

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
Roy Schauder  
Assistant Battalion Surgeon, U. S. Army, World War II

2006

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**Schauder, Roy W.,** (1920- ). Oral History Interview, 2006.

User copy, 2 sound cassettes (ca. 75 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 2 sound cassettes (ca. 75 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **Abstract**

Schauder, born in Clintonville (Wisconsin), joined the 135<sup>th</sup> Medical Regiment, Wisconsin National Guard for a couple of years after his family moved to Marshfield (Wisconsin). He was drafted in 1943, mobilized at Ft. Sheridan (Illinois) after which he attended basic training and officer candidate school at the Medical Replacement Training Center at Camp Robinson (Arkansas), medical officer candidate school at Camp Barkley (Texas) and finally an eight week crash course to become assistant battalion surgeon, which had previously been a Dental Corps officer position. Schauder joined the 2nd Battalion, 385<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division (Patton's Third Army) at the end of the Normandy campaign. He describes his admiration for the men in the battalion, the "doughboys" who endured privations and trench foot. When a guy would come back from the frontline with battle fatigue, Schauder mentions the aid station would fix them a highball (GI alcohol and synthetic powdered lemon juice) which would loosen them up. Schauder details the medical personnel structure within an infantry battalion and describes their jobs. He reflects on his respect for "Doc," the private first-class medics on the line with the "doughboys." As the battalion continued beyond Bastogne, Schauder describes in detail the effect that a German artillery barrage had on a barn where a squad was laying low and his reaction to the scene. Schauder details his respect for Chaplain Stoller and several heroic acts he performed. He speaks of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division's involvement in taking Fort Koenigsmacher, across the Moselle River on the German side, and the 200 casualties they sustained. Schauder mentions his belief that because the Germans destroyed the dam and flooded the river, the unit didn't set off land mines on the river's bank while crossing. He describes how he learned about the Armistice signing by coming down into Pilsen (Czechoslovakia) from a hill and seeing German and American troops entering from both sides. Schauder describes the anti-climatic reaction by most men, how he got a shave and haircut and his thoughts of Pilsner beer. Because he had enough points, Schauder was transferred to the 99<sup>th</sup> Division (return-home division) where he was mess officer and worked with the medics to trace down venereal disease contacts. He describes his efforts to reconnect with members of his WWII unit. Schauder has been a member of the VFW for 50 years (had no reason to use GI Bill) and mentions his reactions when he traveled, by rental car, the same route in Europe his unit did during the war.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Schauder (1920- ) born in Clintonville and raised in Marshfield (Wisconsin), was drafted into the Army in 1943 and served as assistant battalion surgeon with the 2nd Battalion, 385<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 90<sup>th</sup> Division in the Third Army. Following discharge in 1945, Schauder went into the shoe business.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcript edited by John J. McNally, 2006.

## Interview Transcript

John: This is John Driscoll, and I am with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Archives, and today is January 25, 2006. And this is an oral history interview with Roy Schauder, at his home in Shawano, Wisconsin. Roy, thanks a lot for agreeing to the interview and why don't we start at the very beginning, when and where were you born?

Roy: Well, I was born on June 3, 1920, in Clintonville, Wisconsin. My father and his two brothers had a shoe store there, and I spent most of my early life in Clintonville, as a student. And in 1937, we moved to Marshfield, Wisconsin, and opened a store. And while in Marshfield, I joined the National Guard unit there. It just happened to be a regimental band. A medical unit. The 135th Medical Regiment, it was. So I got a couple of years with that, which was very enjoyable, and in 1939, we moved to Shawano, and opened a store. And, of course, we have been here ever since. Well, after Shawano, I worked in the store and also worked in the post office.

John: Oh, okay.

