

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: Charles Whittington

Meyer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

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David Meyer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. Today is August 6, 2011. We're in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Bourbon Street, and today I have the great privilege of talking to, Mr. Whittington, can you say your name?

Charles Whittington: My name is Charles B. Whittington. Everybody calls me Red.

Meyer: Calls you Red, because of your hair.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: And what company were you with?

Whittington: I was Company I, 377th.

Meyer: And when did you join the service?

Whittington: August 7, 1942.

Meyer: And when did you get out?

Whittington: August 28, 1945.

Meyer: And what was your final rank?

Whittington: Tech sergeant.

Meyer: These are just beginning questions. What's your birth date?

Whittington: 12/21/21.

Meyer: And where were you born?

Whittington: I was born in Bartholomew County in a little town called St. Louis Crossing.

Meyer: In what state?

Whittington: Indiana.

Meyer: Indiana. What were your parents' names?

Whittington: My dad's name was Lester and his nickname was Duke. My mother's name was Hazel and her maiden name was Bauer.

Meyer: And what did your father do for a living?

Whittington: He was a farmer.

Meyer: What did he farm?

Whittington: Well, they raised hogs and cattle and soybeans and corn.

Meyer: And was your mother was a mother on the farm, a housewife?

Whittington: Yes.

Meyer: Did you work on the farm growing up?

Whittington: Yes.

Meyer: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Whittington: I've got three sisters. I've got one brother who's deceased.

Meyer: I'm sorry. What are your sisters' names?

Whittington: My oldest sister is Mary, my next one is Maxine, and my baby sister is named Gelsey (PH).

Meyer: And what was your brother's name?

Whittington: His name was Lester, the same as my father. He wasn't a junior. His name was Lester Willis.

Meyer: Did people call you Red when you were growing up?

Whittington: Yes.

Meyer: What was it like growing up on the farm?

Whittington: Well... we didn't have very much, but you had enough to eat.

Meyer: And this was, you were growing up in the Depression, too. So you had work at least?

Whittington: Well, I graduated from high school in 1939. I was only 17, so I couldn't get a job. I worked for a farmer for 15 cents an hour.

Meyer: Fifteen? Fifteen cents an hour? Now people complain at seven bucks. Fifteen cents an hour. What sort of work?

Whittington: He was in the seed corn business, and you had to detassel the corn in the summer.

Meyer: Yeah, detassel the corn.

Whittington: And you had to dry it when it got ripe. And then you had to grade it, and shell it, and put it in bags.

Meyer: Now the grading and shelling, is that all done by machine?

Whittington: It wasn't then.

Meyer: So you did that all by hand... for 15 cents an hour...

Whittington: We shelled. [unclear] corn oil and a little end. And they went [unclear] They called this big end large rounds. They called the little ends small rounds. Then the better part of the ear is called flats.

Meyer: Oh. Sure. And did you put all the big rounds together, and all the little rounds together?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: And all the flats together. What was worth the most money?

Whittington: The flats were worth the most money. They was the easiest for them planters to drop.

[Time 4:45]

Meyer: So you had graduated from high school. Do you remember where you were when you heard about the bomb being dropped on Pearl Harbor?

[Note: Red answers the question as though it is about the bomb being dropped on Hiroshima.]

Whittington: I was in the hospital in Clinton, Iowa.

Meyer: What was going on?

Whittington: Well. I got wounded November the 26th of '44, for the last time. I got wounded on November the seventh. I got the Purple Heart for that. And it was shrapnel wound in my arm.

Meyer: In your arm?

Whittington: And they pulled it out and gave me a tetanus shot and I went back then.

Meyer: And your final wound?

Whittington: I was wounded with an 88-artillery [German anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery gun].

Meyer: With shrapnel?

Whittington: With shrapnel. And it hit me pretty much all over. And I spent four months in the hospital in England, and five months in Clinton, Iowa.

Meyer: Does it still bother you now at all?

Whittington: Not really.

Meyer: Not really. Now back to just after you got out of high school, do you remember when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

Whittington: I was on my way home from Indianapolis. My sister had had an appendix operation. And I had my radio on December the seventh '41.

Meyer: Sure Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

Whittington: No.

Meyer: Did you think then you were going to go to the service... go into the army?

Whittington: I knew then it was going to happen because they'd already drafted people. The first draft was for one year.

Meyer: I remember they did a draft in 1940.

Whittington: For one year.

Meyer: For one year.

