order to attack...

FB: OK... he said "You just killed a man." And he walked out and he was killed. I visited his grave. You know, it's so sad to me that here we went through this war to stop people like Hitler from killing Jews, and in our own Army we have the same feeling conducted against a Jewish officer that ultimately kills a man like Lt. Mears.

(End of tape 1)

FB: I don't know where we were.

DB: I'm here with Fred Barney- this is the second tape, actually it's tape 3. Fred who served as an infantryman during World War II with the 76th Division which had been attached to Patton's Third Army. We want to pick off pretty much where we left off, Fred. You had told us that the very tough story about Major Levy, and this was the activity that had where the LT and his men had got trapped in a pillbox and I think this was after the attack on the Siegfried Line, or maybe that was part of the battle...

FB: It was part of the battle. It was as we had captured some of the pillboxes and not others, and there's another story there and that concerns General Patton himself. I personally did not see it but other members of my group saw him standing on top of one of these pillboxes directing fire, with his shiny helmet which no one else was allowed to wear and his shiny pistols which no one else was allowed to wear. He was known to every German there, and I'm sure they were trying to hit him and couldn't. How he could live through a barrage of machine gun fire, mortar fire, rifle fire, and all of that- it's just unbelievable. And obviously that man had no fear of death at all.'

DB: He is as much a character as we are led to believe by the wonderful Hollywood film.

FB: I've seen both Patton films and I think they were both very accurate. He did things which were crazy- I think I mentioned that he wanted us to wear neckties and be clean shaven and things like that. But he was a genius- a tactical genius. He did things that just fooled the Germans time and time again and we advanced so fast that we had Germans that when we would stop to we would have Germans that were retreating that would retreat right into our area.

DB: In other words, the tanks and the infantry would be able to penetrate so far and so quickly, to get behind the German lines, in effect.

FB: His plan - of course he was a tank man - his plan was to put every soldier on wheels, and of course that's what they're doing now in Iraq- these infantry divisions now are all on wheels. And that's what he did- the orders came from him. We were to confiscate any vehicle we could get ahold of that would run. Whatever it was, it didn't matter- we were to head down the Autobahn...



DB: Speed was the essence.

FB: That's right. We would go you know, 50-60-70 miles a day, and then stop to reassemble and these Germans would be absolutely amazed. They would be retreating and they'd come into our camp.

DB: Tell me about the observation post at Trier. Was that part of this race across Germany? Once the Siegfried Line was broken, was that...

FB: No- we had not broken through. There was quite an extended battle between the Tsar River and the Rhine River. The Mosel River by Trier is more an east-west river and we were on the north side of that river and Germans were in Trier on the south side. We had not captured Trier yet. So it was my duty to take some other soldiers in and my squad and take them during the middle of the night take them as close as we could drive them to the Mosel River shore, bank, and we then would proceed on foot, set up an observation post that would be operable during the daylight hours the next days, and they would report back by radio what was happening in Trier. And so we took off and as I say it's the middle of the night- no lights. Can't use any lights- not even the peep lights on our vehicles, and I drove them as close as I could get without the motor giving us away and then we got out to walk down closer to the bank of the Mosel and we had not gone very far when I hear a BANG, and hit the dirt, any crevice I could find. I thought it was a mortar shell behind me. As it turned out, two men had brought a bottle of champagne with them and had popped the cork and it was then that we didn't give us away, but those two men were intoxicated I think as I heard later, because I didn't know them real well. They were intoxicated constantly and that occurred all the way across Germany. In fact, after the war was over, it was more difficult to find wine and liquor and they decided that they would get alcohol some way, so they opened a railroad tank car that was carrying alcohol that would propel buzz bombs to England and it was of course wood alcohol, and they drank it and died immediately.

