

Quite an Experience
Interviewer

Okay, Cliff, so can you tell me your name, your rank, your unit when did you go to West Point?

Clifford Snyder

No. No.

Interviewer

Okay.

Clifford Snyder

No, I was drafted. [Laughter]

Interviewer

You know, where you grew up?

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

Things like that. Go ahead.

Clifford Snyder

Okay. My name is Clifford Snyder. I was born in Saugerties, New York.

Interviewer

Look at me.

Clifford Snyder

On a little farm up in a small hamlet called High Woods. I went to a one-room schoolhouse for eight years, then went to a very small high school, which less than 400 students in it. After I graduated, I was drafted into the service, and I wound up in Fort McClellan, Alabama, where I took my basic at an IRTC, Infantry Replacement Training Center. There were five or six of them throughout the nation. After my training, I was shipped up to Fort Meade, Maryland, where I was outfitted, and from there I went to Camp Shanks, New York, and on a boat, and on over to Europe.

Clifford Snyder

I landed in Liverpool. From there we went to Southampton, and we took a boat over to Le Havre, and then I was transported from there up to Verviers, Belgium, where I was assigned to the 83rd Infantry Division. I was in Charlie Company, C Company, 330th Infantry, 83rd Division, named the Thunderbolt Division. And I joined them on December 18, two days after the Battle of the Bulge broke, and I was with them until the war ended.

Clifford Snyder

And it was really quite an experience for me. Â I was assigned to the BAR manâ€”I was his ammunition bearer, and I was ammunition bearer until we crossed the Ruhr River at JÃ¼lich on theâ€”I think it was the 23rd of February, 1945.

Clifford Snyder

Weâ€”we moved on down to the river after we crossed. Â We attacked a small town called Muntz, M-U-N-T-Z, and there we had a lot ofâ€”a lot of people hurt. Â So I went from assistantâ€”from ammo bearer to assistant squad leader, which is a level two buck sergeant, and at that time our platoon sergeant was killed, so our squad leader became the platoon sergeant. Â The assistant squad leader, named Battershell, was moved up to squad leader, and I was made assistant squad leader. Â And the funny thing about it, we were both still PFCs, so it was quite interesting.

Clifford Snyder

And we wereâ€”we didnâ€™t get our ranks until the war almost ended. Â Battershell did get his buck sergeant rank because it had been put in for him before the war ended, but Iâ€™ didnâ€™t get mine until the war ended, and we wound up in Grafenau, Germany, in the Army of [German] Occupation. Â We spent about six months there, and then we move to Linz, Austria, and at Linz I was sent out to a Hungarian DP camp, and I was there until we shipped all the Hungarian back toâ€”to Hungary. Â And then they assigned me to the 42nd Infantry Division, the Rainbow Division, and they always said, â€œTwo are lootinâ€™, two are shootinâ€™, and six paintinâ€™ rainbows.â€

Clifford Snyder

So I was only there two weeks, and my own lieutenant had moved on to [the Allied] Military Government in Linz, and so I got in touch with him and I said, â€œCan you get me out of this outfit? Â I canâ€™t take this, you know.â€ Â So he did, and I moved up to [the Allied] Military Government in Linz, Austria, and I was assigned to an IBM Unit. Â They had motorized units where they had tractor-trailersâ€”they hauled the equipment on them, and you could take the equipment off if they had the opportunity, or it could operate on the trucks. Â And I was putâ€”the unit I was put in handled what they called the â€œfroggen bodens.â€ Â I think itâ€™sâ€”Iâ€™m not very good with German.

Clifford Snyder

But that was the personnel records of all the Nazis that did criminal activities, and they had what they called an aperture card, where the picture of the individual was inserted right into the punch card, and you could run them through a machine and pick out â€”a criminal. Â And how this came about, if a person came in and complained that they were molested or hurt in any way by a Nazi, that theyâ€”they could give us a description of that individual, and weâ€™d run that description against the base, database which we had of all the criminalsâ€”or only Nazis, I should say.

Clifford Snyder

And sometimes youâ€”three or four would fall out. Â Then weâ€™d bring those people in and have the person look at them and see if he could pick out the one that caused the crime. Â It was very interesting. Â Â Â

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Clifford Snyder

I enjoyed that a lot. Â And then I think I was there until Januaryâ€”no, to June, June 1, I think, of 1946, when I shipped home.

Dangerous Work
Interviewer

So Iâ€™d like to go back to, you know, when you got to Europe.

Clifford Snyder

Okay.

Interviewer

If thatâ€™s okay. Â So youâ€™when you got to Belgium, you were training, and then they assigned you to the 83rd? Â That is what you said?

Clifford Snyder

Well, the Bulge had broke on the 16th of December. Â This was two days after. Â We were not aware of it even, because we shipped out from Camp Lucky Strike in Le Havre, and we were en route to Verviers, Belgium, to where they had the Repo Depot there. Â And when we arrived, they were packing up their records to get the hell out of town, because they didnâ€™t know where the Germans were, you know? Â The [German] breakthrough wasâ€”quite a big breakthrough, what, 40 miles wide, and they penetrated, I think, around 85 miles before weâ€™we could stop them. Â

Clifford Snyder

But anyway, we checked in that evening, and they said, â€œThereâ€™s a public bathhouse down the street.â€ Â They supplied us with towels, so you could go down and clean up, do what you want to do, but be out on the street the next morning at eight oâ€™clock or whatever, what time. Â And these vehicles will be coming down the street, and theyâ€™ll have a sign on the front how many they want. Â And it just so happened that a jeep came along from Charlie Company, 330th Infantry, and they needed two [men], and the other guy and I hopped in the jeep, and thatâ€™s how we wereâ€”thatâ€™s how we got to the 83rd Infantry Division.

Interviewer

So did thatâ€™was that other guy somebody you had trained with in the States, or had you just met him?

Clifford Snyder

No, no, he came from another camp.

Interviewer

Uh-huh. Â Okay.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

And so is it?

Clifford Snyder

I think he came from Camp Blanding, Florida, if I remember right.

Interviewer

This was the first thing that you did, go to Hurtgen Forest? Did you—were you there?

Clifford Snyder

No, I didn't—this was after the Hurtgen Forest.

Interviewer

Oh, it was.