Whittington: But they never did get out.

Meyer: No, they didn't. You're right. They never got out. And you entered in '42. What was going on in your life when you entered?

Whittington: Well, I was working, and I'd managed to get a new car there in '41, but I knew I was going to get drafted and I didn't want to get in the army. So I went to Indianapolis to enlist

in the air force. But I was a green country kid, I got in the wrong office, I signed, then I was U.S. Army unassigned.

Meyer: Oh! I've heard that sort of story once or twice before. And they never tell you! All they do is, you can tell them you're going into the air force. They don't care. They say, "Sign."

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: So that must have been a shock.

Whittington: Well, it was a shock when I got into Camp Swift, Texas. We were on the train three days from Indiana to Camp Swift, Texas. And when I got off there's all them six-by-sixes [vehicles] there to take us into Camp Swift. And I said to one of them drivers, "What air force is this?"

He said, "Buddy, this is 95th Infantry Division."

Meyer: Oh! So you didn't know until you got to Camp Swift. What could you do?

Whittington: There was nothing you could do.

Meyer: And I bet nobody wanted to hear it.

Whittington: No.

Meyer: So you're just there at Camp Swift, and you've had the wool pulled over your eyes.

Whittington: Well I wasn't the only one. There was others. (Meyer laughs) But about the first year I was in, the enlistees got paid first. So you could go to town. Then they cancelled that, and my name is Whittington.

Meyer: And so you're the last.

Whittington: I'm the last.

Meyer: And was that the way it was for the rest of your time in the army?

Whittington: Oh yes, you always got paid last.

Meyer: So you're in Camp Swift. My wife always wondered, though you grew up in a pretty big family, what's that first night like with all the strangers around?

Whittington: Well, it wasn't good, but we had to make it. We did have barracks at Camp Swift, but they was all new. And there wasn't any sod around them, we had to do all that.

[Time 10:00]

Meyer: You had to put in the sod?

Whittington: Yeah..

Meyer: That's right, because it had only been open about a month. Because it opened in July, I think.

Whittington: It opened in July. They dedicated it, I think, the fifteenth.

Meyer: And you come in in August?...

Whittington: August the, it would have been August the tenth when I got there.

Meyer: So less than a month?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: So they have you getting the camp ready.

Whittington: Of course, none of the companies was up to strength. I was assigned to the third platoon, and we had about twelve men, which would equal one squad. But then you get more every day.

Meyer: So more people are coming in every day?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: So everything changes every day. How long's it get till everybody's there?

Whittington: We didn't come up to full strength until we got to Indiantown Gap [in Pennsylvania]

Meyer: Oh, you didn't?

Whittington: In 1944. And then we were transferring all them ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program].

Meyer: Sure.. What did you think of those ASTP guys?

Whittington: We was hard on them. I was a sergeant, and

Meyer: Because they come in, they don't know anything.

Whittington: They'd been on the gravy train as far as we was concerned.

Meyer: Sure. Sure. They had gone to college. Three meals a day.

Whittington: So we was hard on them.

Meyer: When you're hard on them... How were you hard on them? What did you do?

Whittington: Well.. they got the KP, they got the guard duty.

Meyer: So they had to learn quickly.

Whittington: Yep. (11:50)

Meyer: So by the time you left Indiantown Gap, did you feel like you were one were they okay?

Whittington: Well that's when we got them was at Indiantown Gap.

Meyer: That's when you got them.

Whittington: Yeah Ceo (Bauer) was one of them, Steve was one of them. There was a Rankin that got killed, there was a Clark that got killed.

Meyer: Do you remember Ceo at all from back there?

Whittington: I knew who he was but he was in a different platoon, so we wasn't close. Him and Steve were close. They were in the same platoon.

Meyer: Okay. Okay. Back to Camp Swift. Did you go to Sam Houston [in San Antonio, Texas]?

Whittington: Sam Houston from Camp Swift.

Meyer: Louisiana?

Whittington: Sam Houston was quite a place.

Meyer: How so?

Whittington: It was big stone barracks, and we was right across the street from a PX. And it was wonderful. But we didn't stay there. [pause] They sent us on maneuvers. We'd go out [unclear] Twenty-five-mile march.

Meyer: Holy cow!

Whittington: And marching back in there on a Friday evening. You'd have an inspection on Saturday morning. Of course your rifle ... [unclear] You had to work all night.