Roy: Briefly. I mean, until 1943, when they were drafting, and I was drafted and went to Fort Sheridan, to join other units. I wanted to join the guard unit, the band again, but I didn't pull the right strings, I guess. But, anyway, I was shipped from Fort Sheridan to the MRTC, the Medical Replacement Training Center, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Camp Robinson. And that is where I got my basic training. In the medics. I think that is what gave me the MOS, so to speak, to stay with medical units.

John: Okay.

Roy: So, after basic, I was kept in Camp Robinson as a drill corporal, so to speak, for other recruits, and during that period of time, they came up with a prep course for Officer Candidate School. And I guess I was fortunate enough to have a high enough IQ to make the class, and I took a lightning course, in about eight weeks, at Camp Robinson. And from there I was sent to Camp Barkley, Texas, which was recently opened as a Medical Administrative Corps Officers Candidate School.

John: What Camp?

Roy: Camp Barkley, Texas. Right outside of Abilene. So things just kind of went along pretty fast for me. And after I got my commission, I was retained at Camp Barkley as an instructor in the Officer Candidate School. I handled a platoon of new candidates for commissions. Oh, and I did that for a period of maybe a year, and then the government decided to change Medical Administrative Corps to a new name that they called Medical Service Corps. In order to furnish medically administrative type officers, who had had some orientation in combat division

organization, and things of that kind for troops that were on the front line. Which had previously been held by Dental Corps officers.

John: Oh, yea?

Roy: In most cases, the Dental Corps officer is the assistant battalion surgeon. In combat, he was okay but, from the tactical stand point of view, the MSC officer had better background, because he had been trained in infantry tactics, map reading, and the breakdown of an infantry division in combat. So that is what happened. They took a group of us and gave us an eight weeks crash course and we were sent overseas to be replacements for the assistant battalion surgeon, who had formerly been a Dental Corps officer.

John: Okay.

Roy: And when I replaced him in the unit I joined, he was very happy to see me. Of course, because I joined an infantry battalion that had been in combat since D plus 2.

John: Oh, wow.

Roy: That had landed on Omaha Beach and gone through the Normandy campaign. In fact, when I joined them, it was just at the tail end of the Normandy campaign. And I joined them just before Patton ran out of gas at Metz, with the armored divisions.

John: Yes.

Roy: So that is how I got hooked up with an infantry battalion. And I probably, which might have been a little against the rules, I kept a log, an itinerary, of every village and river crossing, dates, the names of people who were killed, and so on. That day by day thing that, somehow stayed with me throughout the campaign. So I was in the 2nd Battalion, 385th Infantry Regiment, of the 90th Division, which was part of Patton's Third Army.

John: Okay.

Roy: And with them I went through the rest of Normandy, crossed the Moselle River, went on up into the Bulge, through the Bulge, and ended up in Czechoslovakia with the war ended. This is a quick resume of what...

John: A few months ago I did an interview with a vet that was in the 90th Division. He talked about Metz, he talked about the Bulge. And I can't think of his name.

Roy: Well, of course, every battalion, like the one I was in, had, our medical detachment consisted of about thirty-one people, and we were just attached to this

particular battalion. And when that was broken down, you end up with the surgeon, the doctor, whose name was Joe Meboe. I want to mention some of these names because they were wonderful. And the chaplain, whose name was Edgar Stoller. Both of these had landed on D plus 2 and had gone through it. Probably one of the toughest parts of the whole things. So, among the thirty-one people, we would have the front line medics. You know, the one the called "Doc," who was in the foxholes with the infantry. There was one of those with each platoon of infantry. And then there was, I had twelve men that were designated as litter bearers. They were the ones, when the aid man got through trying to patch them up, the litter bearers, that was out job, to go in and find them and get them back. So, you know, those were the people that were primarily on the front line and which, more or less, I was responsible for. The support of that infantry battalion from a medical standpoint to the immediate wounded. That was a very exciting job.

John: I can believe it.