DB: Tell me about Schmitten

FB: Schmitten was one of the saddest experiences that I had even though it did not involve me directly, but our regiment was headed east of course, and we went by Schmitten, or we should have gone by Schmitten. We knew that Schmitten had a training facility for SS troops, and these troops were young boys at the time and the sensible thing to do would be to go by Schmitten and circle it, and just keep it bottled up until these young men in there we're ready to give up.

DB: That was a tactic that was used frequently.

FB: All the time. All the time. Sure. Why sacrifice all the lives and have a frontal attack? What we -I mean the general soldier, and not high ranking officers- what we felt were that the high ranking officers wanted to attack that town so that they could have inside sleeping quarters over the night. There's nothing wrong with that because we all want that in the middle of the winter. But to sacrifice lives for it was a terrible thing.

DB: You saw the after-effects.

FB: I will never forget. Walking up the road towards Schmitten and seeing a whole line of American soldiers lying dead in both ditches on both sides of the road, I can't tell you how many, but just one after the other for maybe two hundred yards. How many men that would be, I don't know but probably a couple hundred or so were killed right there. What a price to pay for a bed.

DB: At what point did your unit and the infantry that were around it begin to really move quickly across Germany? Was it right after the Battle of the Siegfried Line or was it later?

FB: No- it was sparked by Remagen Bridge. That bridge was over the line. The Germans had somehow made mistake and they did not blow that up and we had a commando unit get across there and secure the east side of the Remagen Bridge, and once that happened, then tanks and other vehicles could go across the ridge and that provided a bridgehead and that sparked it. Once we got that, then there were all kinds of bridges built by engineers and we could go across any place.

DB: And you went across one of these bridges that had been built after the Remagen?

FB: Yes, and we were kind of holed up at the Rhine there. It's such a barrier. We were at the west bank on the top but you know, it's a mile down from the top of that bank to the water.

DB: In like a gorge?

FB: Oh yes. For an army to go across there it's really something to do that.

DB: And this was the last major natural barrier that the Germans had as a defense.

FB: Well you're challenging my memory.

DB: In the sense that they...the Remagen was the last major...

FB: It was the first time that I ever saw a jet. We had a German jet come over strafing and it was here and gone so quickly that we didn't even know it happened.

DB: Let me ask you about air cover during this period. You came in early 1945 towards the end of the Battle of the Bulge. Did the Allies have air cover? Did you see many? Was the German air power a problem for you?

FB: No it wasn't a big problem for us at that time. I can answer that by saying that every time now that I meet an air force pilot who flew in across there, I just have to go up to him and say thank you. What would happen to use is we had gone down the road, and we'd see a whole line of German tanks facing us, all burned out because the American Air Force had bombed them

out. If they hadn't been bombed out by our Air Force, we would have been all dead. I owe my life to the Air Force.

DB: Many of your attacks as the infantry moved forward were preceded by air power making major attacks against the Germans.

FB: They made mistakes- they weren't perfect. Sometimes it wasn't a mistake it was- they couldn't do anything about it. The story of one general- I wish I could remember his name, but he was one who spoke to us while we were doing our training at Camp McCoy, so we all heard him speak, and a week later he was dead. He had flown over to France and he was on the front line, observing, and the Air Force was bombing the Germans, and we set out smoke grenades to mark their line. The problem was, the wind changed. All the bombs fell on Americans. His name was McNair- General McNair- he was killed.

DB: Through friendly fire.

FB: Right- American bombs.

DB: Once the Remagen Bridgehead opened up, then there was a race across Germany and ultimately the meeting with the Russians. Can you tell us about that?

FB: It was during this time then that we loaded up on every vehicle going. It was this time that we just shot through and our group went along with Jena- we ended up near Werdau, and Zwickau, which is Z-w...eh, I don't know...

DB: But you can still remember the names

FB: I remember the names every well and that's where we ended up, and our division met the Russians- I didn't personally because the forward combat troops met them and there were pictures in the paper of the Russians and the Americans dancing together

DB: Lots of news footage of that. Did you have any experiences with the Russians eventually?