Clifford Snyder

Yes. Yeah, the 83rd had just come out of the Hurtgen Forest, and they had quite a few casualties there, so they needed a lot of replacements, and that's how I wound up in Charlie Company in the 330th. And so the Third Army was not committed to the Bulge yet. I think we were committed around maybe the 22nd or 23rd of December. And the Fourth Armored [Division] had set up a task force—they broke through to Bastogne. Opened up a roadway, and they were using that to get the wounded out, and get food and ammunition in, and what have you. A A A

Clifford Snyder

And for some reason or not, the body of the Fourth Armored [Division] never caught up with the task force. So as we were going up to St. Vith—our division was assigned to go to St. Vith—they dropped our regiment off for about three days. And we assisted the task force to keep the road open, so they could get the wounded out and get the food in and what have you. And then we moved on to St. Vith.

Interviewer

So the—the history that I read of the—of the 83rd, it's just amazing—the amount of progress and success that they had was. What was the feeling among the guys when—when you joined up? Was the morale high or low?

Clifford Snyder

Morale was excellent. Morale was excellent. It always was. I—I was really amazed. It was a unique division, I guess—I don't know. Maybe—I think probably the rest were the same way. But we had a job to do, and it's dangerous work. [Laughter] A A

Interviewer

So when—when you—when—well, so—you guys were involved in the—in capturing Neuss, the city of Neuss. Were you involved in that at all?

Clifford Snyder

In where?

Interviewer

When youâ€”when you guys, in Operation Grenadaâ€”were you involved in that at all?

Clifford Snyder

In Otter?

Interviewer

This is in March, after the Bulge?

Clifford Snyder

Oh, after the Bulge. Â Letâ€™s see, we went? February the 23rd we went across the Ruhr River, so seven days later, we were on the Rhine River. Â Our division was the first division to reach the Rhine, and we reached it near a little city calledâ€”not a little city, fairly sized large city called Neuss, N-E-U-S-S, which I understand now has changed its name to something else. Â But weâ€”we triedâ€” there was still a bridge intact across the Rhine River at Neuss. Â And we tried to capture that bridge, but unfortunately, we were fighting in the streets. Â There was a street running down through the city of Neuss to the bridge, and we were about halfway down to the bridge, and they blew it up.Â

Clifford Snyder

And we could actually see it being blown up, you know. Â It was unbelievableâ€”and so thatâ€”thatâ€™s prevented us from getting across the Rhine. Â And then we moved in a position just across from Dusseldorf, which was almostâ€”was across from Neuss, but a little downriver from itâ€”and we stayed there until, oh, I canâ€™t remember the exact date. Â In fact they sent two of our companies up to Holland to train on river crossing on a Meuseâ€”Meuse River, I believe, in Holland, and that was quite an experience, too. Â The Naval personnel were up there with boats, and we were training with them to cross the river. Â Â

Clifford Snyder

But fortunately, we never had to, because theyâ€”they finally got a beachhead across further north, and we were able to ride across the Bailey bridge and get across. [Laughter] And weâ€”from that time on, we were assigned to support the Second Armored Division, and their theory was theyâ€™d have the Armored Division?we were now under General Simpson. Â They removed our division, along with four or five others, fromâ€”from Patton. Â Of course, theirâ€”Patton wanted to go to Berlin, you know, and I guess Ike [Eisenhower] had to do something about it, so he pulled out four or five divisions.

Clifford Snyder

Put us with Simpson, who was given the assignment of capturing Berlin. Â And from that time on, it was just a rag-tag circus. Â See, we were an Infantry division. Â We didnâ€™t have much motorized support, where a Tank division had their own motorized equipment, you know. Â And theâ€”the point was that they would keep moving as fast as they could. Â If they hit a pocket, theyâ€™d bypass it, and then weâ€™d come along and clean out the

pocket. And that's the way we operated until we reached the Elbe River, and that was quite an experience then. But before we reached the Elbe, there was a ridge called the Hartz Mountains.

Clifford Snyder

And there's there was they thought there was an armored or two armored divisions, German armored divisions, located up in the Hartz Mountains. So we were our regiment was dropped off again, and we were to go in from the I guess we'd call it the south end, maybe. And the Eighth Armored Division was going to swing around, come in from the other side, and we'd kind of pocket them in the Hartz there.

Clifford Snyder

So the first night we went in, we made pretty good distance there. I think we went five or ten miles the first penetration into the Hartz Mountains. And we were now up almost on top, and we come to a crossroad.

Clifford Snyder

And we set up we were going to we set our an Infantry company is usually assigned, when they're in attack, you assign two tanks and a tank destroyer. So, we positioned our two tanks and our tank destroyer at this crossroad, and the company command post was established back just before the the crossroads. And the non-coms [non-commissioned officers] were sent were called back to the CP to be briefed on what we were going to do the next morning. But while they were back there, we we heard this this motorized noise coming from from the other direction.

Clifford Snyder

And it was just getting dusk, and we were trying to dig in. It wasn't very good digging because of the rock and that, you know. But anyway, our squad positioned our our bazooka man in a drainage ditch which ran underneath the road, you know. He was only about maybe 10, 15 feet from the roadbed, which was macadam. And so we heard this armor well, we didn't know it was armored at the time. We heard motorized noise coming our way, you know, when the non-coms were coming up to the crossroads, and we were mentioning it to them, and our Lieutenant Philipson. A A A

Clifford Snyder

And they said, Well, it's probably the Eighth Armored, because they're coming in from the other direction. But instead of the Eighth Armored, it was the first vehicle was a half-track, German half-track, and I'll never forget the the third platoon sergeant, Sergeant Dunn, he was going to walk up and ask him what outfit he was from, and he saw the swastika on his door. I guess the Germans realized that they were that we were Americans, you know? They took off, and it went right on down through our they caught up back in regiment somewhere. But anyway, he was far ahead of the first vehicle behind him, which was a Mark IV tank.

Clifford Snyder

And I guess he didn't have communication with the tank behind him, because the tank came down, and they had a sleeve over their their barrel of the 88. They didn't even realize we were there, you know? So when he rolled up to that drainage ditch where our bazooka was, our we had an 18-year-old kid on the bazooka, and he let

a round go, and that thing went up in flames. A He got it right through the track, you know? A He must've hit the gas tank or ammo or something, but that thing just blew up, you know, and it just blocked the road. A A A

Clifford Snyder

Now, behind it was two half-tracks well, there was more than that. A There was tanks and half-tracks and what I don't know how much stuff. A And this young bazooka kid, he goes back, reloads, knocks out two half-tracks, and he got a Silver Star for it. A Yeah. A And I'll never forget that.

Interviewer

So was that the end of it I mean at that at that point?

Clifford Snyder

Well, no. A Well, they opened up fire on us. A Of course, they they set up they had automatic weapons that were better than ours, really. A But they put down quite a stream of fire down the road, and we pulled back into the woods. A They couldn't get through because of the tank, you know, so they finally got their equipment turned around and got out of there. A A

Clifford Snyder

But in the morning, we had we captured seven German soldiers. A A couple of them were slightly wounded, not bad. A And so the next morning our division was going our company was going to move on.