Roy: And I don't take any, like I say, any compliments, because the guys that really did the work, who were called "Doc" by every infantryman in the unit, were these PFCs on the front line, in the foxholes, next door to the guys who were right on the line. I lost a lot of them. A lot of them didn't make it. I had a lot of respect for every one of them. So, you know, we would evacuate, using a litter Jeep, if we could use a Jeep. If it was feasible. Or we would just go carry this guy back. Then, of course, the chaplain and I, many times would be part of that group, to give them all the help we could give. And, of course, we tried to get them back to where the aid station was located for whatever they needed. They called it *triage*. We were in a position where the doctor would sort them out, you know. If they could make it, we tried to save them. Those that we couldn't, we just couldn't.

John: Yea.

Roy: But it was a fast moving operation. And that is kind of what we did all the way through the whole thing. I had a couple of times when I kind of wondered.

John: Yes. I'll bet.

Roy: But all in all, even though we may have been a hundred yards, or two hundred yards behind what was actually the combat, we were relatively safe compared to the boys up there walking through the woods or sitting in a foxhole. So it seems like each echelon as you go back, it gets a little more comfortable. Well, it started with the riflemen and, of course, the aid men and the litter bearers. And my job was primarily to keep contact with battalion headquarters so we knew where the troops were, and if something happened, we would get to it. And, like I say, we moved. We had a couple of very memorable, like the Moselle River crossing. Patton wrote quite an article about that. And the Saar River crossing. We did that. And then on up into the Bulge.

John: Were you there during the Bulge, or right after?

Roy: Pardon me?

John: Were you there during the battle of the Bulge, or right after?

Roy: No, we went in during it. The Germans had reached almost to Bastogne. They were just around Bastogne, and Patton's unit was brought up from the south. They pulled us back from the Saar thing. And we went up to the south of the Bulge. The idea being that the Germans, from the south, because they were advancing west and north. That was our job. We went in to try to liberate these small towns and cut the German advance off. Yea, we were right in the middle of it. In fact, when you first got in there, it was a little difficult sometimes to tell where the artillery was coming from, ours or theirs. And it was quite a situation.

John: I can believe it. Yea. That was late, that was November, December, or '44?

Roy: Yea. That little book will tell you about that. I think that little brown book has a page in it that says Neider Wampach. That was a Belgian town.

John: I see here, it says ASR Replacement Depot, Camp Reynolds, Greenville, Pa.

Roy: Well, that was before the war.

John: Oh, I see.

Roy: Go a little further.

John: Okay, I see. I was born and raised at Sharon, just south of Greenville.

Roy: Now, there is a page where it names all the French towns that I went through and then it goes on until you find a town called Neider Wampach. You may have to keep paging there.

John: Here it is.

Roy: Neider Wampach, Belgium, with a parenthesis around it.

John: Yea.

Roy: And those four names. Here, I'll find it for you. Oh, yea, that's it. Neider Wampach, right at the top here. That was the 16th of January, 1945, and those four names at the top, it says Sharp, Wade, Wisnewski, Scannell.

John: Yea.

Roy: Well, it just so happens I was with them at the time and we had gone down, our battalion and our companies had gone across a big field and they were going up a slope where some German Tiger tanks were firing down into the village. And the first two companies had gone through the woods. And had taken some casualties. And we were, this particular litter bearer group I had with them there, we were going to follow and go along with the reserve company so we would be in a position to help if they needed it. Well, we got on the edge of this little village and there was a heavy weapons platoon, a squad, had gone into a barn with a cement foundation. This was so they would be out of sight, and so on, until they could move across the field, and I and my four litter bearers went in there with them, for cover. And artillery started coming across the field that was right within our view. We could see it moving in our direction. And the battalion exec officer was with us. His name was, at that time he was Major Wallace. He's dead now. Died a couple of months ago. And he went next door to a building where there was a mortar OP, to see if he could spot where this stuff was coming from. We didn't know if it was ours or theirs. So I walked out of the barn door with him and into the next building, and about twenty seconds later a 420 millimeter mortar came in, right in the top of that barn where I was. And I know the concussion managed to knock me to the floor. I got up and all I could hear was somebody calling "Medic!" And I went into the barn, and it is a little hard to describe. I think that was the closest I ever came to whatever they call it. There was nothing left. And all four of those boys were gone. We couldn't find even find them. They identified one by his dog tags, on his torso. And we identified the first lieutenant who was the heavy weapons officer in the barn, they found one of his four-buckle overshoes across the street, with his foot still in it.