Meyer: Now were you still a private then? Or were you—

Whittington: I was a private then. I didn't get to be sergeant until about the time we went to ... We went on Louisiana maneuvers.

Meyer: Yeah, the swamp maneuvers.

Whittington: And that's when I made sergeant. If I'd have been a sergeant I would have made private. They give us a quart of water for a day. We got into this [inaudible] area; they sent all the noncoms up [unclear] so we couldn't get any water. Of course they all filled their canteen. And they pulled an inspection. They busted all of them.

Meyer: They did! Because they didn't obey the rules.

Whittington: Yeah. And that's when I made sergeant.

Meyer: Because they got rid of them, and then you went up.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: So they must have seen that you were sergeant material.

[Time 15:00]

Whittington: Well, I had pretty good score on, I don't remember what they call that test. I had enough points. I applied for officer training. But I didn't—

Meyer: They didn't call you.

Whittington: They didn't call me. There were a few guys from my company that did go, and one of them was named Lynning (PH) and he was a lawyer and he ended up being an instructor at Fort Benning. He made a good one.

Meyer: Yeah, that is good. And after the Louisiana maneuvers, so you're made a sergeant. Now as a sergeant, are you--

Whittington: The assistant squad leader is a sergeant. And later on, and I'm not sure when, I became a squad leader and a staff sergeant. Then when we made that first attack at Maizieres-les-Metz [France], the sergeant got his foot pretty much blown off. So then I was the platoon sergeant. And the next day when we made that other attack [Thaymaker?] was a platoon leader and he got killed. So then I was a platoon leader until I got wounded.

Meyer: So you're a platoon leader from Maizieres-les-Metz all the way until you finally get wounded.

Whittington: That wasn't very far.

Meyer: Oh, you were wounded in November in the arm.

Whittington: Yeah. Yeah.

Meyer: Back to Indiantown Gap, I understand you won a marksman contest and you got to leave on a three-day pass? Do you remember that?

Whittington: Yeah, but I got in the desert—

Meyer: Camp Coxcomb [California]

Whittington: Yeah, I got an expert infantryman badge.

Meyer: Oh, you did?

Whittington: And there were only two awarded in the company. And they gave us a fifteen-day delay en route to Indiantown Gap.

Meyer: Oh, they did.

Whittington: And that's when I got married.

Meyer: You got married on the way? During that fifteen days?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Is this your sweetheart back in Indiana?

Whittington: Yeah. But we had to get a blood test. That took three days. And out of that fifteen days I was only home nine, because of train transportation. And I got married on Saturday night, and I left on Monday morning.

Meyer: So you had, no! You got married, so you had Saturday, Sunday with her. And that's it.

Whittington: That was it.

Meyer: When's the next time you saw her?

Whittington: Well, she got to come to Indiantown Gap a couple of times.

Meyer: Oh, that's nice.

Whittington: And I got a three-day pass from Indiantown Gap once. And she was still in high school. She was seventeen.

Meyer: She was in high school! So she was seventeen.

Whittington: She was seventeen.

Meyer: So you knew her when you were growing up there?

Whittington: Yes. I went with her starting in 1940 when she was in the eighth grade.

Meyer: And her name is Glenna? (PH) (CK)

Whittington: Yah. And we're married sixty-four years when she died.

Meyer: Oh, I'm sorry. Well, that's great. I'm sorry she passed. When did she pass?

Whittington: October of '08.

Meyer: I'm sorry. Sixty-four years you were married.

Whittington: We were married for sixty-four years.

Meyer: And you started going out with her when she was in eighth grade?

Whittington: That's right.

Meyer: And what grade were you in?

Whittington: I was already out of high school.

Meyer: She must have been really pretty.

Whittington: She got out of the eighth grade in 1940. I got out of high school in 1939.

Meyer: Was the town small?

Whittington: Well, we both lived in the country.

Meyer: In the country.

Whittington: Yeah, the town was small. We were about twelve miles east of [inaudible].

[Time 20:00]

Meyer: So, Camp Coxcomb, you get married, you come back, then you go to Indiantown Gap. So as a sergeant, the ASTP guys come in. And do you get a couple in your platoon that you have to straighten out?

Whittington: There was [a Ranson and a Ford and a Fulholler?] in my platoon. [unclear] [Fulholler?] is still living but he won't come to the reunions.

Meyer: He won't.

Whittington: He lives in a ritzy place in Florida, one of them gated communities. He's a retired lawyer from New York. But he done prison time.

Meyer: Oh, he did prison time.

