

INTERVIEW WITH  
MAJ. GEN. BUTLER B. MILTONBERGER  
(Retired)

by  
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Donald Snoddy: Okay, I think we'll just start with your early life and where you were born...

Miltonberger: Well, I was born in North Platte on the 31st of August, 1897, and graduated from high school there. I had one year at the University School of Music, enlisted in the Army in 1916 until 1916 (?), with the local National Guard Unit, which was at that time Company E of the 5th Nebraska Regiment. I served 9, 10 months on the border at Llano Grand, Texas, and Brownsville and all up and down the Mexican border.

Donald Snoddy: Did you see any action along the border?

Miltonberger: Just occasionally a shot was fired, but it didn't amount to anything. Bandits, mostly. In those days the border was completely isolated; the ranchers had withdrawn and all the white people had left there. It was a virtually abandoned area. We came back to North Platte in February of 1917, and in anticipation of the war we knew was coming on, recruited to our full strength and waited the call here for the First World War. We were mobilized then again in July of 1917 and sent to Camp Cody, New Mexico in August of 1917. We were at Camp Cody, New Mexico, until the summer of 1918. This time we were shipped to Europe and the division which we belonged...we had been redesignated the 134th Infantry Regiment, of the 34th Infantry Division. But when we got to Europe, they broke up our division and we were used at the front as replacements. I joined the 4th Infantry Division and served the remainder of the war and two years of occupation in Germany with the 4th Infantry Division after the war. I came home when my father died and I then took---reorganized the company as Company D of the 134th Infantry in 1923 and was made a Captain at that time and I served---kept that company operating and was

promoted to Major in 1933 and was promoted to Lt. Colonel in 1940. During that period I attended a 6-months school at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in 1927 which is called the Company Officer's course and I successfully completed that. I completed the correspondence course of the Command General Staff School and the advanced course of the Command General Staff School. In November of 1940, I again went to Ft. Benning for the advanced course of the Staff Officer's course, which I graduated from that in March or April of 1941. This time I returned to the regiment, which was at that time at Camp Joseph T. Robertson in Arkansas. I was given command of the regiment then as a Lt. Colonel in May of 1941. And I competed successfully against quite a lot of opposition as I was a junior Lt. Colonel. A great many of the regular Colonels knocking around would liked to have had the regiment. Anyway, I kept it. And I was promoted after the maneuvers, the big maneuvers in the summer and the fall of 1941 in Arkansas and Louisiana, on November 11, 1941, I was promoted to full Colonel, which was a peacetime promotion, of course, and gave me quite a bit of seniority as it later proved.

I'm confining this talk to strictly military and leaving out any civilian pursuits because at that period that I'm talking about carried through the great depression and while I never did go hungry, I had many times it was a little hard to get along.

At any rate, I was home on leave; the first leave I'd taken when the war was declared, when they attacked our fleet occurred at Honolulu. I was here on leave. I returned in time to catch my outfit as they left for the West Coast. We were destined at that time and orders had already been issued, but not to us, but had been cut, that we were to go to the Philippines as part of the Corps of three divisions. It turned out, of course,

that no troops were sent to the Phillipines.

We were then assigned the guard on the West Coast and I had as a responsibility the area from Los Angeles north to the Santa Maria River. That was an interesting assignment. We were there approximately ten months, after which we were sent to Ft. Rucker, Alabama, for training for overseas for the European Theatre. We trained there and completed successfully the maneuvers in Tennessee at the conclusion of our training and in the winter of 1944, we also took a month of mountain training in West Virginia.

In May of 1944 we were shipped to England and, of course, we were a very junior division in the Isles. The divisions that were there before us, some of them as long as a year and a half. But during our stay in the last of May and before the invasion in June, Gen. Patton and Gen. Eisenhower came down to Cornwall where we were stationed to give us a review. I met both Gen. Patton and Gen. Eisenhower, I knew them both. They took that occasion to review the 134th Infantry Regiment from Nebraska and apparently, we put on a pretty good show for them. Gen. Eisenhower gathered the troops around him at the conclusion of our parade and exhibition, and told them that he was a Kansas boy and words to that effect and that he was very proud of this Nebraska Regiment and he souped the men up to no end; really gave them the business.

Shortly after that, after the invasion in June, we received orders to go overseas, over to France, which was unexpected because we figured there was a great many people ahead of us. One thing led to another, we finally crossed the beachhead on the 5th of July, and moved up as an in corps reserve and sat there in front of St. Lo for a couple of days in reserve and then were committed to combat, with the specific objective of capturing St. Lo.

That was a tremendous story, that St. Lo fight and I can't begin to cover it all. To begin with, we were green, new. The regiment itself was highly trained, highly motivated, and I have never seen such enthusiasm as that morning of the 15th of July when we jumped off. I insisted that we have that initial attack, a little different from the attacks that the rest of the outfits had been using. I wanted no preparatory artillery preparation. I, in the hedgerow country, I thought that it didn't do any good except to alert the enemy and get them in position and to resist us. So we kicked off without any preparation whatsoever at 5:45 on the morning of the 15th, and for the first initial few hundred yards, went like nobody's business. Just like a football team, those fellows just went crazy. We, our success in the succeeding three days stems right from that initial breakthrough of the advanced front line of the German front line. We, on the 18th, had patrols in the city of St. Lo, and so reported it. St. Lo was free of the enemy and we had it under control.

Now here comes the part that I wish to get on the record. I was a green commander, I wasn't as smart as some of my regular army contemporaries. And we no sooner had this city of St. Lo under control on the 18th than I was contacted by the division on my left, the 29th Infantry Division, a National Guard Division from Maryland and Virginia, but commanded by a regular that was also a publicity hound. He asked me for permission to send the detachment in to St. Lo for pictures, the purpose of taking pictures, and I granted this thing which time they mounted a procession of photographers, correspondents and they proceeded up the road, which was in our territory, which I granted permission to do, went into St. Lo and staged a big hurrah about how they captured the city and they policed up

a body off of the battlefield, where they got this body we never did find out, and they put it on a bier in front of the demolished cathedral and they took pictures of it and they called that Maj. Howie who had died in the advance on St. Lo, this you probably have; it wasn't Howie at all, and to this day, history records the fact that they had captured the city and they had photographic evidence of the fact they had. That taught me a great lesson. Not that I cared for the publicity for myself, but my troops; the regiment that I commanded didn't get the recognition that they deserved. It was a horrible thing to do to a bunch of young fellows... We lost about 900 people, killed or wounded in the attack on that city--- and they had this thing. Due to my inexperience, have these laurels of this battle taken from these young fellows just has griped me ever since. I have never been able to rectify this apprehension that history has on the capture of St. Lo. It's an impossibility. They had the photographic evidence and I can't compete with that.