FB: Yes- I had some experiences with them and mostly very unpleasant. The Russians made it obvious to us immediately that we were not their friends and I have no idea why. That was alluded to in the movie Patton, and I...

DB: Patton was no friend of the Russians either was he?

FB: Not after some of the things that they did, no. He was about as poor a politician as you could find anywhere- he was as bad as I am. He really gave it them. I had a job of delivering something and I don't remember what it was. It was somewhere around Hoth Bavaria. I had to drive, I was by myself and deliver this, and it was quite a long ways. Guessing it was around a hundred miles or so. To get there directly, I would drive through Russian held territory. To not drive there directly, it would have been twice as far, so I decided to go through the Russian

territory. Every checkpoint I got to, I had rifles pointed at me. Every time I'd come up, they'd start screaming and yelling

DB: It must have been very difficult because of language- you didn't speak Russian, they didn't speak English...

FB: Right. They had a way of speaking however. Those rifles said an awful lot to me. They said I had to be very careful not to do anything wrong, not to make any quick moves- I had to be very patient. So by doing that I got through, and believe me, coming back I took the long way. But it was a harrowing experience. I wasn't too sure I was going to live through that one, but they didn't shoot.

DB: At this point, we're talking about probably what- April? The war in Europe is beginning to wind down, once you've met up with the Russians.

Fb: The story I just told was after the war was over.

DB: OK, so this must have been in May.

FB: Yes

DB: Let's talk a little bit about that period of time- right after the war was over. There were still accidents and death, I take it.

FB: Yes- people died needlessly. I commented on the two alcoholics. If they had received some treatment who knows they might have lived through it, but there were others too. The command was concerned with the soldier without duties would get in trouble. So they initiated immediately after the war, they initiated a program of training, if you can imagine- these guys had gone through and defeated the Germans, and seeing guys killed all around them and then they have to go through training? One of the training methods that came up was to sharpen up the use of rifles so they initiated a combat rifle range. In this type of range, there are pop up targets- silhouettes of people that will pop up, and the popping up is done by a soldier in a foxhole behind that target. He'll pull on a rope that will snap that up when he's ordered to do so over a telephone. Unfortunately, whoever set up the range failed to notice high tension electric wire overhead. A ricocheted bullet cut one of those wires while training was going on and that wire fell on the telephone line and electrocuted every soldier who was operating a target at that time. It was terrible. I can't remember exactly how many but I would presume maybe 15 to 20 men died right there.

DB: What about German civilians- were they safe at this point?

FB: No- there were rapes, shootings, so on the Russians touted as being rapists and they were said to have raped many German women, but you know, we were not clean. One of our kitchen staff- cooks in the kitchen- were also convicted of raping a German woman and I forgot what happened to them but they were found guilty.

DB: What about the mix-up of the carbines?

FB: Well, that's another thing- accidents would happen. A man from my hometown was in the 76th Division also and I had seen him from time to time- he was in 2nd Battalion and I was in 3rd. He was a staff sergeant and I was in charge of a mortar group and after the war I went over to see him, and he was a private. I went over and asked what happened to him and he said well, he had fallen out for a company formation and he had picked up what he thought was his carbine and evidently it was another soldier's and the other soldier had left it loaded. When they got out of formation to stop, it was a German a hundred yards away or so working in his garden, and we didn't have a lot of respect for Germans because the philosophy had been while we were going through the war that the only good German was a dead German. And so he just picked up the carbine and just kind of aimed at the man and pulled the trigger and of course we hear all the time that you don't aim a gun at someone unless you really want to kill them. That's what happened- he killed that man. He was court martialed and broken from a staff sergeant to a private.

DB: The war in Europe had come to an end. What happened to you then, at that point?

FB: Well, it was an interesting time to start with because I was in HQ Company. My unit was put on military government, and our LT who was in charge of the intelligence section worked closely with the Burgermeister- this was in Verdun which was a good size city- maybe 40,000 people, something like that. And the rest of us were- we had duties every day to go around and do whatever it took to run that city. If there were facilities that weren't set up yet we tried to make some arrangement to get them repaired and underway

DB: So government administration.