Whittington: We don't know what.

Meyer: Okay. So maybe he's embarrassed, maybe he feels ashamed and doesn't want to come.

Whittington: I correspond with him all the time. And she's [unclear]

Meyer: Now I'm looking at some of your granddaughter's notes. From Indiantown Gap, did you do some of the West Virginia maneuvers?

Whittington: We went to West Virginia mountain maneuvers.

Meyer: And did you climb the mountains, too?

Whittington: Oh, yeah.

Meyer: And somebody said there's someplace, Seneca Mountain? Did you like—what did you think of it? Did you like climbing?

Whittington: I didn't like it, but you do in the army what your orders are.

Meyer: Okay. And then as a sergeant you have to get all your men to do it, whether they're scared or not.

Whittington: That's right. We went on a one-week survival training [each squad for one week at a time] at Indiantown Gap when we was on our own. We had a compass and we had to follow the route. And we camped out. We had to get our own food.

Meyer: Did you hunt, or did you find berries, or what did you do? Or did you carry some food with you?

Whittington: Well of course when we started we carried some with us. And then you scavenge as much as you can get. And we was lucky; we got within a couple hundred feet of a little old grocery store.

Meyer: [laughs] That's good. Well, that's part of it. That's part of it. So you scavenged to the grocery store [laughter].

Whittington: Yeah. We didn't get very much but I remember we got great big cherries and a loaf of bread. And man, it was good.

Meyer: I bet. I bet. But you were out for a week? The whole squad?

Whittington: Yeah. One squad at a time. And it worked out. It was good training.

Meyer: It is good training. It is good training to go through it at least once. Were you there in Indiantown Gap when you heard about D-Day, the invasion?

Whittington: We had to be, because then we moved on up into Massachusetts.

Meyer: Myles Standish?

Whittington: We went to Myles Standish. And it was D+ 44 when we went on the mainland.

Meyer: Had you traveled on a boat before when you got on the ocean?

Whittington: No.

Meyer: Do you remember your ship?

Whittington: Yeah. USS West Point. It was the biggest one that the United States had.

Meyer: Were there a lot of men on it?

Whittington: Eighty-five hundred.

Meyer: Eighty-five hundred!

Whittington: And our battalion was on the sun deck.

Meyer: So you were outside.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Was there any protection from the rain or waves, anything?

Whittington: Very little. But the worst of it was all them guys that got sick down below was coming up there.

[Time 25:00]

Meyer: Sure. I heard a lot of guys got sick down below. So they came up and they probably stank.

Whittington: Yeah, man, it wasn't good.

Meyer: No. No.

Ceo Bauer: We stayed on the promenade deck. Played cards. Got dirty. fellow veteran, aka C.O.]

Meyer: You stayed on the promenade deck.

Bauer: Played cards. Got dirty.

Meyer: You played cards up there?

Whittington: We played blackjack for a penny.

Meyer: Blackjack for a penny? And how lucky were you?

Whittington: I don't remember about that. I wasn't very lucky.

Meyer: No, you'd remember if you were lucky. Somebody said that the boat was so crowded that sometimes fights would break out.

Whittington: Oh, yeah.

Meyer: Really? Just because people were just edgy?

Whittington: Everybody was scared. And most of the time they were sick.

Meyer: Oh, sure. Your granddaughter, she writes that a couple fell or they jumped overboard.

Whittington: It was one at least that went overboard.

Meyer: Wen overboard. They just left him?

Whittington: That's all you could do.

Meyer: Because you were zigzagging across. You're going fast.

Whittington: Yeah, that was a suicide. You know what I mean.

Meyer: No. no. You're right. Your granddaughter said you said by the time you got to Europe you were all ready to fight somebody.

Whittington: That's right. I mean, you was mad.

Meyer: You were mad. Yeah. Where did you land in Europe?

Bauer: I wasn't that mad.

Whittington: Well we weren't in Normandy.

Meyer: You're in Liverpool?

Whittington: We landed in Liverpool in England, but where did we land in France?

Bauer: Omaha Beach.

Meyer: Omaha Beach.

Bauer: We got off on the concrete, too.

Meyer: You got off on like a—

Bauer: One of those piers.

Whittington: Floating dock.

Meyer: You got off on a floating dock?

Bauer: Yep. Inside the damaged harbor. That harbor got damaged by the storm. But it's still some functional.

Meyer: Was there still any remnants of D-Day on the beach?