Clifford Snyder

And the platoon sergeant told me, he said, You stay here with two other two other guys, and guard the seven prisoners, and we'll send a vehicle back to pick you up. A So we sat there for almost all day about three o'clock in the afternoon, I was getting a little worried. A Cause we went from seven to twenty-eight Germans that came out of the woods, and they gave up to us, you know. A And here we had 28 prisoners. A There's three of us, and it was a little concern there, you know? A And just by luck, a vehicle's coming, and I said, Geez, I hope it's ours, and it was.

Clifford Snyder

It was a half-track. A It belonged to an anti-tank company, and they came from Albany, New York. A It was funny. A Anyway, he came up to us and we stopped him. A Of course, he didn't know if we were Germans or what either, you know. A And he said, I'm trying to get back to my company. A He said, I broke down, oh, two or three days before. A He said, They're supposed to be in Goslar? G-O-S-L-A-R, a town there in the Hartz Mountains.

Clifford Snyder

And I said, Look, I said, we got to do something. A He had a half-track with a flatbed on the back, and he says, Geez, I can't take them. A I said, Look, we got to do something here, you know. A You can't leave us here alone. A A

Clifford Snyder

I said, "We're supposed to have transportation—it never arrived." A So anyway, we got the German prisoners on the back of the half-track, and I had the two guys stay on the tail end of the half-track, and he had a 30-caliber machine gun in the cab next to him, you know?

Clifford Snyder

And so I said, "I'll take care of that." And he said, "Okay, that'll help." So we took off, and it was starting to get dusk. We finally got to Gosler, and they had an enclosure there where we could release our prisoners, have them take them over. And I got to meet the first sergeant of the company that he was in, you know, and it happened to be a fellow from Poughkeepsie, New York. Biff Hoffman, his name was.

Clifford Snyder

He used to be an amateur boxer. I used to—my dad and I used to watch him box in Kingston, you know? So anyway, he treated us like kings, you know. He said, "Look," you know, he said, "we'll give you a good night's sleep," he said. "There's no way we're going to find your company at night," you know.

Clifford Snyder

He said—they had a house they took over and the first sergeant and the captain and that were in it. He said, "We've got a couple extra rooms. You three guys go in there," he says, "and take a shower and clean up." Oh, we were really thrilled.

Clifford Snyder

So the next morning after breakfast, we got out. I said, "We got to find our—our Company." He said, "Well, there's quite a bit of traffic going through Gosler." He said, "Maybe—why don't you get down there and see if an 83rd vehicle comes along?" And by God, it wasn't long and the 83rd vehicle come along. And it was from the headquarters company of the first battalion. So I said, "Boy," I said, "this is great." So they took us back and we finally got back to our company in the Hartz Mountains there. And—but that was quite an experience, you know?

Middle of the Fray
Interviewer

Were you—did you communicate with the Germans at all, the—the soldiers?

Clifford Snyder

There was one—yes. There was one that really spoke English well. In fact he helped us a great deal, 'cause he wasn't really at that point in time in the war, you weren't getting the hard-nosed German soldiers, you know. They'd either been recycled after many years fighting in Russia and Poland and everywhere else, and they—there wasn't much fight left in them.

Clifford Snyder

The biggest problem we had with the 28 [prisoners] was we had three kids that were anywhere from 15 to 18, and they had overcoats on them. And they kind of stuck to the side, you know, and we—we did a visual search, really.

Clifford Snyder

Finally, I said, "We got to do something here," and I called the German that spoke English over. "I said, "Tell them guys to take off their coats, and we'd like to look at them," you know. "So they took them off, and each one had a part of a pistol, you know, and ammunition, in pockets inside. "And we stripped them of that. "We took their coats away from them, threw them over the wall and got rid of the ammo and that, and we broke the pistol up, so. "But that was the only problem we had with the 28. "The rest of them were"were soldiers, range anywheres from, oh, 20 to maybe 45, something like that, and their"their fighting days were over.

Clifford Snyder

They didn't"they didn't want to fight anymore, you know? "So we didn't have any trouble with them. "But"

Interviewer

Is that when you got back to the"to your division in the mountains?"

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

And you continued did"is that what you said?"

Clifford Snyder

Well, we had"yeah. "In fact, we joined them"we got back to them around noontime of that day, and they were in attack at the time, and they were going up a" a slope and they were clearing what had happened. "There was"the Germans had slaughtered the trees along each side of the road. "The Hartz Mountains is heavily wooded. "And they had charges, timed charges in these trees, so that when they exploded, one tree would fall over the other, like this, and block the road. "And we had combat engineers up there clearing that out, and we had our squads on each side of the road, protecting them.

Clifford Snyder

And the artillery observer and his radio man were with us, and whenever we moved up enough, they wanted to throw sporadic artillery in front of the"of the combat engineers to protect them, you know. "And they"we moved up one time, and for some reason or another, a short round came in and hit in a tree right directly over me, and I didn't get hit with a damn thing. "But the auxiliary"the artillery observer, who was a lieutenant, and his sergeant were both killed, and three of our boys in our squad were killed, right"right directly in front of us, you know? "And we're just lucky that the company commander was nearby.

Clifford Snyder

And he had a 300 radio also, and he called back and told them to stop the artillery. "You know, we got a short round. "Yep. "So that was a"that was a little messy, there. "We had"I think there was three or four more that were wounded at the time.

Interviewer

Mm.

Clifford Snyder

Our platoon got hit pretty hard.

Interviewer

Wasâ€”was that the fiercest fighting that you saw, or theâ€”wasâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Pardon?

Interviewer

What was the fiercest fighting that you saw?

Clifford Snyder

The fiercest fighting was in Behan, Belgium, on December 9th through the 11th of 1945. Â Behan was oneâ€”the Bulge is now crumbling. Â The Germans are trying to retreat back into Germany, and there was a highway that went through there. Â It was one of the few escape routes that they had left. Â And, so the 321st Regiment of our division had run a patrol up to aâ€”a road junction just outside of the town of Behan, and they found that the Germans hadâ€”had leftâ€”the foxholes were empty, and they came back and reported it to the division, you know.

Clifford Snyder

And the division decided, â€œHey, weâ€™re going to attempt to capture the Behan,â€ and cut that roadblock, cut that road off so they couldnâ€™t escape any more through that area. Â So on the morning of the 9th, our company was assigned to move up and capture the road junction, and if possible, captureâ€”there was a little bridge there leading into Behanâ€”and capture the bridge and establish a beachhead, a little beachhead across the bridge. Â And so we left that morning and we accomplished the roadblock. Â They still had not taken that road junction over again, so the company commander set up his CP right there.