FB: It really was, and it was a lot of fun and I don't mean that in a light sense of the word and it was nice to have a job where the aim was not to kill somebody.

DB: Construction instead of destruction. And then Marseilles, France came into the picture.

FB: They deactivated the 76th Division at that time- we were all assigned to some other Division in some other unit.

DB: They deactivated the entire Division.

FB: That's right. That's right. Probably there was a cadre left to take care of details. But we had been promised by presidential order that all the combat troops in Europe would be give a furlough in the US at home before being sent to the South Pacific.

DB: It was clearly assumed at that point that the infantry and all of the soldiers would be going to the Far East to settle that side of theater of war there.

FB: that was expected right. I received orders and as usual they didn't tell us anything, they just said "Get on this train..."

DB: How many of you at this point?

FB: It was all broken up. I wasn't with any other Headquarters company personnel at all at this time- it was all soldiers that I didn't know. It was a whole trainload of men from the 76th Division. We got on there, and the train was run by Americans or under American control. As usual we'd come to a stop and ask where we are and try to figure out where we're going. Then we came to France and we still didn't know, and as it turned out, we ended up in Marseilles France in the Mediterranean. I was given orders to report to a certain place and when I got there it was a grave digger company. It was a group from the Quartermaster Corps and their job was to retrieve dead and process them, go over their belongings. Identify them and so on, notify next of kin, things like that.

DB: Graves registration unit. In Marseilles?

FB: That was outside of Marseilles- I've forgotten the name of the French town, in a desert- as far as the train goes...

DB: We don't think of Marseilles as a place where many of these dead would have occurred- that it would have been in other parts of Europe...

FB: That Company had just come from where I came from. So they now - there weren't a lot of casualties, they were not needed there and they were being sent to the South Pacific. Every soldier has a number that identifies what their job is. I had a number identifying me as an intelligence personnel for an infantry outfit so it was obvious to me that it didn't matter that I was in this graves registration unit. When I got to the South Pacific, I would be right back in an infantry division and therefore they wouldn't have gotten around to giving me a furlough.

DB: Was this a typical Army snafu or do you think it was a purposeful method of getting around the presidential order?

FB: I don't know how to say it. I guess an answer to your question directly- they wanted to get as many soldiers over to Japan as quickly as they could and the high ranking officers did not want to wait for all of us to get the furloughs- they wanted to get as many of us directly right over there, and they do things like that in the Army. IF you think about what was done in this war right now, in 2004 and 2005, they are pulling stunts like that right now. All kinds of things.

DB: Did you get specific orders to ship out to the South Pacific?

FB: Well, you know- you don't get it as an individual. Yes- the Q Company that I was assigned to get orders to ship out on a certain boat, and the boat was going to south Pacific so that's

where we were going. Fortunately, the atomic bomb dropped and thank god it did because Japan surrendered and that was the day before we were to get on the boat and so we just got on the boat anywhere and the only change was to land in New York City rather than Tokyo.

DB: How do you feel about the bomb then?

FB: Any time I heard someone say that it was inhumane to drop that bomb, I just like to be able to show them a picture of all of the dead that I saw. Especially the dead that were in Pearl Harbor. That's how all this started and I just couldn't imagine that we would withhold that bomb and sacrifice lives to conquer Japan when we could save our lives- it's true we had to kill thousands of Japanese but it was either them or us, and I really have no patience for those people who feel that we should not have dropped that bomb.

DB: You're on the boat now- right after the bomb has dropped. Huge relief. Did you know that your destination would be the United States?

FB: Yes.

DB: It must have been quite a different attitude than the one that took you over to England.

FB: Oh yeah, and it was... what a thrill when we came into the harbor in New York City. In fact even before that- when we could see the shore and we could see cars going back and forth - what a thrill it was to see that. And then coming in and going by the statue and coming in- it was so exciting and when we pulled up to the docks and people were there cheering. We were the first ones back! We got back Labor Day weekend.