Bauer: Oh, yeah.

Whittington: Oh, yeah.

Bauer: Wooden crosses. We know, we went up past the cemetery. You're getting started. That's kind of a sobering thing.

Meyer: So you saw the wooden crosses?

Whittington: And there was all kinds of equipment. [unclear] the equipment was just laying out there.

Meyer: Just laying out. Washed in, or just from the ...

Whittington: rifles, artillery and everything.

Meyer: So everything was just strewn around.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Then you go up to the apple orchards? Or once you landed—

Whittington: We went into the hedgerows.

Meyer: Oh, into the hedgerows. Had the Germans left the hedgerows by now?

Whittington: Yes. And we spent about two weeks there before they moved us on line. We didn't go on line until up near Metz.

Meyer: Were you part of Red Ball Express?

Whittington: No, but we had people that was assigned to that. We had calisthenics every morning. We had rifle training. Everything to keep us busy for about two weeks there. We was in pup tents. They wasn't ready for us to go in yet.

Meyer: So are the men under you, are they getting nervous?

Whittington: Oh yeah, everybody was nervous. The officers was trying to keep us in line. And we relieved the 90th Division.

Meyer: Oh, you relieved the 90th Division. That's right. That's near Metz?

Whittington: At Maizieres-les-Metz

Meyer: Did you go across on 40&8s? On the trains? Or did you march?
[Time 30:00]

Whittington: Yes, done that to Paris.

Meyer: To Paris.

Whittington: Then we was marching the rest of it.

Meyer: You marched from Paris to Metz?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: It's a long way, isn't it?

Whittington: About a hundred miles.

Meyer: About a hundred miles.

Bauer: We could see the Eiffel Tower.

Meyer: You could see it?

Bauer: Some guy did. From the train.

Meyer: Could you see it, Ceo?

Bauer: I'm not sure. That guy said, "There's the Eiffel Tower."

Meyer: Ha! [pause, during which they talk about trading cigarettes for brandy and sex?] So the first place you see, you get into action is Maizieres-les-Metz?

Whittington: Yes.

Meyer: I've talked to Ceo, I've talked to a few people. They said, were you in on that attack on the Chateau Brioux?

Whittington: Yes.

Meyer: Do you remember that night?

Whittington: Yes, I got hit in the arm with a piece of shrapnel. I went back to the first aid station and they pulled it out, awarded me a Purple Heart, gave me a tetanus shot, and sent me back up there.

Meyer: So is that at the beginning of the attack?

Whittington: Well, I was back there during the rest of the attack. But the attack failed. Land mines, and all that German artillery was coming in. They finally got orders to withdraw, but we lost a big percentage of our company. A lot of them got killed, but a lot of them got wounded. Like Ceo, Steve, and Darrin, who was the platoon sergeant, and I took his place. And it was a disaster.

Meyer: Looking back, some people say, one person said Patton didn't need to make that attack that night. He could have done it in the morning.

Whittington: A lot of people believe that. And I do, too. I think we'd have got along a lot better. But he made the decision.

Meyer: And General Walker had to go with it.

Whittington: And Patton insisted on that marching forward. You didn't fall down.

Meyer: So you stood up and you shot while you were walking.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Is that how you started to go toward the chateau?

Whittington: Oh, yeah.

Meyer: March and fire? Were you in a march and fire line going toward the chateau?

Whittington: Yeah, but I didn't get very far. I got hit by that artillery.

Meyer: Boom! So that sent you off, and there were other guys keep going on?

Whittington: Yeah. None of them got very far.

Meyer: I talked to an artillery man, Jim Woolner, who's gone now. But he said that was one of the worst nights of his life. We had already plotted our artillery to defend, he said, but people getting overrun that night. He said, I think, K Company got overrun.

Whittington: K Company got it worse than our company. Man, they almost annihilated them. They didn't have anybody the next morning.

Meyer: They had nobody.

Whittington: They got their commander killed, all their lieutenants. They didn't have anybody left.

[Time 35:00]

Meyer: No one left. So you're taken out, and you're taken to the hospital. Are you there for a day or two?

Whittington: No, I was back on the line the next morning.

Meyer: The next morning.

Whittington: They pulled that out, gave me a tetanus shot—

Meyer: And sent you back?

Whittington: Sent me back. And we were attacking the next day.

Meyer: They were attacking or you attacked?

Whittington: We did.