John: Oh, my God.

Roy: I hate to say this but I have never forgotten that.

John: I can believe that.

Roy: And from there, I took a look. There was just nothing. And I had to walk maybe a hundred yards up to where our aid station was set up, and I got in there, and I told the chaplain, I said, "I don't know, but it isn't good down there." Two of them, Sharp and Wisnewski, are on the Wall of the Missing, in Luxembourg, in that cemetery there. Well, it's not a cemetery, it has what they call the Wall of the Missing. All of these people who died during the Bulge and were not identified. Well, two of them, they identified one with the dog tags. We knew him, so he wouldn't be on the Wall of the Missing, and then the other one, apparently, they found later, enough of it to identify him and the remains were shipped back to the States. To where, you know, they could put them in a cemetery. That was probably one of the roughest times.

John: I can imagine.

- Roy: It happened every day, pretty much, but not like that. I couldn't have been closer to it.
- John: And you feel so helpless.
- Roy: Yea, you do. It is terrible to think, but when these guys are in that situation, it's like getting up in the morning and going to work. We took a lot of casualties, our unit. And it was just like I say, I was just far enough back to where I wasn't right there. I used a foxhole sometimes but I wasn't right there, when it hit. I don't mean to dwell on it. I can't help it. That was probably the one time when I really got close. Crossing the Moselle River was a tough one. There is quite a story on that one.
- John: In there?
- Roy: Fort Koenigsmacher, if you looked in the history books, the 90th Division, and our regiment, was responsible for taking Fort Koenigsmacher, which was the German fort on the German side of the Moselle River. And the Germans blew the dams and flooded the river. We crossed over at night in assault boats to get to the other side. I have a story on that that was written by somebody in the engineer company that tried to put the bridges in. I think we took two hundred casualties. They weren't all ours. But the battalion, before they even got across the river. Because as soon as the bridge would be half way up, the Germans would blow it up with artillery. And they when they flooded the river, there was no way. And we were fortunate because when they flooded the river, the water was deep enough so we didn't set off the land mines that were set on the bank. Anti-tank mines and stuff that was down far enough under the water so we just went over the top. I'll give you an article you can take along with you. And it's written, the exact thing of what transpired. See, I was over there, three or four years ago.
- John: Oh, were you?
- Roy: And if you look in that little book, my son and his wife, we hit every single one of those little villages. We rented a car, and we didn't go sight-seeing, we followed the map, every one of them. And all the way, well, I didn't have enough time to get into Czechoslovakia. But it was interesting because, like the cement factory, when crossed the Moselle, is still there.
- John: Oh, yea?
- Roy: Well, just the remnants, but I could see it. I could stand on the shore and look across. Really traumatic thing, because when we came back, we landed in Chicago at seven-thirty that night, and the next morning my neighbor called me and told me to turn on the television. They had just hit the towers.



John: Oh, wow.

Roy: We landed at seven-thirty the night before. In Chicago, from Paris. So, you know, I am a pretty lucky guy.

John: Yea. Oh, wow.

Roy: You know, I am still, it is amazing what a trip back can do for a guy.

John: I'll bet.

Roy: I don't know if it did me any good, particularly. But, at the same time, once you do that, you can remember those things almost better than what happened last week. I suppose that is a sign of aging, too. So, that was a lovely experience. You know, this little book here, this takes me from Camp Barkley, Texas, to all the way out to the shipping point, and across, and it shows the names, and maybe I am being too aggressive here, but I've got some print-outs of those pages. If you could use them at all, I don't know.