We fought our way out after that incident. We occupied St. Lo, of course, I had the entire regiment in there, was there a million times myself for the next three days. Then we fought our way out of St. Lo, a ring of hills to the south and east of us, and to the Vire River. We were very successful, and during that fight, we lost two of our Lt. Colonels, two of our battalion commanders, and we lost Lt. Colonel Thomsen of Omaha who was killed and Lt. Colonel Denver Wilson of North Platte, was evacuated, and from then on, it seemed to be a steady progression of losing officers until the time the war ended, they had a complete turnover three or four times. And men, too, of course. We also participated after the Vire River fight, then we joined Patton's 3rd Army and moved to the south and

to the east around Paris. We participated in the Mortagne fight. We were in that thing four or five days and we started on our way east and south of Paris and it just was one fight after another, but nothing very serious until we reached the vicinity of the Moselle River. We had two or three very sharp fights before that, but the Germans seemed to get reorganized pretty well. And we hit the Moselle River, we had approached the river, had three battalions, I had the battalions abreast...had the first on the left, second in the middle, and the third on the right. And the commander of the second battalion, a young fellow, (by that time we'd reduced to these young fellows), he was 25 years old, West Point graduate, a very fine young man by the name of Frederick Roecker. And as he approached the town of Flavigny he found a bridge was in tact and he asked for permission to try to capture it, which I granted, and he made a wild dash for the bridge and captured it before it was blown up, but we couldn't get tanks, we couldn't get supporting elements down there. During the night, the Germans managed to get some engineers in to infiltrate into the bridge and blew up the bridge and the result was our battalion became isolated on the other side of the Moselle and we lost about half that battalion. We finally got the survivors withdrawn and reorganized the battalion, but that was the worst catastrophe we'd had in one unit up to that time. Col. Roecker himself was badly wounded.

We then, after a period of a day or two, made another attack across the river successfully this time and that was at the time we captured the city of Nancy. We were the first troops, of course, in Nancy; didn't have much opposition, only a little sniper fire. We then moved from Nancy east, fighting got tougher, Germans got better organized, things got tougher as we moved along until we got, (I won't try to go through all the little

fights we had,) but we got up to Germany itself, proper, the first week of December, and were engaged in a rather fierce fight with the Germans at that point; when the Bulge occurred and we were withdrawn and shipped hurriedly up to the Bastogne area. We stopped overnight at Metz, received replacements, by that time we were down to some companies were low as 25, 30 men to a company. We received green replacements from the United States and were sent on the next day in the Bulge fight. We were detached from the division and sent straight into Bastogne, being again the first really organized troops together with the 4th Armored Division task force. Lt. Col. Craig, who commanded the first battalion in the 134th Infantry, moved into Bastogne and took over the eastern defenses of the town of Bastogne while the 101st Airborne pulled back out. We fought around that town from then until the last of January. It was heavily wooded, forested, mountainous area and it was dog-eat-dog and our casualties were tremendous, as were the Germans'. But when we finally prevailed and broke their line, it was almost the 9th Army and we finished out the war with him, crossed the Rhine River and attacked. It wasn't bad, no, not much opposition. And finally wound up at the Elbe River in May, last of April of 1945. Approximately 45 miles from Berlin. We held that position until, I was, then we were sent back, I had been promoted, I guess maybe I had overlooked that, but in January-- the last of January in 1945, I had been promoted to Brigadier General. It was a combat promotion. And I had to leave the 134th Infantry Regiment, much to my sorrow I hated to leave the outfit, but I was assigned as assistant Division Commander of the 35th Division and was still close to my old outfit.

We moved back to the vicinity of Coblenz, Hanover first and then Coblenz as occupation troops and at that time I was ordered by Gen. Eisenhower

to accompany him to the United States on a victorious tour that he was making which I enjoyed very much. I was in the United States with him until July 12 of 1945 when I returned to my 35th Division which was then at Paris. We were getting ready for the invasion of Japan, reorganizing, getting the outfit ready to go. Then, of course, the ending of the war in Japan in August caused the break-up of the outfit and everybody, we sailed for the United States and the outfit was demobilized. I was assigned to the War Department staff and I served on a board in the War Department until Gen. Eisenhower took over as Chief of Staff. He then insisted that I become, take over the national reorganization and recruiting and establishing of the new National Guard. After which time he had given me to understand, and his word, that he would recommend that I be appointed Brig. General of the regular Army.

I served two years and reorganized the Guard. At the time I left, physically disqualified and retired, we had the guard well on its way to complete reorganization, a fact which I am very proud of.

I've lived in retirement ever since, with the constant battle against a pair of lungs that don't work too good, but with an outdoor life and taking care of myself, I get along pretty good. That very briefly is kind of an outline of what my career was from a military standpoint.

(Cuckoo clock in background while subject changed to Gen. Patton.)

Miltonberger: A friend of mine, I ran across him a good many times. And we had socialized together. First time I met him was in Louisiana. I was Lt. Colonel and commander of this 134th Infantry Regiment and I was bucking pretty hard to be given permanent command of the Regiment and become a Colonel. Georgie, at that time, commanded a kind of a mixed outfit, armored and horse cavalry. He was additionally a cavalryman, of course. And when we butted heads someplace down in Louisiana and I got

lucky and chewed him up a little bit, after the thing was over, we got together and he was a little sour about it, but he congratulated me. He was very nice about it. That's the first time, of course, I met him personally. I met Gen. Eisenhower down there several times. Well, after our review in Cornwall, Gen. Eisenhower and Gen. Patton had been down there in the area in which the review was held by train and they had a special car, of course. It was parked on the siding and after it was over they invited me to their car for a little conversation and a drink and I spent maybe an hour, an hour and a half in there with them before they had to leave and had a very enjoyable time. And I know now that they had me in there for the purpose of sizing me up from several other standpoints because before that my contact with them had been strictly impersonal and had been in the field and they had no opportunity to look me over close. And I know now that that's the reason they had me in there.

Well, I formed a very, which afterward proved quite close, friendship with both of them because eventually in the front lines, Patton was always a pain in my neck, he was always down there raising a ruckus about this and that and the other. He was a darned good commander, don't think he wasn't. That's what you need, people down there looking over personally. Gen. Eisenhower chose me to go to the States with him as a combat representative. I appreciated that very much. I always thought that was a very fine gesture. It came like a bolt out of the blue, I had no idea that he was going or that I should be chosen. It turned out to be a very fine experience.