Meyer: You did. And then did you take the chateau that day?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: So there's every indication that maybe if you had waited you could have taken the chateau--

Whittington: Well, we got zeroed in and we knew where that minefield was so we went around it.

Meyer: Oh. Sure, so now you know where the minefield is, so you can go around it. Were there any Germans left or did they evacuate?

Whittington: They got out of there. And they just went through to the woods behind.

Meyer: Oh. So anything else you want to say about that day?

Whittington: Well that wasn't a good day, but we did take the chateau. And we was in there for two or three days.

Meyer: In the chateau?

Whittington: Yeah. But there wasn't anything left. There was no roof. There was a basement. We put down guards and then we did get some sleep there. And we picked up all of our dead people. We put on white arm bands.

Meyer: On the dead?

Whittington: And the Germans didn't shoot at us when we were picking up. But we was out of officers. They sent up replacements for the company commander. And then he got wounded. And that's when Geiger come up.

Meyer: That's when Vince Geiger came up.

Whittington: But when he came up the first thing he seen was us turning over dead people.

Meyer: Oh. So that must have shocked him.

Whittington: I imagine it did.

Meyer: Do you remember him from back then?

Whittington: Yes. He was the company commander from then on, until I got wounded. I got wounded the last time on the twenty-sixth of November. And I'd say he probably come up there the twelfth.

Meyer: So that was the second time you were wounded was the twenty-sixth of November?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Now I'm looking at your granddaughter's notes. You reached the Moselle River, you crossed the river. And the commanding officer sent someone over to get bedrolls?

Whittington: Yeah, we had to go back, bring up the officers' bedrolls.

Meyer: The officers' bedrolls. Is that Vince Geiger?

Whittington: No, he wasn't there yet.

Meyer: He wasn't there yet.

Whittington: That was before the—yes, he was there for that. Them names are not coming up.

Meyer: It will come.

Whittington: We got some replacement officers by the time we crossed the river.

Meyer: By the time you crossed the river. And by this time now you're the main sergeant of the platoon?

Whittington: Yes. And they sent a guy up for [pause] I got along pretty good with all the men. After making it to Metz, we seemed to get along pretty good.

Meyer: Okay. They said here, it said, with the bed rolls, that you made at least one trip back and forth when you returned, and you kept a bed roll for yourself?

Whittington: And everybody who was on that detail.

Meyer: Everybody was on that detail kept a bedroll for themselves.

Meyer: She says you were staying in a barn, or a shed?

Whittington: Yeah. It was a stable.

Meyer: Oh, a stable. Is that still around Maizieres-les-Metz? Or where?

Whittington: No, it was on the other side of the Moselle, so it was Metz.

Meyer: Oh, so it's Metz.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Then she writes, during a firefight, there was a German who was shot who was going to set a bomb?

Whittington: Well, we had them stables and they had the other building. And down the end of that street there was like a big garage with wooden doors. And he was coming over to blow us up. But we hit him, and we were shooting tracer ammunition. We set them [doors?] on fire, and he was going to burn it up. But he pulled his Luger out.

Meyer: And he shot himself?

[Time: 40:10]

Whittington: He shot himself.

Meyer: So you hit him. He went into the garage and the tracer doors hit the doors of the garage and they started to burn. And rather than burning up, he shot himself. Where was it that you asked, she writes you asked by a commanding officer to go on a reconnaissance at night. And the next morning, oh, that's the German mine, next morning through a German minefield. And when you were asked to go a third time you said no And the officer said that he would court martial you.

Whittington: That was MacIntyre (PH), and he's our head, so....

Meyer: What happened there?

Whittington: Well, that was after we captured the chateau.

Meyer: After you captured the chateau.

Whittington: Then we knew there were Germans out in the woods. And he sent me on patrol in the morning. And we located that machine gun. But then that night he sent me out again, and we located it, same place. And the next morning he was going to send me again. And I said, "I'm not going."

Meyer: Yeah, you were pressing your luck. That took a lot of guts to say that to a commanding officer. Did you just feel unlucky? Or did you think it was [stupid?]?

Whittington: Well, we had lost people every patrol. And I wasn't going to do it again. We knew where they was at.

Meyer: So you knew where it was. So when you would go out there to find it again someone from the machine gun would shoot your platoon.

Whittington: Yes. Of course, I knew most of them battalion officers. I went back and told Lieutenant [Hackman?], who'd been in our company. And he told me to go back up there and not worry about it.

Meyer: He told you what?