John: I'd be glad to take them. Do you have a copy? I would be glad to take them.

Roy: It gives an itinerary of everything, like the Moselle crossing. I've got the notes that I took the night before we made the assault on Fort Koenigsmacher. And it ties in exactly with this engineer's report that I just transcribed from a web site, from the 90th Division. I thought it was just kind of nice to have those.

John: Yea.

Roy: I thought somehow, what I am going to do is send a copy down to the 90th Division Association. There is a lot of names in there. And they might want to print some of that just to see if they can find, or whoever is in there might be wanting to find somebody. So, I did have an extra copy made. I can always get another one. But it reflects all of that stuff. Just a second.

[Momentary break.]

John: Okay.

Roy: You can keep that, if you want to make a copy. This is the story that I got so far. And these are the pages out of the book.

John: Do you want these back?

Roy: I would like it back.

John: I'll mail it back to you.

- Roy: That is my copy. See. There is another copy around, someplace.
- John: Okay. I will send these back to you. I'll have them copy them and I'll send them right back to you.
- Roy: Yea. There is no hurry. It might help, with what is going on down there.
- John: Yea. A copy of the book. Okay. That's great.
- Roy: I wouldn't be doing this if I wasn't under pressure. My kids and grandkids.
- John: They're pushing you, huh?
- Roy: Well, they got a lot of stuff. I mean there is a lot of souvenirs scattered around. I captured my own German prisoner one day.
- John: Oh, yea?
- Roy: Well, sort of. He was willing. And I got his rifle. And I came in with this rifle. I couldn't have shot the damned thing if he'd have tried to run. But he was glad, you know. And one of the medics says, "Hey, look, the lieutenant's got a prisoner. It wasn't fortunate for him, though, because this was right across the Saar River, and they put him in a basement of a house up the street where they had German prisoners, and some of ours, and so on. And the Germans hit that building with a phosphorus shell, and everybody in it was either killed, or burned badly. And I think that is where he got hit. He wasn't as lucky as he thought.
- John: Well, again, that is an example of just, how do you defend against something like that? It happens.
- Roy: Exactly. And from that, I've always thanked God that I could have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. And it was close many times. But I am no hero, because, like I say, it's like going to the grocery store every morning. You've got to get up and get at it. And these guys, by God, I admire those dough boys. We lost a lot of them to trench foot and stuff. They'd come in, they had their four-buckle overshoes on but no shoes. I mean, they couldn't get the shoes on any more. That would tell you how their feet worked. Well, supply missed the boat, you know. They were short on underwear. And in the Bulge, one of the aid men told me, his name was Barker, he said, "We'd stay in that foxhole," he said, "You couldn't raise your head, and stuff." And he said, "Supply would come up at night and give us a couple blankets." He was in a foxhole. There wasn't any running around in the day time.
- John: That was the coldest winter in a hundred years, or so. The '44-'45 winter in Europe. Yea.

Roy: And, as I look back on it, I don't even remember where in the hell I slept many times. It was fortunate where I was, we had these, they were goose-down. We called them mummy bags. You know, for one guy. You could slip yourself into that, go off into a corner somewhere and you were warm. Thank God for those. But the average GI, there was no way.

John: How was the shortage on clothing? How about food and that?

Roy: We had our C-rations, or K-rations. Oh, yea. Everybody, we were issued so many of them a day. Depending on the situation. Most of the guys carried a couple in their knapsack, or whatever. But to get back for a hot meal was rare for an infantryman. Back where we were, the aid station, you know. Like I say, these guys would come back from the front with battle fatigue, and this and that, pneumonia. And we'd get them in the aid station, and we'd fix them a highball. Give them a little GI alcohol, and some synthetic powdered lemon juice from the K-rations, and water. That was good for them. It just kind of loosened them up. There was a certain amount, we had plenty of liquor rations if we wanted it. Most of us didn't have time to enjoy it. We were able to, you know, make these guys comfortable.