DB: How long did it take for you to get home? To Meadville? Did they muster you out or did it take a lot of red-tape time?

FB: My wife was in the Marine Corps and she was stationed at Henderson Hall which is right next to the Pentagon-

DB: This goes back earlier to when you were getting married- not when you were supposed to, but when you got shipped out to England.

FB: That's right- when I shipped out, she joined the Marine Corps and after a month of KP, that's where she ended up, in Henderson Hall. That was the address. I gave the Willard Hotel in DC as my home address. I got sent to Fort right there by Washington, and when they went to give me my discharge, I said "I need my teeth fixed. I need you to take a look at my teeth first." I think I'm getting ahead of myself here...I guess that's right- I've lost track of some of the time here. So they sent me...

DB: You were trying to think of a reason to stay there where your wife was

FB: Well, I needed my teeth fixed too. Over in battle, they did have dentist there, and you would see them once in a while, and there was a dentist and a helper. The helper would be on a bicycle. The bicycle would be hooked up to the drill and he would be pedaling like mad to turn the drill to drill your teeth. I never had enough courage...

DB: You had enough courage to face enemy fire...

FB: But not that. They found a lot of things wrong. They had to pull one of my front teeth. It's a good I did that or it would have cost me thousands of dollars to get a repair later. So they fixed my teeth and by this time, all the other guys were coming back, and they didn't have room to discharge me. So they gave me a furlough and so I went home. My parents lived in Erie PA at the time.

DB: Do you remember that homecoming at the time?

FB: Oh yes- that was glorious. We had a wonderful time. To see all the old buddies again. And then, one of the things that really hurt was that one of the buddies that was in our group- most of those guys were in the Marine Corps, and he got killed on Iwo Jima, so when we all got free, we all went back to see his parents, and I often thought that it hurt more- it just broke them up to see all of those guys there in uniform and their son wasn't coming home. He finally did come home and he was a local VFW post is named after him in Meadville PA.

DB: One question that I want to ask- they talk a lot about someone who's been in combat coming back as a changed person. You certainly came back more mature than when you went over; Do you think it changed you, and in what ways?

FB: Well I think that Maturity is the answer I can give because when I went to college before the war, I didn't study. Once I got out of the Army and went back to school I got all A's and B's. When before I started back in college, I was working- all veterans who were discharged from that war, were given something called the 52/20 Club. The 52/20 Club gave you \$20 a week for 52 weeks. You didn't have to do a thing for it. I didn't take that. I got a job as a lumberjack and went in the woods during the winter and that didn't bother me because I'd been out the whole winter before. I had to sleep in the snow, here I only had to work in it. I cut down trees and during that winter until I started in college.

DB: Where was this?

FB: this was in Meadville PA. that showed maturity because the guys who took the 52/20 Club- they'd have time to go to the bar during the day and drink and they'd drink that money up pretty quickly and they'd have nothing to show for it.

DB: What about the GI Bill, and when did that come in?



FB: That came in immediately because I was finally discharged in December. I had been working while I was on furlough and I had to go back and get discharged. My wife couldn't get discharged until I got one and I went back in Washington and got a discharge and then hand carried my discharge papers over and gave it to her commanding officer and another week, she got out.

DB: Where did you go then?

FB: Right after that, then I came to Michigan and I could continue with the engineering, but it would have to be at University of Michigan because Michigan Normal did not have engineering. So I interviewed there and interviewed over at Michigan Normal because I thought that well I might want to study physical education because I liked sports. That was ultimately the decision that I made.

DB: That was with the GI Bill?

FB: that was with the GI Bill and it was a wonderful thing. That did more for the American economy as well as helping us individual soldiers with anything to do, and I think whoever terminated that- that was a mistake that they stopped that. In fact, one of the speeches I did was to promote that. You know- to me, if they could offer a small salary- a very small salary and a lot of benefits after you get out, that would help enlistments. Not only that, but these people who might go in the army right away who never get college or training very well might end up with menial jobs and the ones that go to college, if they go in the service, they're going to get better jobs and they're going to pay more taxes.