Whittington: Go back up there and not worry about it.

Meyer: Go back up, don't worry about it. And is MacIntyre (PH) still there?

Whittington: Yeah, he was still there. But he wasn't there very much longer.

Meyer: Because he gets wounded. He gets out of the picture.

Whittington: Yeah, he had to get wounded by artillery, I reckon. I saw him after the war at the racetrack in Louisville. His family was in the wholesale grocery business in Kentucky.

Meyer: In Kentucky? And how was he after the war?

Whittington: He never would come to our reunions. [unclear] paid his dues a few times and tried to—

Meyer: Get him in?

Whittington: Get him in, but he never did come.

Meyer: When did you start coming?

[Time 43:38]

Whittington: Sixty-two. I was separated from the company when I went to the hospital, and I didn't know anything about the reunions until I seen it in a Legion magazine. And I went in '62. I don't think I've missed one since.

Meyer: Must have been great to see everyone again.

Whittington: Yeah. And we used to have fifteen or twenty I Company men show up. But [unclear]

Meyer: Yeah. Yeah. [pause]

Whittington: But we was out of officers. They sent up a replacement for the company commander and then he got wounded. And that's when Geiger come up. [The next few minutes is duplicate audio from an earlier section]

[Time: 52:41]

Meyer: This goes back to Maizieres-les-Metz. When you're picking up the soldiers, you're wearing the arm band, You're wearing a white arm band. And you're not carrying a weapon.

Whittington: No.

Meyer: Because if you carried a weapon the Germans would shoot you.

Whittington: Right.

Meyer: So do you remember anyone who went out with you then?

Whittington: Well, it was the third platoon, and then that guy from Thomas, Indiana walked out there with a rifle, and no band, and they killed him.

Meyer: Oh, you mean, so you're there picking up bodies. And then somebody from—

Whittington: My company, he walked out there and he was from my hometown.

Meyer: Said Sergeant [Fosenbecker?]

Whittington: Sergeant [Bolshy?] got killed out there. A good friend of mine, Virgil [Manly?] I was with all the time, [camped?] with. We lost a lot of people.

Meyer: So this one man from Columbus, Indiana, while you're there with your white arm bands he walks out. Why did he go out there?

Whittington: He thought it was peaceful, and he went out there to smoke.

Meyer: He went out there to smoke a cigarette?

Whittington: He had his rifle hung on his shoulder, but he had a rifle.

Meyer: So he broke the rules. He didn't realize it.

Whittington: He didn't realize them Germans were going to shoot at him. They shot him right in the head.

Meyer: So then you had one more to bring back. That must have been hard for you since you knew him, too.

Whittington: He rode the train from Indianapolis to Camp Swift with me. When I had, at our reunion in Columbus two years ago, we laid a wreath on his grave. Because they brought him back.

Meyer: Oh, that's who they laid, the, and what was his name?

Whittington: Donald Fields.

Meyer: How do you spell that?

Whittington: F-I-E-L-D-S. Fields.

Meyer: Donald Fields?

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Your granddaughter also said, so this is the first time you're wounded is in your arm. When is the next time? She said you're wounded three times.

Whittington: Well I got shot with a rifle. It knocked me down. It went through my ammunition belt twice. It just made a flesh wound, so I didn't go back for that.

Meyer: And where were you then?

Whittington: That was the day of the attack on the chateau.

Meyer: So when you go back, you get hit in the arm. So then you go on. Do you go on towards Metz?

Whittington: Yes, we go through Metz. Almost to [inaudible] when I got hit with that artillery.

Meyer: So you're there for when Metz surrenders?

Whittington: Oh, yes.

Meyer: Were you there for something in the plaza, was there a parade or anything, or a celebration?

Whittington: I don't remember any celebration.

Meyer: Oh, the 95th didn't have it. Fifth Division got it.

Bauer: He got down in the basement of the tobacco factory.

Meyer: You got down in the basement of the tobacco factory?

Whittington: We got in a brewery.

Meyer: In the brewery?

Whittington: And that's where [Riordan?] got drunk, he was the fourth platoon sergeant. And he wouldn't move out. So they busted him. I don't know what ever happened to him.

[Time 57:01]

Meyer: You got to a brewery and he just got drunk?

Whittington: Yeah. Yeah, he wouldn't go.

Meyer: And he wouldn't go? Oh, they wanted to move out and he wouldn't go?

Whittington: He wouldn't go.