John: Roy, I am going to stop here and flip the tape.

**[Side B of Tape 1.]**

Roy: Letters that were written by people who wanted to learn more about relatives. There must have been forty pages of requests by people. And going through there, all of a sudden, I spotted this name Meboe. He was my battalion surgeon. And it must have been ten, fifteen years ago that this lady had written, or e-mailed the 90th Division to find out if anybody knew anything about Joe Meboe, when he served with the 90th Division. Well, I remember him, of course, because I worked with him. And he had been formerly a baby doctor, pediatrician, at the La Crosse Clinic, before he was drafted, before he got into this infantry outfit. So I e-mailed her back, and, of course, the postmaster couldn't deliver it, but there had been a phone number on that thing. And I called the phone number, and that is who it was. This was Joe Meboe's granddaughter. And she didn't know anything about his military service. Boy, so she and I have been going back and forth. I knew him like a brother. So, like I say, that Internet is a wonderful thing. For that. It just puts you right in the, more than happy.

John: That's great. What about toward the end? You say you got as far as Czechoslovakia?

Roy: Yea. We were one of the first units to get into, we went, in fact, the town was called Pilsen. It had a different name then, and the little town we ended up in, it's name was Susice. You'll find it in here. Well, it will be in that other stuff, too.

John: Okay.

Roy: May 8, 1945. I won't ever forget that. Our battalion had been going through some high land and wooded area in Czechoslovakia, just kind of sweeping, because the Germans were high-tailing it, about that time. And we hadn't taken any casualties. We had one casualty. A sniper shot him. But I know we got up to the top of the hill and we were looking down into this little village. I couldn't believe that there were troops coming into the village from both sides, Germans, Americans, wheelbarrows, motorcycles, and German Volkswagens, all coming into this town. And we got down into the town and that was the end of the war. They had signed the armistice then. We didn't know it until we got down into this little town. What a crazy feeling.

John: The fellow I mentioned earlier, who was in the 90th Division, was at Pilsen.

Roy: He was?

John: Right at the end. Told me there was a brewery there.

Roy: Yea. Pilsner beer.

John: And he, they gave him, I guess a barrel of beer, I don't know. A keg of beer. And his captain caught him. And said, "I don't have any problem with you getting a barrel of beer. Did you pay for it?" And he said, "No, the brewer was so happy to see us, he gave me." And he said, "Well, take some money back, and pay him. But see if you can get another barrel, too." I can't think of who that was. Well, it doesn't matter.

Roy: It was part of the 90th, because, as I say, a tank unit had gotten in there, going in first. But we just kind of walked in. The town was wide open. I remember, myself, I got a shave and a haircut. Cold water, of course. But I thought, just for the hell of it, you know. Yea, that was something. But that was the first thing I thought of, too, Pilsner beer.

John: Yea. That's great. What was it like when you and the guys found out it was over? And you were still in one piece?

Roy: I think most of us just sat down. No hoopla, no hurrahs, no jumping around. No nothing. Just sort of an anti-climax. Just unbelievable, you know. Things were tapering off. They weren't as bad as they were before. But at the same time, you never knew. Sniper. What the hell was he hanging around for? You know? And, yea, but as I recall, we just were a group, you know. And the group I was with was very small. There would be just myself and a couple of litter bearers, and a Jeep. Our idea being that we would get into this little town and set up an aid station, because things weren't quite as rough then. We could pick and choose a little bit.

So, yea, it was just, you know, so, it's over.

John: Did you, were you, were there plans to go to the Pacific?

Roy: Well, they were talking about sending some units to the Pacific, or to Korea. And then, of course, what they did was find, take the group, the people who had points. If you had, I don't remember, was it a hundred and thirty-five points? Or something that they would use as a determining factor as to whether you would be the first group to go back to the States. And I remember I was lucky enough to be in the first group, because I had combat time, and I had a Purple Heart, and stuff like that. And so I had enough. So they took those of our, the 90th Division, who had enough points and transferred then to the 99th Division, which was designated as a return-home division, so they'd have an administrative group that they could handle. So that is what they did. So I was assigned then to the 99th Division, and during the brief time that I was with the 99th Division to go back, I was the mess officer.