Patton was a fine commander. He was bombastic and foul and he'd dressed himself in a theatrical manner...all for effect...he studied it. He was smart enough to know it had its impact on the average American, so his foulness of mouth didn't quite have the impact that he thought it had, because the

average young man in America wasn't quite that foul and they didn't quite appreciate the way he used his words. He used them in a sort of inappropriate manner. However, it was a minor fault that could be easily overlooked. He had undoubtedly high morale and whenever you get men to say proudly that they belong to the 3rd Army, which our people always did, you know that somebody's instilling a lot of personal pride in, unit pride in, and that's what he did. Another thing, he was always visible, that's good for a commander to do, he was always visible in the front lines, he was visible where people can see him. That's good and he's the only Army commander that I know of that ever did do that since the Civil War.

Donald Snoddy: Why don't we go back to the Argonne Forest in the First World War.

Miltonberger: You mean, oh. Well, my experiences in the First World War were very limited as far as combat was concerned because, in the first place, I was sent up to the 4th Infantry Division as a Sgt. and I joined the 47th Infantry Regiment towards the tail end of the war and from my viewpoint as a platoon leader and way down in the hierarchy, I wouldn't say that I had much comment to make except that it was just damned good and tough and cold. By that time, as you may recall, it was getting late in the fall as far as any personal recollections is concerned, I just don't have any particularly. I remember the little towns, Commercy, for instance, in France, and my memories, after the war when I, it was two years I spent in the Army of occupation, are much more vivid than they are in the 30 or 40 days I spent in combat in that war, which is very limited. So I just don't have anything except...

Don Snoddy: Maybe we can cover the time you spent in the occupation Army.

Miltonberger: That was more or less enjoyable. Of course, 50 years is a long time and in some 52 years, since that happened and I was young and very impressionable and the German people impressed me considerable. I had, of course, excellent opportunity to spend quite some time in France and to get to know the French people and, as being young and raised in a medium class American home, the German cleanliness and their organization of life appealed to me considerably. From that standpoint, I always had a great respect for the German nation and the German people. They, of course, they have a, a German has a national characteristic that is so hard to breed out of them. As the Englishman says, "they're either at your throat or at your knee," and they are a whole lot that way all right, but my time spent in Germany after the First World War was entirely enjoyable. I was, in the first place, I was transferred as a 1st Sgt. to the headquarters of the 4th Infantry Division. When you move from a combat outfit, a line outfit, up to a more or less exalted atmosphere of a Division, why your privileges and your contacts and all that become entirely different. We had more opportunity for enjoyment because we weren't bound by any training regulations. So, while we had some duties, for instance, I'd catch a duty as a military police for 30 days, well I didn't enjoy that too much, it is an experience, I'll tell you. But we got to travel a lot and I was describing it to the head of the school awhile back the enormous number of young people in Germany at that time who were, and I presume that that happens after every war, who were orphans and they would range anywhere from 9 to 13, 14, 15 years old and they were the toughest little rats you ever seen in your life. They'd lived by their wits for years, they'd steal anything, they'd commit murder, they'd do anything. And we used to have to round

those people up, those little kids and we'd get a compound full of them, 15 or 20 of them, and we'd endeavor to turn them back over to the Germans. If you know, during that period of the occupation, we were roughly bounded by the Rhine River and on the right bank of the Rhine was Germany proper and on the left bank was the occupation areas, the French, English and the Americans. But we'd endeavor, and I'd accompanied two or three of those convoys, great big 6x6's full of those kids to turn over to the Burgermeister of the town on the other side of the river. That was an experience, I want to tell you, because they were really rough. Things in that nature is about all that stayed with me over this period of years. Life was much more elementary in those days. We didn't have the aeroplane. We had airplanes, but they were extremely fragile. You didn't see them like you see airplanes now. We had motor equipment, we also had, the Germans had mules and horses, everybody had mules and horses. We had motor equipment, we had big developed motor van truck, a 4-wheel drive affair they called a quad, probably because of the 4-wheel drive, and the French at that time had as laborers, we called Annamites (sic) (Annamese), and I know now that they were southeastern people that were from Vietnam that they were called Annamites (sic). They were short and oriental and the American government turned over 75 or 100 of these quads, trucks to the French army and they sent these Annamites (sic) up to drive these quads away. Being 4-wheel drive in those days, the 4 wheels, when you turned the front wheels to the right, the rear wheels turned to the left to throw you around, throw you, even good American drivers. We had a pontoon bridge across the Moselle River and they turned these trucks over to the Annamites (sic) and I'll never forget that sight as they started down the hill to hit that bridge to drive back to wherever they were going with these trucks and one by one they drove off the pontoon into the river,

one by one. It must have been the most god-awful scene I ever saw in my life. And you could sympathize with them because when they'd turn the front wheels, the rear wheels would turn, and not being too good a drivers, well, I guess there must have been 25 or 30 of those trucks in the river before they finally got it stopped. That isn't a very exciting reminiscence. Those things stay with you over the years.

Don Snoddy: Did your acquaintance with the Germans in the occupation after World War I help you when you went back to fight in World War II?

Miltonberger: Yes, and if you'd be interested in, to me, a very interesting thing. We were quartered in a castle that belonged to the family of the von Bethmann-Hollweg family which is a very prominent German family, and Bethmann-Hollweg, one of them was, they call them premiers in Germany, anyway he was towards the end of the war that prominent, and we were quartered in this castle which was on top of a hill at a place called Viederbrising. That was just a few miles down the river from Coblenz. At that time we had moved all the occupants of this castle out and there wasn't any of the owners around that it belonged to. And they, of course, owned great quantities of land adjoining this castle. I lived in this castle, had quarters in there for over a year and became very familiar with the whole thing, so after this second war was over and we came back to occupy the area around Coblenz, why as soon as I could get time, I had my staff car and driver and aide and I said, "By God, we're going up to see my old quarters up at the castle at Viederbrising." So we drove up there and when we got up to the castle, the old matriarch, the old madame, von Bethmann-Hollweg, was there in residence with her servants and the castle was a going affair, but it had been hit with a couple of bombs, not hurt badly. So I requested an audience. (Of course, we weren't supposed to fraternize much with them) and the old lady received me in her, in the castle in the parlor room where she received

visitors, and she spoke excellent English, of course, and I introduced myself and tried to explain to her. It was incomprehensible to her that I, as a Sgt., had lived in this castle during the First War and had come back as a General. She just couldn't believe it. I had a long 2 or 3 hour conversation & it was a very interesting conversation with her because she was bitterly anti-Nazi, she had been, and she said, "Just to prove it to you, my three sons all served as privates in the German Army," and she said, "You could be very sure that if I hadn't been anti-Nazi, that they would had to do that." I was quite sure of that, too. I asked her if she was being well taken care of. Yes, she, but she was bothered by some vandals, a little vandalism and I said, "well, I'll put a guard on the place and so you won't be bothered any more, what else do you need?" And she said, "Do you have any American cigarettes?" and I said, "Sure and I gave her a cigarette." I pulled a pack out, I smoked in those days, and I gave her a pack and she just, well, she glommed onto those, she never smoked cigarettes. She was a girl of the old school. Immensely wealthy woman, still immensely wealthy. Probably dead a long time ago now. But she had three sons and only knew of one that was alive, she had no idea where the others were. Typical of all the families of Germany. That was one interesting experience I had.