Clifford Snyder

And our assignment, our second platoon that I was in, our assignment was to try to cross the bridge and establish control there, you know? Â And fortunately, we did, we made it, did. Â They had a little guardhouse on the opposite side of the bridgeâ€”it was probably a portable job, I donâ€™t know. Â And we went across the bridge, and we captured?there was one German in theâ€”in theâ€”in the thing, and he was half-asleep. Â We scared him half to death, and I guess heâ€™d have told us where Hitler was, if he knew where he was, you know. Â So he told us exactly where there was three groups of Germans across the bridgeâ€”German soldiers, and what buildings they were in.

Clifford Snyder

And it just so happened we took the first squad, they went on the left side of the road, and we took the one right on the road on the right side. Â And then the third squad moved off to the right. Â There wasâ€”I donâ€™t know if it was a farm, orâ€”a number of buildings over there that theyâ€”they found the other group, and we captured about 15 of them altogether.

Â Never fired a shot. Â So our assignment was that A and B Company wouldâ€”as soon as weâ€”if we established our positions across the bridge, that A and B Company would join us, and we would attack Behan.

Clifford Snyder

So after we got our positions, and our Lieutenant Philipson, he sent a sergeant back to tell the company commander that, â€œHey, weâ€™re established. Â Send A and B Company over.â€” Â And the sergeant came back and said, â€œThe company commander tells me that A and B Company arenâ€™t ready, so hold your positions.â€” Â And we werenâ€™t too happy with that, â€”cause we only had three squads across there right now, which amounted to whatâ€”between 36 and 40 men. Â And that afternoon, we were attacked by a Mark IV and someâ€”some German soldiersâ€”Iâ€™d say a platoon, maybe two. Â And the weather was so bad it was unbelievable.

Clifford Snyder

The temperature was below zero. Â It snowed and the fog from the North Sea was drifting in. Â And when they actually became visible to us, they were only about 30 or 40 yards away from us, and we really wounded and killed quite a few of them. Â And so they retreated back, and then on the 10th, the next day, they attempted to do it again, around ten or twelve oâ€™clockâ€”I forget exactly. Â And theyâ€”but then they sent a few more troops. Â But, we were able to rebuff them there, too, you know. Â And then Philipson was really upset, ourâ€”our platoon command, or platoon leaderâ€”he was really upset.

Clifford Snyder

He said, â€œIâ€™m going back to talk to the captain myself.â€” Â His name, I think, was Gifford, Captain Gifford. Â He said, â€œWe got to do one of two things. Â Either they have to give us moreâ€”more people over here, or weâ€™re going to pull back across the bridge,â€”you know.

Clifford Snyder

So he went backâ€”he was gone about an hour. Â When he came back, heâ€”he had three machine guns, air-cooled machine guns, from the fourth platoon, you know, and he had, oh, about eight replacements that had just come over from the States. Â And then they were carrying K-rations, whatever theyâ€”some C-rations, and at least we had something to eat, you know?

Clifford Snyder

And he said, â€œIâ€™s the A and B Company is now arriving. Â And we shouldâ€”weâ€™ll be attacking tomorrow morning at nine oâ€™clock.â€” Â So we were thrilled with that, you know. Â So the morning of the 11th rolls around, and weâ€™re all ready to attack, and what happens?

Clifford Snyder

Eight oâ€™clock in the morning, the Germans attack us. Â They started throwing in mortars and artillery shells. Â They onlyâ€”they did for about 15 minutes, and then they attacked us, and they didnâ€™t realize that we had that big a force in position to attack them, you know. Â And itâ€”it was a disaster. Â They come out of that fog, there were only 30-40 milesâ€”or yards away from us, and theyâ€”we were just mowing them down. Â It was unbelievable. Â Yeah.

Clifford Snyder

And byâ€”by two oâ€™clock in the afternoon, we had captured the town. Â And we inflicted over 500 casualties on the enemy, and we had 128, I believe, casualties of our own. Â So that was, I think, one of the biggest battles I was in.

Clifford Snyder

The one at Muntz was also big, but our squad got hit hard at Muntz, butâ€”and they got hit hard, you know, at the Behan also. Â But that wasâ€”that was a real battle. Â Youâ€™re battling the enemy, youâ€™re battling the weather, and youâ€™reâ€”you had our own troops that werenâ€™t ready to help us out, you know? Â Plans never worked out the way they planned

Interviewer

So, scary. [Laughter] Â Were you scared?

Clifford Snyder

Yeah, I was somewhat scared. Â You know, at 19, you get scared, but it wasnâ€™t that bad, really. Â The weather was terrible, you know, and I used toâ€”I changed my socks every night. Â I had two pair of socks, and of course, our combat boots leaked like a sieve, you know.

Clifford Snyder

So every night Iâ€™d take my wet socks off, and Iâ€™d have the other pair in between my underwear and my body to dry out during the day, then I kept swapping them. Â And I think thatâ€™s the only reason I didnâ€™t get frostbite. Â They stunk like heck, but, you know, at least they were dry, pretty much dry, when I put them on.

Clifford Snyder

But a lot of the guys did that, but so a lot of them had frostbite. Â We lost an awful lot, an awful lot with frostbite.

Interviewer

Mm. Â So are any of the men that you see here at the reunion, were they there at Behan?

Clifford Snyder

Itâ€™s amazing. Â Yesterday I met a fellow, Jesseâ€”what was it, Swanson? Â I believe it was Swansonâ€”no, Palmer, Iâ€™m sorry. Â Jesse Palmer, P-A-L-M-E-R, who happened to be in the weapons platoon in Charlie Company at that timeâ€”he was a machine gunner. Â Butâ€”and then thereâ€™s a fellow that I met who left Charlie Companyâ€”he was in the squad that I had joinedâ€”who left theâ€”he was in a Hurtgen Forest, and he had frostbite, also. Â He left on the 16th. Â I joined the company on the 18th, and I went to that squad, so I always felt I was his replacement, you know.

Clifford Snyder

But itâ€™”it wasâ€”itâ€™s something. Â But yeah, Iâ€™”and both those fellows are at the reunion today, so, you know, we get together. Â But Jesse Palmer, this is the first reunion heâ€™s ever attended, and when he sawâ€”saw me, of course, we didnâ€™t know each

other. A He saw my shirt, and he said, "You're in Charlie Company?" A He said, "I was in Charlie Company." So we had quite a discussion last night. We knew a lot of the same guys, you know—the sergeants and the officers and what have you.