John: Oh, okay.

Roy: The colonel had to give me something to do, and I was also, I worked with the medics to trace down venereal disease contacts. Which was big business then.

John: Oh, I bet.

Roy: And so that is how that turned out. And I can remember General Patton called a parade front of the 99th that was going back, the people who were going back. And we marched in the rain, I remember, for I don't know, a couple of miles, to where there was an open area. And we formed up in parade front, officers in the front row, and so on. And stood there. And Patton came flying in in a Cub plane. Yea, he flew in. And old Patton, he is like they picture him. So we're standing there and he got up on the stage and called us all good sons of bitches and we killed a lot of Germans, and this and that and the other thing. Gave a short talk and then he come down from the platform, and he went across. He inspected the troops, you know. He came across the front row. Of course, being an officer, I was standing in the front row. And I was closer than from me to you. I could have spit in his eye pretty easily. But he was everything they said, boy. He was spit and polish, I mean, he was something. So I never forgot that one. Yea. So, that is the way it works.

John: But you didn't go to the Pacific?

Roy: No. No.

John: Okay.

Roy: If I'd have got into my National Guard outfit, that I was bucking to get into, that is

where they went.

John: They went to New Guinea.

Roy: Yea. They went to New Guinea.

John: I have talked to some of them.

Roy: And they probably ended up in the medics, or something, in the hospital or something. At least, the band members would have. Did you know any of those people?

John: I have just interviewed a few of them, but I didn't know any of them personally.

Roy: You didn't interview any from the regiment, did you?

John: No.

Roy: See, like I say, I belonged with the band. That was big time for me. I was just barely old enough to get in to it. But, with that, and the post office time I had, and the time overseas, and some reserves time, if I hadn't goofed up, I would have probably retired as a major.

John: Okay. What did you do when you came back?

Roy: Went into the shoe business.

John: Oh, okay.

Roy: Yea, my two brothers and I. We had the shoe store here that we closed up in '87. We had the store, oh, a little over fifty years. Had a real nice business. And I stayed with the business after we sold out, and I worked with them for several years.

John: Okay. You mentioned that you had the Purple Heart. Would you tell me about that?

Roy: Well, you know, I have often thought, they've asked me about it. And I have no way of proving by scars, or anything like that, but the doctor insisted that I have one. Our unit was in the town of Dilingen. This was shortly after we crossed the Saar River. This was kind of a rough place. We crossed on a little foot bridge, and about an hour after we got over the bridge, the Germans blew it up. So we were over there in a town called Pachten. And we had no vehicles. Just the battalion. And the Germans were in the bigger town of Dilingen, which was next door. And you'd actually hear their tanks a couple of blocks away. And we were, you know, kind of itchy. That is where I got this German soldier. You know. And so, I

remember going up towards the town proper to see what things were going on, if I could find out where the battalion headquarters were, and so on, if they needed me to be somewhere. And on the way back, before I got into the aid station, the aid station we had was, I think, had previously been a post office. Pretty solid building in there. Just as we were going back into, going to go into the station, German artillery hit the doorway and I just, I didn't get hit with shrapnel or anything. But I was hit with bricks and stuff. And knocked me down, you know. Scared the hell out of me.

John: Oh, I can imagine.

Roy: But, you know, I got down into the basement area where the aid station was, and this doc says, well, he signed a slip. At the same time, I felt a little guilty about that because there were infantry boys up there that probably should have had half a dozen of the damned things. Oh, yea. Same way with the Bronze Star. I got the Bronze Star and sure, that's fine, but in my opinion, every one of those guys on the line should have got the Bronze Star.