DB: have you ever thought about what your life would have been like had this military experience not happened to you?

Fb: I guess we've all thought of things like that- what if. I had an experience before I went to Youngstown College that made me just absolutely sure that I was not going to work in a menial type job the rest of my life. I didn't know how I was going to get away from it but I wasn't going to do that. I had a job working at Talon Slide Fasteners- just pant fly zippers and so on and my job was to inspect those- they came down a conveyor. Every time they would come down the conveyer, it was group piecework so, every time you went to the bathroom, everyone looked at their watch because they wanted the group to make more money but if you made more money the company cut the rate and it would fluctuate back down, and we had to join the union, and come to find out it was a company union and if you had a complaint, you were complaining to the people that you felt did you wrong. I realized that the deck was stacked. It was really stacked back then. I made up my mind that I was going to do something different. So I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have GI Bill...

DB: With this GI Bill, you were almost coming full circle, back to Eastern Michigan Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University. How had the campus changed? You had changed-

you were more mature, but the campus must have changed. When you left it, it was full of uniforms...

FB: Well it was not changed as far as building as grounds and facilities, but the thing that changed was that there was an influx of thousands of GI's, and it was the second semester when we were able to get back. The college was prepared for that influx- how could they be? They were used to all women there- the female students were used to competing with each other. All of a sudden, all of us who were now more mature, we came in there and these poor girls was- all I heard from them was "You guys- you just make it too tough for us. You study too hard." So that's where the change came, and I think the professors were gleeful. They had some pretty high class students.

DB: I met you because a few weeks ago you were wearing, just before Memorial Day- Sunday service, your service uniform. I must say that it fit very well still. I wonder if you could get that for me- I want to ask you about some of the patches.

FB: OK

DB: Ok so Fred Barney has gone into the closet and pulled out his jacket which I mentioned is pretty heavy material- not what you'd wear on a hot summer day like today.

FB: It is a dress uniform, and it would not be worn in summer normally. Normally we would have worn khakis only. "

DB: This is all drab, has 4 buttons down the front. At the top, left shoulder is this patch, chevron type patch with a blue top, a white insignia and a red rectangle below that. What does this mean?

FB: each division has a patch and that patch was adopted to represent 76th Division. You might see some that have a big yellow shield with lightning through it, and that is cavalry. The big red 1 - the most famous one - is the First Division- the big red 1.

DB: Ok so this is the 76th Division patch. Just below that is a stripe. A pointed stripe.

FB: Everybody has a rank. If you have no stripes at all, then you are at the bottom of the barrel, and at this time, a buck private- a private with no stripes at all, would get a salary of \$50 a month. With the stripe, you get a salary of \$54 a month.

DB: So this stripe is a private first class. This is the infamous one you talk about where you learn to sew.

FB: I did learn to sew. I sewed that on there many times.

DB: Down below the elbow on the lower part of the sleeve, there are two patches.

FB: Yes- one of them- there are two gold slashes there, and each one represents 6 months in combat overseas.

DB: And the diagonal- this is olive drab against a black background.

FB: That is a longevity chevron. It shows that I was in at least one term which is three years. I was in about three and a half years, so that's where I got that.

DB: At the collar, at the top of the collar on the right side there is simply US, and on the left side, there are crossed medallions about the size of a quarter, with crossed gold rifles on them.

FB: that is the designation of infantry. And if I were in ordinance, you would have a bomb in each branch of the service would have some special insignia.

DB: Above the left pocket, there are two ribbons and then above that is a metal semi-wreath with a blue rifle emblazoned over it. Can you describe what these are?

FB: Well actually there are four ribbons. Three of them are put together because when you have more than one they are attached, but that gives no significance at all. I'm not sure I remember all, but the one with the three stars on there shows that I fought in three battles in Europe.