Advance, Advance, Advance
Interviewer

So I'm going to go back later. So you guys did cross the Rhine eventually?

Clifford Snyder

Oh yes. Yeah, we went north. The British and the Americans had already gotten across, and the 17th Airborne had jumped, and they—they were up north there, so we. They had—they had quite an area they already captured, and we pushed through them, the Second Armored, and we just took off. And it was amazing. Some days we traveled 20, maybe 50 miles, you know, trying to keep up.

Clifford Snyder

In order to keep up with the Second Armored, any German equipment that we came across, like old buses, school buses, half-track, anything, we would—we would take it over.

Clifford Snyder

And like we had a school bus—our platoon had a school bus [Laughter], and the lieutenant had a German jeep, Lieutenant Philipson. And a funny thing happened—at one point there, we're in a column and we had had to stop for some reason or another.

Clifford Snyder

And this German command car comes out of a side road and pulls right in front of Lieutenant Philipson, so Lieutenant Philipson walks up, taps him on the shoulder. He said, "Give me your Luger." He looks up at him, and he was a general, German general. And then he didn't want to—he didn't want to give in to him. He said, "I want a German—American general [to surrender to]." I don't want a lieutenant, you know? [Laughter]

Clifford Snyder

That was funny. He said, "Give me your Luger." And he spoke fluent German, too, our Lieutenant Philipson.

Interviewer

And so—so as you—when you crossed the Rhine, and then did you—was it—were the Germans pretty demoralized through that period, too?

Clifford Snyder

Yes. Yes. Definitely, yeah. Some of the units we came across were fairly well-trained, but I think most, a lot of them were the home guard and stuff like that, and we were able to move quite rapidly right up to the Elbe.

Interviewer

Uh-huh, and then at the Elbe, you what?

Clifford Snyder

Well, the Second Armored decided to go across the Elbe. And had no way of getting across, but they captured a ferry. Now, this ferry was on some kind of a cable or something—I don't know what kind of a boat you'd call it, but I'd say a ferry. So they went across on this damn thing, and they—and they—they captured a position on the other side. And they ferried over a number of troops—I guess they got a company or two over—and the Germans were really kicking the hell out of them.

Clifford Snyder

And so when the 83rd got there, what happened, too, the ferry was on this cable, and of course there was positions on each side where the cable was fastened. Their artillery knocked one of the cables off on the opposite side of the river, on the German side of the river, and the ferry drifted down the river. So they had no way of getting across.

Clifford Snyder

So they finally got a bailey bridge across, and we went across then, and relieved the Second Armored, and we drove—we came back around that time from the Hartz Mountains, our regiment. And we went across, and the Americans had built a bridge by the time we got there, and we went across the bridge.

Clifford Snyder

And we were 40 miles from Berlin, and the Germans were begging us to take Berlin, and I guess Churchill and Roosevelt and Stalin got together and decided that the—the battle line would be the Elbe River.

Clifford Snyder

Now here we got three or four divisions across the river already, and they stopped us. And boy, our commanders, they were really upset. They wanted to go to Berlin, you know. So anyway, even Eisenhower came up and spoke to the commanders and that. Said, "Hey, look, this decision was not made by me—it was made by Stalin and Roosevelt and Churchill." So that became the line there, and we always felt we should've got a Battle Star.

Clifford Snyder

The Russians actually got a Battle Star—they called that "the Eastern Front Battle Star," I guess, the Russians, and we should've gotten a Battle Star for crossing the Elbe River, but it never—never happened.

Interviewer

So did Eisenhower—Eisenhower actually came to where you were?

Clifford Snyder

Yes, I actually saw him, yeah.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah. Â He walked down through the troops and that. Â But he had already met with the commanding, you know, generals and that, and. Â But the officer, our division commander, he was very unhappy, along withâ€”with all the other ones, you know? Â So that was the end of our war, right there.

Interviewer

Well, so then I read that some of the 83rd I guess went south after you wereâ€”you were across the Elbe, and youâ€”and they ran into a concentration camp? Â Is that true? Â Were you part of that, or?

Clifford Snyder

I think the 331st didâ€”Iâ€™m not sure.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Clifford Snyder

Our regiment didnâ€™t, but I think the 31st didâ€”331st. Â Yeah.

Interviewer

So when did youâ€”when did you leave Germany?

Clifford Snyder

I didnâ€™t leave till June of â€™46.

Interviewer

Oh, soâ€”okay.

Clifford Snyder

Being a youngster when I went over, I only had 38 points, I think, when the war ended, and now thereâ€™s guys there with 150, you know. Â So I had to stay a year after the war.

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

Clifford Snyder

In our army of our occupation.

Reflections From Home

Interviewer

So youâ€”you came back in June of â€™46?

Clifford Snyder

Yes. Yeah. I was discharged at Fort Dix.

Interviewer

Uh-huh. Â And so what was it like to come back?

Clifford Snyder

Oh, fantastic. Â Coming in thatâ€”into New York, and see that Statue of Liberty, oh, my God. Â I think the boat tipped to the left. [Laughter] That was a thrillâ€”thrill to be home. Â Actually, I was only in the service two years, really. Â It wasâ€”it was 17 weeks of training, and we were over, you know, our IRTC training.

Interviewer

Mm-hmm. Â So what happened to Lieutenant Philipson, do you know? Â Was heâ€”did you see him?

Clifford Snyder

You know, he got hit back in St. Lo, I think. Â He came over with the division from the States, and heâ€”his knee was in very bad shape. Â But they sent him back up, back to the company, and the poor guyâ€”I felt sorry for him. Â Heâ€™s about 6â€”4â€”. Â He had been a football player, I think, in college. Â Really a nice guy, and heâ€”he didnâ€™t drink, and of course, heâ€™d get liquor rations once a monthâ€”the officers did. Â They get like a bottle of whiskey, a bottle of rum, and some beer, or I donâ€™t know what else. Â And he come out, and heâ€™d give us a talk on why we shouldnâ€™t drink, but then he gave it to us, you know. [Laughter]

Clifford Snyder

But he was a real, a real great guy. Â But as soon as the war was over, theyâ€”they went back, and I think he probably had an operation. Â I donâ€™t know what happened to him as far as his knee was concerned, but he was a great leader. Â A great platoon leader. Â They wanted him to take over the companyâ€”he wouldnâ€™t do it. Â He said, â€œNo, I want my platoon.â€” Â

Clifford Snyder

Many towns we came to, with his ability to speak Germanâ€”like the mayor of that town would come out with a white flag, you know, and heâ€™d go and talk to him, and heâ€™d say, â€œYou go back in, and if thereâ€™s any German soldiers in there, have them march out,â€” you know.