Meyer: [Laughs] Well, drunk, I could see someone drunk not wanting to—

Bauer: They took him out, didn't they?

Meyer: Mustered him out, Red said.

Whittington: Yeah. They locked him up temporarily. I imagine they let him out. He probably got sent to another company.

Meyer: So you said Red went to the basement of the tobacco—

Bauer: I just remember stories that when they checked out the basement, [unclear]

Meyer: So when they were checking out the basements in Metz, you had something happen to you, some incident?

Whittington: Well, I can't think of that officer's name. We hit a booby trap in that tunnel.

Meyer: There was a tunnel with booby trap.

Whittington: And it blowed up but we didn't get hurt.

Meyer: Were you there when General [Wilhelm] Keitel, was that his name?

Bauer: Keitel.

Meyer: Keitel was captured?

Whittington: Yeah, I was there, but the ceremony was a little bit [unclear] You only knew what was right there.

Meyer: What was right there. So did you see, were there any natives of Metz around? Or was it just you and the Germans?

Whittington: They were all hid.

Meyer: They were all hid.

Whittington: There were a few there that Roger Gorgon got acquainted with. He was what, ten, eleven years old? [break in tape]

Meyer: Were you in the first floor of the German headquarters? Somebody said that there was some, Ceo heard that there was some hand-to-hand fighting. Do you remember anything like that? You don't have to talk about it if it's upsetting.

Whittington: Well, I wasn't in on that because I was still over there in the stable.

Bauer: Okay, you aren't one of the ones that rushed across.

Whittington: No. We finally go across.

Meyer: When you went across, was it all cleared out?

Whittington: We didn't have any other resistance in Metz after he surrendered.

Bauer: See, they had to rush the [concern?]. And then they rushed the first floor. And then they had scraps of [unclear] and then the Germans wouldn't surrender on the top floor. That's when Geiger, if you read my account or Geiger's account, that's when he had to take the surrender of the, they wouldn't surrender to anybody but an officer. He had to dig out his first lieutenant bars to accept the surrender. So Red was there then, but he was probably someplace else, trying to find out what was in the basement.

Meyer: So you were there when the surrender took place, but you were in a different part of the building?

Whittington: Yeah, I didn't see it. I think Geiger was there. He wasn't going to surrender until we got some big officer.

[Time 1:00:39]

Bauer: The best he got was Geiger. (laughs)

Meyer: The best he got was Vince? That's the German general.

Whittington: Yeah.

Bauer: The German general was caught in the hospital. It [kind of frightened him?]. He was in the hospital wounded.

Meyer: Was Keitel. Did you—

Bauer: We got to go, I guess.

Meyer: Everyone going to dinner?

Bauer: Yeah.

Whittington: Are they moving out?

Meyer: Out to dinner?

Bauer: Well, let's get the 5:30 bus.

Meyer: Five-thirty bus?

Bauer: I wanted to tell you [Bodner?] called me and said let's try to get together, I Company and all. Over at the restaurant.

Meyer: Okay. I'll ask you two more questions, and then maybe later on I can ask you a few more.

Bauer: You should go, too, Dave.

Meyer: Sure. I will. I will go. Where were you when you were wounded the third time?

Whittington: Where was, [unclear] I was out in the middle of the field. And that 88 landed behind me. Then I got wounds in the face, I got some shrapnel in my lungs. It blowed half my ass off. And I was in the hospital for a long time. They gave me penicillin every four hours. But then some surgeon examined me and took all that bad flesh out, and pulled it together. And then I started getting better. But then I couldn't walk.

Meyer: You couldn't walk.

Whittington: No. Some nerves in my legs.

Meyer: Sure. And how long did it take you to walk again?

Whittington: I was still walking with a cane when I got discharged and sent [unclear].

Meyer: And that was in August of--

Whittington: August of '45. August the twenty-eighth. It was V-J Day. I got discharged V-J Day.

Meyer: V-J Day. That's a good day to get out.

Whittington: Yeah.

Meyer: Well Mr. Whittington, I'll talk to you later because I don't want you to be late for dinner. In fact, I'll bring some of this to dinner just in case there's a moment. You can always tap me on the shoulder whenever you think of something. But thanks for talking so far.

Whittington: Okay. Thanks.

Meyer: I'm so glad. Thanks for waiting, too. This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th. It is now 5:21 in the afternoon. I'm just talking to Mr. Whittington. And we'll get back to him later.

[Time: 1:03:33]

[End Interview Session.]