DB: those battles being the Battle of the Bulge, the Siegfried Line, and Central Germany.

FB: Then, there is another one which I don't know what it is. And there is one for the American theater if you were in service in the United States. There is a good conduct medal there. Those are medals that I received personally. The rifle that you talked about with the blue background with the wreath is the rifleman's medal. I'm most proud of that right now. The only people who can get this are people who have served in the infantry in combat.

DB: On the right side, over the right pocket, there are insignia here too.

FB: Yes- there's a plain blue insignia- a bar. That is one I'm most proud of also because that is called Presidential Unit Citation. That's awarded by a proclamation by the President of the United States that our unit performed meritoriously in combat. That's pretty important to me. Under that there is an infamous "ruptured duck" showing that I was discharged.

DB: That's a discharge patch.

FB: It is, but I have something to say about these awards. I now as a WWII veteran have a right to apply and get a Bronze Star. A Bronze Star is the third most important award that can be given for meritorious service. The Presidential Medal of Honor is the most important. Secondly is the Silver Star. Thirdly is the Bronze star. I don't know why that was initiated, but I know of some soldiers that have gotten that. I hate to see that. It's not right. It would not be right for me to have a Bronze Star because I didn't do anything to earn it. Many of those men whose only

claim to fame is the same as what mine is- we lived a long time. Now we're able to get a Bronze Star.

DB: You're suggesting that not earning it like those others who earned it, got it.

FB: We talked back about some people in my unit who are now with the Battalion Commander, ahead of the troops, way out in front- I told you the story...

DB: Repeat that story, because I don't think it's on the tape.

FB: Well, our battalion Commander, Major Levy, and his driver and three members of our intelligence section would reconnoiter the area ahead of the troops. They would get in a Jeep and just go. The one member of that group would come home- back to the company area and he would relate at night some of the things that happened and one of the things that stuck with me- they came over the crest of a hill in this Jeep pretty fast because they went fast. You go fast to not get shot. The driver slammed on the brakes because right ahead of them were fifteen or so Germans with their all of their weapons pointed right at these five men in the Jeep. So the five men in the Jeep, stood up, raised their rifles at the Germans, and the Germans had their rifles aimed at our men. Finally, one German dropped his rifle and slowly raised his hands. After that, the rest of them did that in sequence and soon, they had all dropped their rifles and were gathered up as prisoners and they were returned back to the proper areas after that. When you're talking about awards, those people got and deserved a Bronze Star. If I got one, I would be saying that I'm equal to them and I'm not. I'm really opposed to that...

DB: But Fred, you have a sense of pride in what you did and what you went through, and having fought under Patton- certainly one of the most famous, if not THE most famous military geniuses during the war. Did you at the time, when you were going back through these terrible experiences- did you have any sense at that time that you would feel this kind of pride?

FB: Yes- I certainly did. We knew what we were fighting for. We knew that Hitler had just killed a lot of innocent people and we knew that we had to win the war or we would be under the control of his regime, so it was important to us and when it was over we were proud, and we were proud ever since, and I'm still proud.

DB: Fred, thank you. This has been a wonderful conversation with Fred Barney, who served in eh 76th Division in Patton's Third Army. Fred we appreciate your reminisces and your stories and hope that it will be useful to those at Eastern Michigan University. And Fred has asked me to indicate that I'm Dick Bowman- I met Fred a weeks ago at our local church and when I found out what he was doing, since I had a background in television, perhaps I could help with the interviewing for this event. I hope it's all useful, and congratulations Fred.

FB: Thank you Dick. I am deeply indebted to you for all this because I would not have been able to get through all of this very well all by myself. So, my thanks of those who will listen to this, and I would like also to dedicate the tape and my gift to Eastern Michigan University to those

men in that ASTP unit who died in combat and to those men who had left what was then Michigan State Normal College to go into service whom I never met and did not return. Thank you.