Clifford Snyder

And a lot of little towns we captured, we didnâ€™t fire a shot because of him. Â He was fantastic. Â He was the only officer in our company that could speak German, you know, so.

Interviewer

And so didâ€”did usually the soldiers come out if he negotiated with the mayor, and then they wouldâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Yeah, yep, yeah.

Interviewer

A handful of soldiers would come out?

Clifford Snyder

Yep, and they wouldâ€”

Interviewer

Wow.

Clifford Snyder

Throw their weapons down, and weâ€™d capture them, ship them back.

Interviewer

And did anyâ€”did that ever not work out, where he would talk to the mayor and next the people would come out shooting, or?â€”

Clifford Snyder

No, I canâ€™tâ€”no, I canâ€™t recall. â€” I canâ€™t recall any time that it ever happened, you know? â€” That there was a trap or anything set up. â€” Nope.

Interviewer

So it mustâ€™ve been very reassuring to have him around.

Clifford Snyder

Oh, yes. â€” Oh.

Interviewer

I mean a big, tall guy.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

He actually speaks the languageâ€”thatâ€™sâ€”

Clifford Snyder

I remember that poor guy on the bridge. â€” He picked him up and slammed him against the wall, and he said, â€œTell me right now,â€” he says, â€œhow many troops are in this town,â€” you know? [Laughter] And he says, â€œRight across the bridge in that building thereâ€™s some. â€” In this building thereâ€™s some. â€” Over on that side.â€” And he said, â€œBut at the end of the town,â€” he said, â€œthereâ€™s a large number of them.â€”

A He said, "I don't remember," he said, "I don't know how many," but he scared the heck out of him. [Laughter] He was very convincing.

Interviewer

So does he ever go to the reunions at all, or?

Clifford Snyder

No, never did, no.

Interviewer

Never did.

Clifford Snyder

He came from Wisconsin, I think. He was probably at that time probably around 30, maybe, 35, something like that, but a great, great man. No, he was one of my favorites in the company.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah, and here I am an ammo bearer in Muntz, and I come down off the ridge and I'm telling him that the BAR man is shot through the chest and the medic is working on him. And that the platoon sergeant is down his throat is shot. He died in just a matter of a minute. And our squad leader, he said, "You're now the platoon sergeant."

Clifford Snyder

Battershell, who was assistant, became the squad leader, and I became the [assistant squad leader] here I am, I'm only in there about a month, you know? Unbelievable.

Interviewer

Well, it sounds like you stepped up, though. It does sound like you were happy to take charge

Clifford Snyder

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer

And you were able to take charge and make decisions, which is what it takes.

Clifford Snyder

Well, it was at 19, you know. But in a war, you have to make decisions, you know? And the biggest job I had was keeping the guys moving. The squad leader usually stayed there back at the end of the and kind of worked through me, you know, in making sure the guys kept moving. But if somebody got down and wouldn't get up, you either had to get root them. Get Hey, yes, you can move, you know? So you had to keep guys moving. But that didn't happen too often. We had a great squad. Geez, those guys were great.

Clifford Snyder

We had a lot of replacements that after a whileâ€”I never really learned many first names. Â I just knew the last name. Â Theyâ€™d be here today and gone tomorrow, you know, and. Â But we hadâ€”the division had over 11,000 casualties during the war. Â I think there was close to 3,000 that were killed. Â We ranked number nine. Â There was 66 Infantryâ€”66 Infantry and Armored divisions in the ETO, and we ranked nine as far as wounded and what have you, killed, so.

Interviewer

So one of the things that officers talk about is feeling responsible for the guys. Â As a deputy squad leader, did you feel that way?

Clifford Snyder

Oh, yeah, definitely, yeah.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah. Â Yeah. Â I was responsible for making sure that everybody maintained all the equipment they were supposed to have, you know. Â I got a little notebook. Â I still have itâ€”this guyâ€”well, gas masks were the biggest problem, â€™cause the compartment where you kept the gas mask, you could get about three K-rations in there. Â And that was a little more important than a gas mask, so weâ€™d throw them away. Â And at the end of the war, when I was discharged in Fort Dix, they wanted to charge me \$14.00 apiece for three gas masks, and I blew my top. [Laughter] So I didnâ€™t have to pay for them.

Interviewer

So when you came back to the States, did you go right back to Saugerties, or did youâ€™

Clifford Snyder

Yes, I went right back to Saugerties, and there was no work at that time, â€™cause all the guys that got out ahead of me, all the jobs were pretty well taken.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Clifford Snyder

And a lot of the businesses were much more or less retooling, and doing whatever they were doing, you know. Â And I got out in June, and I did odd jobs, and they had this 52-20 the government set up, where you got \$20.00 a week for 52 weeks. Â So I signed up for that. Â Well, I only collectedâ€”I finally got a job, in I think it was September, with a gas station in Woodstock, which is right near where I lived, and I went to work there. Â And they paid me \$35.00 a week. Â I worked five days, and then half a day on Saturday, soâ€™for 35 bucks.

Clifford Snyder

But it was money coming in, you know? Â And my two older brothers, theyâ€™they had

come home. Â They were also in the Infantry, and they all came home, and one got married, and the other one moved out, so I was living with my mother, and I helped support her while I wasâ€”while I was still home, you know?

Clifford Snyder

And then in â€™48, they were going to build the New York State Thruway. Â And a contractor from Woodstock got the job to batch, dry-batch the concrete and gravel and that, to the mixers on the Thruway where they mixed the concrete and laid it up, so I drove truck for him for two years.

Clifford Snyder

And oh, that was greatâ€”I was making \$1.68 an hour, you know. Â And maybe we were working 10-hour days and a half a day Saturday. Â I was taking home \$100.00 a weekâ€”boy, back in that time, that was money, you know? Â And then I went with IBM in 1950. Â I spent 38 years with them. Â I retired in â€™87, and I was in my 38th year when I retired. Â But Iâ€™ve had an interesting life, Iâ€™ll tell you. [Laughter]

Interviewer

Well, having been through that war mustâ€™ve been amazing. Â I mean Iâ€™”itâ€™sâ€”when you read about the wars today, you know, this Iraq situationâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

And Afghanistan, where itâ€™s so, so complicated, and people have to do things that they just donâ€™tâ€”you know, theyâ€™re not always so comfortableâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

About, and so it causes a kind of I guess internal conflict that a lot of World War II soldiers I think didnâ€™t have toâ€”have to deal with.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah, yeah. Â Yeah, war technology has changed so much thatâ€™”itâ€™s getting pretty much motorized today, andâ€”but back then, you needed that Infantry to move up there, that front edge, you know.