Donald Snoddy: What was your feeling as far as the idea to invade Russia right after the Second World War and take care of them while the Army was still over there?

Miltonberger: No, we knew that the Russians were, let us say, were outwitting our political leaders, we knew that. I believe the average American all knew that Roosevelt was playing with fire. Truman went along with it. But as far as any combative instincts against the Russian

people, I don't actually remember that there was any kind of a idea of any type. No, I don't think anybody ever gave it a thought. And the reason (the Germans) they hammered and hammered the last year or so when they saw they were losing the war was to try to create a deviousness. And to point out, which is entirely true, to point out the troubles the world would have with Bolshevism, with Communism where they'd have prevailed and, true enough, been some plenty of trouble. Because of two ideologies, it's just absolutely almost impossible to live side by side, but I always say the German propaganda in various forms are probably responsible for a lot of that.

Donald Snoddy: Was the German propaganda that they waged against the Americans, was that very effective?

Miltonberger: Now, are you talking about their battlefield propaganda to the soldiers? I've got a lot of examples of that in those books and I would say that they provided tremendous amusement and entertainment from the standpoint of entertainment, that's the part they played. Their pictures of nude women and they had one of them that was in there, it said that this gal probably entertaining the..you know, all that sort of thing at home and all that sort of thing. And probably it's your wife and somebody, that was just amusement, that's all, awful crude.

Donald Snoddy: Prior to the Second World War I noticed that you took part in the Omaha riots and the Republican River flood which brings us back to the home front, but I'd like to get you to talk about those, if you would.

Miltonberger: Well, I remember that very well, it was 1935. The Omaha street car riots and at that time the street car people went on a strike and as I recall it was the strike that went from bad to worse, finally a lot of vandalism, a lot of destruction. According to the lights in those days, which is probably today would be passed over as inconsequential, at any rate, we were mobilized and I commanded a battalion, 1st battalion of the 134th

Infantry then, and I moved in to Omaha ahead of the battalion. They brought the four companies of my battalion, in fact they mobilized the entire regiment, but they only used my battalion down in South Omaha. As a matter of fact, we done, our battalion done all the dirty work, the other battalions stayed up in reserve in North Omaha. We got, the first thing I done was close the saloons, of course, and then we found out the trouble makers, the homes of the trouble makers, and I set pretty hard on those people and these homes, dragged these birds out by their ears, put them behind bars for awhile, let things cool down and had no more further trouble, we had no trouble at all. Gov. Cochran came down and was very congratulatory about it, he thought it was a good job, so that's about all there was to it. Didn't amount to anything. Nobody got hurt. I got out of there quick as I could. Don't like that kind of duty very well.

Donald Snoddy: What about the flood? Just minor guard work?

Miltonberger: Yes, you, I had alot of that stuff, had to guard against looting you know when people abandoned their homes, there was always some of those characters from the other side of the tracks that want to get in there, they'll steal anything they can move, feather pillows and/or anything else.

Donald Snoddy: Did you take part in liberating any prison camps? I know I'm hitting the more glamorous sides of the war, but I think we can maybe dig back into the other part of the war.

Miltonberger: Well, I tell you, yes, we, our episodes as far as the true Nazi, the true Hitlerite and his atrocities, we found them towards the end of the war, we found them most everywhere. Now, for instance, they started moving prisoners back, of course, or moved them ahead of the Russians, or something, they moved them one way or the other, to try to get a, and then at the when the guards would find there was all up with I have one

instance in mind and I can't even tell you where it occurred, but we ran onto it. It was a big barn type of a structure into which they had herded two or three hundred of these prisoners into it and set it on fire. When we came on it it was still smoldering a little bit and smelled to high heaven and these dead bodies stacked one on the other. That wasn't an interment camp or anything else, that was on the spur of the moment by a bunch of people who had lost all sense of morals and sense of decency. Now, you understand, that wasn't the German people, that was the dregs of their society of which we could dreg, we could get that out of our society, too, don't ever mistake yourself. We've got people, lower edge of our society, who would do the same thing if you put uniforms on them and paid them enough money and gave them the idea that, they'd just do it, that's all. So, as far as atrocities are concerned, I visited Belsen and I got just for a manner of information, and--visit one, I didn't want to see any more at all. And when you get to cleaning up after a mess like that, I want to tell you that's a god-awful thing to do. And the best thing to do when you get into what we did, we always went to the nearest town and commandeered all the German civilians we could get with all the equipment, horses, and stuff, dig big trenches and dump these people into them, that's all you could do. Just get rid of the smell in the dirt. But as far as pinning the evidence on anybody, that wasn't our job. I presume our C.I.D. people came along afterwards and then by interrogation by following, getting the train orders or something, they may have been able to later pin that on some individuals. Whether they did or not, I don't know.

Snoddy: How well did you get along with war correspondents?

Miltonberger: Fine. I found them alright except one and I won't mention his name, but he's well-known in Nebraska as a radio and television,

radio commentator, didn't have any television in those days. Radio commentator. And this character came up to me towards the last end of the war at the time I was general officer then and I had known him in the states and knew him in Nebraska and he was a very capable individual. And he said, "I haven't got anything to take pictures with." Something happened to his camera. I had two or three confiscated German Kodaks and I gave him a good one to use and he didn't have any transportation and I had a Porsche, a big German Porsche, you know, a beautiful automobile, I told him he could use that for awhile. He wanted to set up a broadcast for the home folks, I don't know whether they had a recording or what, but he had, they had in those days, they had some sort of a machine that they could record, so we sent him back to the artillery people and the artillery people got him all set and he made a very dramatic recitation that this big battle was going on, then they'd pull the cord and they'd fire a couple of 105's see and give him some emphasis, and you know that dirty dog then folded up his tents and he left. He took my Porsche and my Kodak and went back to Paris and he got \$5000 for that automobile. He sold it. And came back to the states and made a great to-do, he made several tapes of some kind and made quite a hit around here. We must have done everything we could to bust his balloon, but we found out later he had cancer and he died within a year or so after that. That's the only dramatic experience I had with war correspondents. But now that the majority of those war correspondents are, the only thing that they demanded of you was to be on the square with them. I discovered that you could safely tell you anything you wanted to tell them, anything, secret or anything else. And if you emphasized anything, that was not for publication, it never was in the publication. My

experience with them, they're a fine class of people.

