

Taped Interview
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I was born in Tchula, Mississippi in 1923. When the war started I was a freshman at the University of Mississippi, Ole Miss, where I had enrolled in September of 1941. Two of my friends and I were driving around with our dates, in a borrowed car, when we heard about Pearl Harbor. (The car belonged to the uncle of one of the men with me.) We shrugged our shoulders and asked each other, “Where is Pearl Harbor?” The next day the Chancellor called the student body together at Ole Miss and we heard the President declare war. I had just started college and was focusing on getting passing grades, and adjusting to the environment, having come from a very small town in Mississippi. I was unsure of what I wanted to do in the future, not having given much thought to that. I was in the R.O.T.C., Reserve Officer Training Corps, and this program was discontinued in June of 1943. We were inducted into the Army and sent to various Army camps to complete 17 weeks of infantry training. I went to Camp Croft at Spartanburg, S.C. I was sent to Ft. Benning, GA to the Infantry Officer Training School and was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in April 1944. My officers training company at Ft. Benning was filled with other men who had been in R.O.T.C. training at other colleges throughout the U.S. A sizeable group in my company was from South Dakota State College.

Upon graduation I was sent to the 103d Infantry Division at Camp Howze Texas—near Gainesville, Texas. I was Platoon leader of the 1st Platoon, Company C, 409th Infantry Regiment, 103d Division. We spent the next few months in training and went to a camp near New York City in October for a few days before embarking on a ship in a convoy heading for Marseilles, France. I had been to New York before but was still overwhelmed at the city. I had a date with a Dallas girl who was in college in Connecticut. It was really not an unpleasant time.

I remember that the ship that carried President Wilson to Europe at the end of WWI was in our convoy going over. When the ship got to the Straits of Gibraltar we all went

to the left side to see the Rock of Gibraltar and they made us move to the other side, as the ship was leaning. Many got sick on the ship during what the Navy called a Class 7 storm. You might be lined up to eat, almost sick at your stomach, and someone would throw up right in front of you. I remember holding money for men who won it in crap games and I didn't want to lose it.

When we disembarked in Marseille they sprayed smoke above us, I assume for security reasons. Going through Marseilles, I remember greeting a kid with, "Parlez-vous français?" He said, "Oui, oui, oui!" That is about the only contact we had with the people in the city. Our division went into combat near St. Die, France about November 1. We fought through the Vosges Mountains. Our Battalion Commander was Lieutenant Colonel Teal Ferrell and our Captain was George Taylor from South Carolina. At the town where we entered I was standing next to George and he said, "Oh God, somebody shot me through my right arm!" I looked and it was through his upper arm. He never returned to the company. At first you weren't scared about being in combat. You concentrated on looking for the enemy. But when you got shot at and saw a little combat you sure were scared.

I had very little contact with prisoners but when we had them they were difficult to manage. As in our case, we started with a squad of twelve men but after a few weeks, with injuries, we were down to six or seven men. If you had prisoners you had to send them to the back of the line and spare a man to guard them. That was the problem. They were docile though and didn't give us any trouble.

I remember a humorous incident when we spent the night in a home. I was six feet tall and weighed about 190lbs. Another Lieutenant was bigger than I was and the first Sergeant was as tall as I was. Our feet were wet and we had not taken off our shoes in days. An old French lady in the home insisted on drying our socks. So she did. We had a bed for a change and three of us slept together—three men my size or bigger! We slept like logs but when one had to turn over, we all had to turn over! I remember that very well. The French people were all very grateful and brought us food and wine when you would capture a little town.

I was wounded on December 2nd in Selestat, France about 35 miles south of Strasbourg. A rifle bullet went through my right leg about 3 inches above the knee and

luckily missed the bone, nerve and artery. I was evacuated to England and was in the 188th General Hospital in Cirencester. After recovering I had a hernia operation and didn't return to my company until after V.E. day. I rejoined the 409th Infantry regiment in Innsbruck, Austria which city the division had captured.

In Innsbruck we were preparing to go to Japan. Of course we were elated when the war was over. The 103d was filled up with high point men (you got a point for every month you were overseas; two points if you were married etc.) and returned home. I had only 47 or 48 points which for a Second Lieutenant that was virtually, "nothing". This was in August of '45. So I thought that if I could get home in time to go to Ole Miss and finish college in September of '46 I would be pleased. I was transferred to the artillery and I knew very little about the artillery. I went to a separate artillery battalion and my battery ended up guarding prisoners at 3d Army Headquarters in Bad Tolz, Germany, south of Munich. Before we went there we were sent to other sites in southern Germany. My regret was that when General Patton was relieved I did not go down to see him turn over his flag to his successor. It was on a Sunday morning at 10 o'clock.

I was at Headquarters for a few months when I met a Major who asked me if I would like to go to Munich and be a Leave Officer at the Leave Terminal, basically as a contracting or purchasing officer. In that position you could authorize, on your signature, purchases less than \$5,000. All formal leaves to Paris, Brussels, or London, for example, left from that terminal. I went up to interview the Captain who had the job at that time and eventually I took over the job for the last six months I was overseas. It was pretty nice work and I got to take some fine trips to Paris, Switzerland, and Rome. I was promoted to First Lieutenant there.

I returned home in July of 1946 and graduated from Ole Miss in June of 1947. I married the music teacher in my hometown and joined the Prudential in July of that year. Later I was Manager for the Prudential of the Mississippi Agency for over 20 years. We had three fine daughters. My wife died of cancer in 1981, and I later married Mary Walker from Fort Worth and we are living in Jackson, MS.