Interviewer

So did you lose anybody in the war that you were very close to?

Clifford Snyder

Oh, yeah. Â One platoon sergeantâ€”oh, God. Â Now Iâ€™m trying to think of his name. Â I canâ€™t think of it off-hand. Â It was funny, though. Â He became our platoon sergeant. Â He was only with us a short time, but he cameâ€”he was with the company quite a while.

Â He was promoted to platoon sergeant. Â And after the Bulge, his combat boots were shot, and when I came through Fort Meade, it was a Saturday that I wasâ€”I went to the mess hall. Â I gotâ€”I went back a day early. Â I wanted to make sure I got there on time.

Clifford Snyder

And I went to the mess hall, and this sergeant walks up to me, and he said, â€œWell, we got 24 officers we have to outfit,â€ he said, â€œthis afternoon.â€ Â He said, â€œWould you help us?â€ Â I said, â€œSure.â€ Â So me and another fellow went, and we went over and they walked the officers through, and they gave us a section of the clothing that they were going to be handed out, and the sizes and that. Â What the hell did I haveâ€”I had a shirtâ€”a shirt and the caps or something. Â I forget what it was. Â Well, anyway, after they were outfitted and everythingâ€”it only took a couple of hoursâ€”we went back for lunch.

Clifford Snyder

And he says, â€œYou know,â€ he said, â€œI can walk you two guys through and outfit you before you have to go through with a group.â€ Â And I said, â€œGeez, thatâ€™s great.â€ Â So we went over to another sector where they handed our clothing out, you know, and so we were outfitted and got our M1s and everything. Â They were in Cosmoline, and they had a place there where you could clean them up, you know. Â They were in like a casing and â€”you know, it wasnâ€™t canvasâ€”or yeah, I guess it was canvas casing. Â And the Cosmoline is thicker than ever. Â They had kerosene and that where you could clean the rifles, and so we had allâ€”we were all set that afternoon.

Clifford Snyder

We actually went out on the range. Â He went out with usâ€”a nice guy. Â He was a staff sergeant. Â He said, â€œCome on, weâ€™ll go out on the range and weâ€™ll fire those rifles.â€ Â And we zeroed them in. Â I zeroed mine in at 50 yards. Â He said, â€œWhy 50 yards?â€ Â I said, â€œYou seeâ€”and he says, â€œTheyâ€™re usually 75 or 100.â€ Â I said, â€œNo. Â No, 50 yards.â€ Â I said, â€œIâ€™ll Kentucky windageâ€”itâ€™s more than that,â€ you know.

Clifford Snyder

So anyway, we fired our rifles and everything, soâ€”but the only bad part about it was the next day, we were gone. Â We were shipped up to Camp Shanks. [Laughter] That was something.

Clifford Snyder

Oh, yeahâ€”he said at the end, when we got all our clothes, he says, â€œIs there anything else you want?â€ Â I said, â€œYeah.â€ Â I said, â€œI want another pair of boots.â€ Â He says, â€œTwo pairâ€”why do you need two pair of shoes?â€ Â I said, â€œHey, winterâ€™s coming on, and Iâ€™m going to Europe. Â I want two pairs of boots.â€ Â So I got two pair of com boots, combat boots, you know, and I said, â€œAnother thing,â€ I said, â€œwhen we went through the officersâ€™ clothing there,â€ I said, â€œthey had a nice womanâ€™s sweater there with a zipper down the front.â€

Clifford Snyder

He said, â€œI canâ€™t give you that.â€ Â I said, â€œWhy not?â€ Â And he said, â€œAll right, Iâ€™ll give you one,â€ so he gave me one. Â I put it right in the bottom of my duffle bag, you knowâ€”boy, that was the warmest thing. Â I wore that all through the winter, and

that with the combat jacket, you know, it was all I wanted, you know. A That sweater was really warm. Â It was wool. Â It was really nice, so.

Service on the Home Front
Interviewer

So I'm curious. Â When you"when you enlisted, do you remember what day you enlisted?

Clifford Snyder

Pardon?

Interviewer

What day you enlisted"do you remember?

Clifford Snyder

Well, I was still in high school when I was 18, in March, so I got a deferment. Â And '43 was a tough year. Â I graduated in '43. Â My father died in May of '43. Â My two brothers were recalled back into the service"they had already spent a year in Fort Dix with the 156th Field Artillery out of Kingston, and they were released in June of '41. Â And then, of course, December 7th came along, and they were called back two weeks later. Â And Roy, my next-oldest brother, he wound up in the Fourth Armored, and my oldest brother, Eddie, he went to Fort"Fort Benning, Georgia, to train the 30-day wonders down there.

Clifford Snyder

And they got called back, so"and then it was just my mother and I, you know. Â And finally, I was reclassified in August"things didn't move very fast"to 1-A. Â And then my mother"we had a lot of property. Â My father bought up woodlots, and he sold logs and stuff like that. Â But we had no money, you know. Â It was during the Depression. Â And I got a six-month hardship deferment, and so I didn't get in till June of the following year, actually. Â But no, it was May [1944], actually, when I was recalled, or went in.

Interviewer

It must've been pretty hard on your mom.

Clifford Snyder

Oh, it was.

Interviewer

That year, too.

Clifford Snyder

The poor woman. Â She was a farm girl, you know, she was brought up on a farm, and Dad handled all the checkbooks and, you know. Â They didn't have much in the checking account, believe me. Â But it was hard for her, so I got work. Â I got a job in the paper mill in Saugerties, and I worked there until I went in the service.

Clifford Snyder

But it was hard for Mom. Â She finally wound up in a brassiere factoryâ€”can you believe that? [Laughter] Â On 9W in Saugerties. Â She loved to sewâ€”she was a seamstress. Â She made a lot of clothes, you know, and stuffâ€”quilts she made. Â She was really handy that way, so she did get a job before I left, and so.

Clifford Snyder

But that was a sad day when she took me down to the railroad track, you know. Â Not when I went in, because I went to Albany and came down, but I came home for Thanksgiving in â€™44, and when I left that day, I was sad, you know. Â She drove me downâ€”the West Shore was still all passengers and took me down to New York.

Clifford Snyder

And it was funny, tooâ€”in â€™41, December 7th occurred [when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese], and about February of â€™42, my two brothers were already gone. Â And I was home with my father, and he wasnâ€™t doing well, and my mother.