Snoddy: Well, they claim that that's what got Patton into all of his trouble. Was it...

Miltonberger: Patton got into his troubles himself. They tried to cover Georgie up on that slapping instance, in fact they did cover him up for two or three months. You see, they didn't break it for two or three months. Drew Pearson is the one that broke it. Otherwise, if that sniff hound hadn't got onto it, I don't believe anybody would say anything about it. It really was a small incident as far as the war was concerned.

Snoddy: Of course, you're acquainted, I presume, with General Wood.

Miltonberger: Well, he was one of my,...he commanded a battalion in the Army. Very fine battalion commander.

Snoddy: I'd like you to talk as much about him as you like.

Miltonberger: I don't know whether this will go on tape or not, but Wood was wounded, and I just don't recall where, we had a pretty tough fight, it was east of Nancy and he was a battalion commander, had the 3rd battalion. He got word to me that he was wounded, they evacuated him and I met the ambulance as they were taking him back and I said, "Where did they hit you Warren," and he pointed down to the lower part of his body. I said, "My God, man, I need you too bad, you don't stay in that hospital too long." He said, "I'll be alright," he said, (I was Col. then,) he said, "I'll be alright, Col. and I'll let you know how I feel." In two or three days I got a note from Warren, and he said, "Dear Colonel, I can still sing bass. Yours truly, Warren." He's got a great sense of humor, that fellow. And a very fine combat commander, very fine. He carried out his orders enthusiastically, he never lost his enthusiasm, one of the finest battalion commanders I ever had. I think a lot of Warren.

Well, of course we had a, as I have said before, the regiment was highly trained and highly motivated, and it, in my estimation, was one of the finest trained regiments I ever seen, ready for any job that might come up. Initially, it seemed to me that the 134th Infantry Regiment always seemed to get these special jobs, jobs that required extra effort and extensive effort. We were assigned to the 19th Corps, the division was, but the regiment, the 134th Infantry Regiment was assigned to the, in reserve, with the 19th Corps. General Corlette, who commanded the 19th Corps, required me personally to be in with him at his headquarters at all times. They'd had a stalemate in the 29th Division on the left and 30th Division on the right had been attacking at St. Lo and they'd become so weary that they hadn't made progress. They would get an order to attack but they wouldn't attack, especially the 29th Division because they'd been one of the assault divisions which had been just fought out, that's all. We stayed in reserve to be used by General Corlette in the 19th Corps whenever he deemed necessary. He called me in his office, or in his tent, on the morning of the 14th and he said they couldn't break this line, the German line, and then he said, "We're gonna have to put some fresh people in, some fresh regiment," and he was going to commit the 134th Infantry Regiment. We were on the end of the assembly area and I told him that I thought we could get the job done. "Allright," he said, "You relieve, on the night of the 13th, 14th you relieve the regiment of the 29th

division that is holding that line and be prepared to jump off in attack on the morning of the 15th of July." I assigned as the attack battalions, the first and 2nd battalion, 1st on the right, 2nd battalion on the left and third battalion in reserve, commanded by Col. Thomsen of Omaha, 1st battalion commanded by Col. Boatsman of Beatrice, and the second battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Denver Wilson of North Platte. I went up to make arrangements for relief on the night of the 14th, this 29th division outfit, and the low morale and utter defeat that I encountered up there in this outfit really dismayed me considerably. They had been fought out, as I said before, they just absolutely lost all their desire to do anything. We took over from them, relieved them much to their relief and were prepared, made reconnaissance on the day of the 14th, ready to jump off on the 15th. The objective in our immediate front was Hill 122, which is a misnomer because a hill in that flat country would be an elevation of 50 to 100 feet, it didn't amount to anything, and that's what this Hill 122 was. That happened to be within the province of the 1st battalion on the right of our attack line. They jumped off with the 2nd battalion on the morning of the 15th without any artillery preparation and made such a success of the attack that by the time night came, they were on Hill 122. Really tremendous sensation within up and down the line of the American Army because this was the first break that the Army had had in the fighting in the hedgerows.

The break that afterwards developed into the capture of St. Lo and the breaking of the line and releasing of the 3rd Army to push through and make their big envelopment that they made around behind Paris. But anyway, Col. Boatsman reported that afternoon that he had his people up on 122 and I directed that everybody dig in, hold the ground they'd gained and be prepared to attack the next morning. As far as Hill 122 was concerned, that in a nutshell is just what happened. The fighting, as I'd said before, from the time of the jump-off, to the capture of St. Lo amounted to about four days, the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, although the 18th of July was not so badly--that's the day we occupied with St. Lo. We had suffered somewhere in the neighborhood of 900 casualties in those four days, killed and wounded. But we did accomplish, as we did every time after that in every situation assigned to us, we accomplished the mission, we certainly accomplished that.

Snoddy: Where did you go after you left St. Lo?

Miltonberger: Well, you misunderstand. We occupied St. Lo for some days. When we made our attack, we had to attack out of St. Lo because the Germans held the high ground to the south and east of us and south of us. And to get out of St. Lo, we had to attack out of St. Lo. So when we, I don't remember, it was 2 or 3 days we occupied St. Lo, we had out CP (command post) in a graveyard in the tomb of a, a deep dug tomb which made it very handy because the stone coffins made ideal desks to work

on in this big tomb. At any rate, when we attacked out of there, that was when we attacked toward the Vire River and made the Vire River campaign and at the time after we crossed the Vire River, and that wasn't a tremendous, the Germans were retiring before us all the time, and it wasn't a tremendous fight, it was, we suffered some casualties, but we managed to progress all the time. The thing I remember most about that was something that isn't talked about too much. We had one incident happen. During that attack, Col. Thomsen was severely wounded in the head and evacuated, and I didn't have anybody to take over the battalion right handy but a Colonel who had been assigned to the 35th Division from Missouri came up, a Lt. Col. from the replacement system, and he was only on a visit. I asked him if he would like to take that battalion, and he jumped at the chance and he was a very aggressive individual. He was only with us three days. He took over the battalion during the attack and at the end of the third day, he was severely wounded himself, he still is in terrible bad shape, the last I heard he was still alive. The outstanding thing that happened during him commanding his battalion, he also had a replacement captain and during one of his attacks, this captain, I don't know what his name was, lost his nerve and turned and started to run and the Colonel tried to stop him and he wouldn't stop and the Colonel had to kill him. This shocked me to no end, but it was one of those things that was happening in front of all the men, he had to take some action and that's the action he took. But the Vire, in a nutshell,

that's all about the Vire River Campaign, it didn't amount to much.

Snoddy: Now, what about the counter-offensive that the Nazi's put up around Mortagne?

Miltonberger: That was a, the Mortagne fight was an awfully disjointed affair. Actually, we were enroute, we were in column in motor vehicles, 6 x 6 trucks, and we were moving as part of General Patton's 3rd Army around to the west after the break through and so we could come around to the south end of Paris. We were taken off our trucks, thrown into this Mortagne fight as we went by it. We just happened to stumble into this thing and that was actually a very strong, coordinated German attack, attempting to break us in two there. I don't know if I'm expressing it very plainly or not, but it came as a complete surprise to us because our objective as far as just as the column was moving towards Le Mans and we were to assemble at Le Mans and prepare to move on to the east when we hit this fight at Mortagne and they jerked us off the trucks and turned our faces into the fight and the first thing you know we were engaged completely. As far as the mission was to bump this German attack which was ahead of us, a spearhead affair, one of Adolph Hitler's brainstorms. Really, it didn't have too much volume to it, but it was a vicious damned thing. It had isolated a battalion of the 30th division, surrounded them and isolated them, just a confused damned thing. We got in there and it took us about 5 or 6 days to straighten that thing out, but we finally got it straightened

out. This battalion was relieved and we went on about our mission. Mortagne, to the 30th division and to the overall American commanders, Eisenhower and Patton, probably had more jolting power than it did to us on the ground. To us it was more or less just a confused damned fight, that's all. We didn't know what the big picture was.

Snoddy: Were you in on the time when Patton was apparently moving head over heels through France and trying to get to Germany and he ran out of gasoline because Montgomery apparently had taken it all for another offensive?

Miltonberger: I remember that very well. Yes, we were going, going great guns, doing very well. Again, we didn't know what the big picture was and suddenly we found ourselves without supplies. I remember it so well because it was on my birthday, the 31st of August, that we got stopped. During that period, I would really have to look it up to know the exact location of where we stopped, but we were pretty well towards the east. During the period, And I knew it would be some time, as I recall, several days, I set back and got our band instruments up and got our band together and played a few concerts for the troops. It was probably the only break we had from the fighting in the years when we were up front. Also, the French civilians enjoyed it very much. Our band was very good.

Snoddy: By that time, were you taking very many German prisoners?

Miltonberger: Yes, and the first big haul we took was a

place called Joigny, J-O-I-G-N-A-Y (sic). That was the 22nd to the 25th of August. That was just prior to the slow-down. No, that slow-down must have happened just after that, when we ran out of gasoline. But anyway, we were assigned a mission to go up and occupy the area of Joigny. German morale had dropped to practically zero there and we had isolated, (which after proved to be the greater part of) well, it was one full German infantry division, or regiment. And our people, well, our S-2 section, our intelligence section, captured a full 500 singlehanded, they just turned themselves in. At any rate, they brought the German Colonel, commander of this regiment, in to see me, and as my remembrance of that is he was a big, strong, tall, good-looking officer, well-dressed and his name was Peterson, which I never will forget. When they brought him into my office I had established in a schoolhouse there, why he came and gave me the uplifted hand, the German salute, and I sent him back out again and I said, "You're a professional soldier and an officer and we don't use that kind of salute, that's a political salute. You go back out and come back in and give me the regular military salute," which he did and he had a half smile. So we got along famously and he told me that, I was interested in the fact that in the German Army a man by the name of Peterson would be apparently a high ranker and he said yes, his whole family had been officers in the German army, professional officers and they had, during one of the early 15th, 16th Century, somewhere back there, the Swedes were on the prowl and the prod and they had made an attack over into Prussia and some

of their people stayed there and the name of Peterson was handed down and that's the way it was. Very interesting and I had an interesting conversation with him. He was thoroughly disgusted with Hitler and the leadership of the war, but was still thoroughly a German officer.

Snoddy: Would you say right off that the discipline in the German army was much greater than it was in the American army?

Miltonberger: Well, the rigidity was, yes. Their discipline was something that was entirely different than ours. Our discipline to a great measure was intelligent discipline, it was based on the intelligence of the individual. We had to have absolute obedience and I don't know what we had was just as stiff an obedience as the German army did, but as far as rigidity of their discipline, they were far ahead of us, but we maintained all the for instance, when you're speaking of discipline, and I can't speak for the modern army, Vietnam, but on the front line and under combat conditions, we maintained our military manners. It was very seldom that we ever deviated. We were taught certain procedures to follow and certain methods of addressing each other and it was just as imperative for me to obey that as it was for a private soldier. We also were taught, that's the reason our army was the best read and most intelligent army as far as a non-commissioned officer and officers was concerned. That's the reason we went to school. Whenever you, for instance, and this comes under the head of discipline, issue an order, no matter if it was an attack order, there was a form. For instance, I remember even yet I could issue an attack order and has to be in

five paragraphs, too. It's designed for that paragraph, for instance the last paragraph, would cover your communications, where your CP (command post) would be, where you would be, and so on.

In other words, over the years, they developed these procedures, these discipline procedures so that everybody acted exactly the same. If I got an attack order from the unit on my left, it would be exactly the same as I'd write it, or an administrative order or anything else. Now that's carrying it just a little bit too far, but that's the way it was. I don't think, I don't know, but I don't think that the German army was intelligently disciplined except in that completely higher echelon. But this that I'm speaking about applies to our lower echelon and because of that, our Army functioned extremely well. And I suspicion that it still functions that way with draftees, with people who are let's say, maybe 40 or 50% of them, just their heart isn't in it, don't want it, but I still think it functions good.

Snoddy: I think the time's come to get back to that 2nd battalion on the Moselle River bridge.