Clifford Snyder

And about ten oâ€™clock on a Saturday morning, an officer and a sheriff from Ulster County walked in the house, you know, and he said, â€œI would like to talk to you and your father and mother.â€ Â So I said, â€œFine.â€ Â Iâ€™d been outside chopping wood, actually, and they came around, and â€œIs your father and mother in?â€ Â I said, â€œYeah,â€ and I said, â€œtheyâ€™re inside.â€ Â â€œWeâ€™d like to talk to them.â€ Â I said, â€œSure,â€ so I took them in. Â They said, â€œWeâ€™d like to talk to you in private.â€ Â So they went in the living room, and they were in there about an hour, and they came out, and they left.

Clifford Snyder

And Dad said, â€œSon, I want to talk to you in the living room.â€ Â So I went in the living room with him, and he said, â€œThe reason theyâ€™re hereâ€”â€ I thought it was maybe something happened to one of my brothers, you know? Â He said, â€œThe reason theyâ€™re here, they want to set up a temporary observation post for airplanes.â€ Â And whereâ€”our home was a little on a knoll, and we could look towards the Catskill Mountains and look over across the river, so we had pretty good vision. Â â€œAnd weâ€™d like you to report planes to Mitchell Field, Long Island.â€ Â So I said, â€œWell, did you say â€”yesâ€™?â€ and he said, â€œYeah.â€ Â He said, â€œWeâ€™re going to do it.â€ Â I said, â€œHow are you going to do it 24 hours a day,â€ you know?

Clifford Snyder

So he said, â€œWell, weâ€™re going to try to recruit neighbors and, you know, with the three of us,â€ he said, â€œwe can probably do it.â€ Â He said, â€œItâ€™s only a temporary thing.â€ Â So in two days, the following Tuesday, the telephone company come in. Â They put a phone in. Â Wednesday, two guys from the Air Force, from Mitchell Field, came up with forms, and they set us up with forms, and theyâ€”they demonstrated how to use it, and they made us call into Mitchell Field. Â And so we had forms, so any observation of planes going, we had to give certain information. Â The height of what we saw, whether it was single-motor or if you could tell, you know, what direction they were going.

Clifford Snyder

So we had a temporary observation post, and we had our neighbors supporting us, you know, and we ran that until '43, June. The week I graduated from high school, they built a new observation post right in the village of Saugerties, and the village people ran it, then, from that point on.

Interviewer

So that was the Civil Defense?

Clifford Snyder

Civil Defense, yep.

Interviewer

Really.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah. I got 2,000 hours of credit. I got an armband with 2,000 [hours] use on it—yeah.

Interviewer

So I have one last question.

Clifford Snyder

We were pretty well involved with the war, I'll tell you.

Interviewer

I have one last question. So was it before you went in? I mean you had these, your two brothers were in the war, so you had some communication. But was it—you know, as a 19-year-old approaching going to war, was it very different from what you envisioned, or was it very—was it—did you pretty much imagine what it would be like?

Clifford Snyder

Yeah, with brothers being in the war, I had a pretty good idea, 'cause they'd already spent a year in Fort Dix, you know, and. And then Roy, he went with the Fourth Armored, and when my dad died, he was in Needles, California—they were training out there—and we couldn't even get in touch with him, the Red Cross couldn't, so he didn't find out my dad was dead until about four days after we buried him, you know. It was kind of a sad thing there. Eddie did get home—he was at Fort Benning, and we were able to get him home. But that was kind of sad, yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer

All right. So is there anything you'd like to add at all—anything I've missed that you—

Clifford Snyder

No, I think I pretty much covered the waterfront here.

The New Guy

Interviewer

Hey, Dadâ€”Dadâ€”what about when you first got assigned to the 83rd Infantry Division?
Â I donâ€™t think you were in Company C to begin with, were you?

Clifford Snyder

Well, no. Â They sent meâ€”they sent me to Company D, and it was funny. Â The platoon sergeantâ€™s name was Snyderâ€”Bob Snyder, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Â I never will forget. Â He later got a battlefield commission. Â And they sent me to Company D, another fellow and lâ€™”the two guys that they picked up that morning. Â And we said, â€œWait a minute, wait a minuteâ€”weâ€™re trained for Infantry.â€” Â I said, â€œWait aâ€”what are we doing in heavy weapons? Â We know nothing about them,â€” you know? Â So he said, â€œWell,â€” he said, â€œitâ€™s a hell lot safer here than it is in a rifle company.â€”

Clifford Snyder

And I said, â€œI donâ€™t care.â€” Â I said, â€œI donâ€™t want to carry this damn base around.â€” [Laughter] Itâ€™s about this big, you know, and after you fire a few rounds, I imagine it was about a foot in the ground, you know. Â Then you had to clean it, and it just so happened that Charlie Company had got two guys from the Air Force, but around that time, the Air Force was cutting back, â€™cause the air battles were disappearing, you know.

Clifford Snyder

And so they sent these two Air Force guys to Charlie Company, just by luck. Â I guess the Company Commander said, â€œHey, I donâ€™t want these guys. Â They donâ€™t know which end of the bullet?the gun the bullet comes out of,â€” you know?

Clifford Snyder

So they found out that two guys that got rifleâ€”rifle-trained people were sent down to D Company, you know, so we swapped. Â So it was this overnight deal, so I went from D Company to C Company. Â [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewer

Well, you mentioned this issue of replacements, that people were coming inâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

And out all the time. Â Was thatâ€”was that a problem, or was that okay?
Â Wasâ€”â€™cause lâ€™ve been talking to aâ€”

Clifford Snyder

At the Repo Depot, youâ€™re talking about?

Interviewer

Just generally. Â Like when you wereâ€”when you were in combatâ€”

Clifford Snyder

Oh, I got you, okay.

Interviewer

And new guys would come in.

Clifford Snyder

Yeah.

Interviewer

Was it easy to make them part of this "of the"

Clifford Snyder

No, it was very hard "very hard, "cause war is so different than training, you know? " I mean you "re out "in training you "re out there, and they "re just firing mortars over your head and artillery over your head, and you "re shooting at targets that pop up out of the ground, and all of a sudden, you know, these targets become real people, and they "re shooting back at you. " And it "s very hard to "and replacements came in so fast. " You know, a lot of times "there was two or three times where we lost maybe three or four men just in a Squad of 12, you know, and you get three or four new people.

Clifford Snyder

And you try to encourage the guys that had experience to work with these guys. " In foxholes, we always tried to double-up if we could, and, you know, to help them out. " But once they got experience, you know, once they got fired at a few times, then they realized what the situation was, you know, and it was either you or them. " And their theory changed fast. [Laughter]

Interviewer

Okay. " Well, thanks so much.

Clifford Snyder

Well, I appreciate it.

Interviewer

This is great. " This is really good.