Miltonberger: Col. Roecker and their moving force tried to ask permission to try to capture this bridge, which I gave him. Well, yah, I can give you the dope on that now. We came up to this, as I told you, with three battalions abreast, the first on the left, the second in the middle, and the third on the right. And as Roecker came, Col. Roecker came to where he could see the highway bridge across the river, he called back and asked permission from me to see if he could hit it and I give

him permission. What happened, of course, was that we couldn't get the support up to him fast enough and they got the battalion isolated on the other side, then they (the enemy) blew up the bridge, either by artillery or got infiltrated, blew the bridge and left them isolated over there. Nothing to do but withdraw them, I couldn't get tanks, I couldn't get any support or any help across to them and the only way they could withdraw was to wade and swim the river, which they did. I don't remember how many people we got out of there, but we didn't get too many. The battalion had to be re-organized. Then we had to re-organize our 2nd battalion, from the battalion commander on down 'cause we lost the battalion commander in that fight, although he did return later, wounded three times with us ... That Flavigny fight in detail, was quite a fight. It didn't last very long, but it was a vicious damned thing and what happened was this. When we made that crossing, practically the whole 3rd Army had moved up to the Moselle River on a broad front and were going to cross the river all at the same time. What happened was when we jumped that bridge, the Germans knew they had to isolate that battalion or we would build a good bridge head there. They moved their artillery, they moved a lot of their help down there to stop that and it made it pretty easy crossing for the people farther up the stream. As a matter of fact, some of them crossed the river without any trouble at all because we had attracted all this. We didn't find that out 'till after several weeks after this happened. As a matter of fact, General Patton told me so himself at luncheon one time after

that and he commended the outfit very highly for this action, said it looked like we lost a lot of people out of our own regiment, but we saved a lot of lives up and down the line by the action. So, it kind of made us feel a little better, but it was a horrible jolt because we had been used to winning and we had never got set back on our heels before. That didn't last very long because we moved in on Nancy right after that. Matter of fact, General Patton talked to me the day before we went into Nancy and he was very desirous at getting the city, a big city, Nancy is a big city, you know, comparable to Omaha. Although we didn't meet much opposition going in there, we hit another river on the other side to cross and we had to stop and re-organize and consolidated before we could attack Nancy, which we did. My headquarters was in the Hotel Tierra in Nancy, and I have been invited since twice to come back to Nancy and celebrate with them the liberation and I haven't been able to do it. These people in Nancy sent a very highly complimentary letter about me and the outfit to the, at that time, War Department, which is on file in my filing drawer. One interesting, to me, facet of this Nancy fight. We had a fine young Colonel who, from the 6th Armored Division attached to us, with his tanks, and he was quite a prankster. He spoke French exceedingly well, and I didn't know anything about this except that I knew I attracted the attention of a lot of Frenchmen and he gave me some fancy Indian name and told them that I was a Sioux Indian, which gave me a lot of prestige and a lot of attention from the French, all

unknown to me. I didn't know anything about it until several weeks after that, but I enjoyed it nevertheless. That's about the only thing about the Nancy affair that I,...from then on it was the fights, dog eat dog, after we had left Nancy heading east.

Snoddy: How much help did you receive from the underground?

Miltonberger: Quite a lot, although you couldn't depend on them too much. I have evidence in pictures, for instance, when we hit Nancy, they presented themselves to me as the Underground and they, of course, the people rose up and got rid of the mayor and all the officials that the Germans had appointed, but they brought in their own staff and the fellow they brought in, in some higher functionary position, we took pictures, you see, the National Geographic was up there and took pictures of them. They had a feature edition on me in National Geographic in 1944. They took pictures of me with some of these leading French politicians and we compared these pictures, some pictures we got from the Intelligence files, German pictures had taken, and here was this one individual who had been picked by the Germans as the leader in the community and had himself stuck right in the forefront of the pictures when they were taken. We didn't know that at the time, but as soon as we found it out, of course, we chopped him off at the pockets, but you couldn't, as far as the fighting people were concerned, and the Underground, that was, they were universally pretty good, although it was hard to, unless you had an interpreter handy; it was hard to understand what they

were talking about. The political underground was so permeated with Communists and I say untrustworthy elements, I just wouldn't have anything to do with them.

Snoddy: We move on to Sugar Loaf Hill and at Meurthe River which was the one across, that you had to cross after you left Nancy, is that correct?

Milton: That's right in Nancy. Sugar Loaf Hill is quite a story. As long as we're after stories, there's a story about every one of them. That's your friend, General Wood, he commanded the outfit that released Sugar Loaf Hill. Sugar Loaf Hill was attacked and captured by our 1st Battalion under Col. Boatsman and was occupied that night and the Germans made a counterattack and kicked them off of there early the next morning. The result was that we had a battalion that had been kicked off of that Sugar Loaf Hill and had to re-organize and it was up to me to recapture that. We had a Lt. Gen. Eddy, Manton S. Eddy, who commanded the 12th Corps we were fighting under then and he came up to my headquarters at Nancy and he said, "We have to have that hill, we've got to have it. I want you to recapture it." I said, "Well, we'll do that this afternoon, General." He said, "You can't do that this afternoon." I said, "We sure can," he said, "I'll bet you a fifth of Scotch that you can't do that this afternoon."

I gave the attack problem to Col. Wood with his 3rd battalion and he organized the attack in the space of a couple hours and he had some tanks, a section of tanks attached to him and they made one of those dashing attacks on this hill and just in a hoot and a holler they went right over it and recaptured it for us. I was very happy about that when it was reported to me. As a matter of fact, I was under OP (observation post) and watched this thing, it was done very well. I called Col. Eddy right away before sundown and I told him we had the hill back now and that he owed me. Well, he never paid me until 10 years afterwards. He was down here in command down at the Commander General's staff school at Ft. Leavenworth, and he, somebody from North Platte was down there and he said, "Oh, by the way, I owe you a fifth of scotch," and he gave it to him and sent it to me. But that's about the story of Sugar Loaf Hill. Very fine job of Colonel Wood.

Snoddy: You got into the forest then and how does the forest fighting differ from the hedgecrows?

Miltonberger: Where do you mean?

Snoddy: Well, around Gremecey.

Miltonberger: Oh, you misunderstand. Those forests are not continuous forests. They farm those woods, those trees are farmed. So, you get into a forest, you just get into a tree farm. Outside of giving cover to the enemy or cover for yourself, why that doesn't amount to much. I don't recall it being much of an obstacle.

Don: How did the winter weather effect the overall situation?

Miltonberger: Well, that was something that I hate to cry about, but it seems we needed overshoes awful bad, after the last of September. You see, it rains a lot in that country in the fall, your fall cold rains. We had a great trouble with the men's feet, trenchfoot, you call it. But although you're not in trenches, it's the same thing. If they don't take care of their feet, for the average man to do, well, you're in trouble, and we did not have overshoes. And later on we did not have what they call the shoe pack for the snow. And the trouble was the quartermaster shipped great quantities of overshoes, but the rear areas, all of them had to have overshoes and they were the first ones out and they got them. And by the time they'd driven to the front, our people didn't get them. And speaking of footwear, and this gripes me to this day, after the winter broke and after the Bulge fight was over and after the spring started, which in that country started breaking up about in February, all the winter footwear sure did pour in on us. We had an awful lot of it and an awful lot of it was thrown in the dump brand new because it just wasn't any use to us. That's the story of the footwear.

Snoddy: What was Red Hill?

Miltonberger: Morhange. The Germans made a very determined stand in the vicinity of Morhange and we weren't in the attack echelon at that time I recall I've got another picture in this book taken of Morhange. The division

commander come up and pinned something on me, I don't remember what the hell it was, anyway, Morhange owes its prominence to the tremendous fight in the first World War between the Germans and the French at Morhange, I remember that anyway. But we had to shake loose an armored division got up there and got into fighting and the way the winter weather started in, rain started in and the mud got heavy and, damn, they got stalled and the first thing I knew, we called the firemen to come up there and break that thing loose, which we did. But Morhange doesn't ring any good remembrance of any fighting, particularly. It was a little beyond Morhange that we got our first Medal of Honor, in the fight out of Morhange and I think it was out of Morhange that Col. Wood was wounded, too. But anyway, a man in my 2nd battalion got his first Medal of Honor in the fight east of Morhange.

Snoddy: Let's move on and cross the Saar River.

Miltonberger: Well, are you talking about, uh, whereabouts is that? And we, late in the year we get along about Thanksgiving, November, There was a particular fight then, I wanted to take up right. There was a river crossing...Sarreguemines fight. This was and we relieved the 6th Army division there and we had a chance to, we had a, the entire 3rd Army was stalled there and had been stalled in the mud and the cold weather so lately we relieved the 6th Armored with the plan that we'd cross the river in a surprise move. Now the river we found, by a couple of fellows going down there at night and trying it, it could be

waded with the water up to your chest, which is pretty bad in the cold weather. We put two battalions across there at night and we caught the Krauts over there asleep, there's no question about that. 17th SS Panzer Division was in there, and we got them out of their sleep and sacked them up and how many we captured, I don't remember, but the town therein was called Puttelange, is the name I was trying to remember. We didn't even get an effective counter-attack after that. We put a bridge across the Maderbach River the tanks came across the next afternoon and we had things buttoned up and we were on our way east again. That was prior to the capture of Sarreguemines. Now we get into Sarreguemines. We're in quite a situation there. Sarreguemines is a big city and it's in the Saar and the coal-mining areas and all that, but we had that vicious little river, God almighty, and it was a vicious little devil and people had lived along for so many years the banks were built up with concrete and they were straight up and down. To organize a river crossing, if you didn't have available bridges would be something that would just really require ingenuity, you couldn't launch a boat, you couldn't do anything with those straight up and down, sometimes 8 and 10 feet high. Our reconnaissance we found an old railroad bridge that the Krauts had blown, but they hadn't completely blown it and there were a couple of planks, the normal width of plank, probably 12 to 18 inches wide, and they would support, they were very firm and would support you. We had people that night before that crossed these, but just to

contemplate crossing several thousand men on a plank and thinking of all the horrible things that could happen, it's a cinch that they had guards over there. If you got a few hundred men across with no support and just something that would scare you to death. I was always strong for taking the unexpected, though, I figured that the Kraut in his sane mind would never figure anybody would do a thing like that. So I just decided we'd do it. I got the battalion commanders up there and we looked that thing over, and I told them exactly what I wanted them to do and I give them a time table and we was to start at dark and the first people across were three or four picked commandos that went over fast, quiet, to kill the sentries that were on the other side, and you know, you'll never believe it, but we put two battalions across there that night. In the dark without a sound being made when they woke up the next morning, we had possession of the entire bank. Well, it was child's play then to throw a couple of bridges across there, 'cause the river wasn't wide, and get our tanks and our support across. Well, I just laid my career on the line, if it had failed, they'd have just cut my throat so quick it had been pitiful. It didn't fail and they thought it was wonderful. So that's one of the things that helps you, either helps you or kills you. Yah, never forget it. And now we're getting into the tough part. We're getting over to Germany now. We're just right on the edge of Germany and we got a Blies River. It's a dividing line between the Saar and Germany probably. That was great competition. You see, in the mean time, I had begin to

get smart about certain things. Begin to get smart with if you wanted to keep your unit up in front and keep, give them credit for the things that they do accomplish, by God, you're going to have to step out and claim responsibility, claim the fact that they did this and they did that and the other. There was great competition between units, to see who would be the first unit in Germany. Of course, we won that, but it was rough. The Blies River was really swift and while it wasn't too wide, it was deep, it was way over your head, there was no question of fording it, so we decided we'd put a battalion across there and we thought we'd put the 1st Battalion across with Col. Craig. You know, Col. Craig is another North Platte product and he commanded the 1st Battalion. And Habkirchen was a town on the other side of the Blies, it was on German soil. We successfully crossed this Blies River with a temporary pontoon bridge and got, I think, about three companies across. And then all hell broke loose. We had an awful time sustaining those people over there. They weren't so deep but what we could support them by fire, but as fast as we could get the start of a bridge in, why they'd knock it out with their artillery. It was absolute hell. And the people that were across there, the companies that were across were bottled up in stone buildings, I thought we was gonna lose them, but we didn't and we fought that thing back and forth and back and forth until I thought they, 3 or 4 days. And then came the

captured, he commanded the 24th Division in Korea and they captured him, kept him a prisoner for two or three years, General Dean relieved us with units of the 44th Division when we pulled back so we could go north to the Bulge and he told me when, at the time on the night of the relief, he said, "I've got a green outfit and you're under too much pressure here. I just don't think we can hold it." And he didn't either, as later events proved he got knocked out of it. Anyhow, they relieved us and we started on that long, cold ride north. We got to Metz', we stopped there overnight, which happened to be Christmas and we re-organized, received our recruits there, the poor devils, I felt so sorry for them. A lot of them they had flown across, we were desperate for people. They were green and we lost a lot of them because they were green, did not take care of themselves. Then we went on north up to Arlon and from Arlon is when we went into Bastogne. Went up the Arlon-Bastogne Highway. In the basement of an old, broken down house I had my CP (command post). Not very glamorous. The glamour all went to the 101st Airborne and the hard work went to us. So that's about all there was. They had to have a good outfit and by that time we were certainly a combat-developed outfit. We were as professional as they make them. They would have been in trouble if they hadn't have had our kind of people. That was really a tough go.