John: Yea. Yea.

Roy: And I think that is a regulation now. Eventually they came around to that. But there was a whole lot of them never got it. So I never brag about that.

John: Yea. But, it is still part of the story, though.

Roy: Well, what it did, I got the points. Of course, the doctor, that wasn't his intention. I am sure. Because I didn't even know it, then.

John: Okay. Then, where did you, where were you released?

Roy: Well, we went by forty-and-eight. Freight cars. From where we were. I can't remember exactly what town I might have been in. But, anyway, we traveled all the way back across France, to Marseilles. Marseilles, France, on the Mediterranean. And I stayed there in a tent compound, pyramidal tent, for maybe three days. And from there we were put on the troop ship back, which was kind of, I liked it. It was like a dream.

John: Yea. Okay.

Roy: That is a remarkable story. You mentioned the surgeon's granddaughter. Have you stayed in touch with anybody else?

John: Well, she didn't know anybody else.

Roy: Okay. She didn't. But have you stayed in touch with anyone?

John: Well, no. The only other guy I ever came across, and I have tried on the Internet, you know. I've got names and addresses from that old book, and just thinking, well, maybe I'll get lucky. So far, I haven't hit any. And, of course, a lot of them are dead by now. I have often wondered if I could get ahold of, like the Sharp family. One of these guys that was killed in that little town. If they knew the real story as to what really happened to their sons, their daughters, whatever. But I haven't been able to make a connection. And I feel guilty because here it is, sixty years later. Now I am trying. I probably should have when I first got back, but, you know, when you first come back, you don't even think about it. And, like I said in the beginning, I probably can remember more details now than I could. Especially after making that trip back. So, the one I did find was in the Legion magazine. They have a page in there, comrades are looking for, comrades in distress, and so on. I saw this guy's name, Barker, in there. He wanted to know if anybody from my unit could get in touch. Well, I called him up on the phone, and he was one of my company aid men in the Bulge. He was up on the front lines in the foxholes.

Roy: Wow.

John: So he and I talked on the phone. But it is a good feeling to be able to make a connection.

Roy: Yep. Especially after all this time. Yea.

John: You mentioned the Legion magazine. Do you belong to the Legion? The VFW, and that?

Roy: Oh, yea, I belonged for fifty some years.

John: Okay.

Roy: I get that, of course. I always look at the back, you know.

John: When you got out, Roy, you had the GI Bill. Did you ever use it? Education, or housing?

Roy: No. No. I never felt like I had the necessity.

John: Well, you had a career to come back to, though? Right? At the store.

Roy: Well, yea. I could have gone back into the post office. They had that open for me.

John: Oh?

Roy: But, I preferred, under the circumstances, with my two brothers, and the store was going good. My dad was getting to the point where he needed help. And I kind of



felt that I should step in there. I wasn't, I think I did most of the administration of the business. My brothers were great on the floor and were great with the advertising, and things of that nature. But I did the buying, and stuff. It worked out very well. It isn't too often that three brothers can get in a business without fighting.

John: You know, that's right. Yea.

Roy: But we hung in there. Sure, we had our differences, but we put a lot of our kids through school and college. When we sold her, we didn't have much left, but it was good for us.

John: This is a remarkable story. It is so important.

Roy: Well, it's hard to, like I say, I get the feeling sometimes when the grandkids ask me a question, and I get telling them about something, I keep thinking, I get a guilty feeling, you know. And that's not so great. My great grandfather, this probably doesn't fit into this at all. His name was Dilly. And I've got a book on it, and I've got his history, too. He was a survivor of Andersonville.

John: Oh, wow.

Roy: He and two of his nephews were captured shortly before Andersonville was built. And he survived, or I wouldn't be here.

John: Yes.

Roy: Because his son was my grandfather. And, have you ever read the book, *Andersonville*?

John: Yes.

Roy: It's a very, what I think, it is a depressing book to read. People like us can do what we do to our brothers. And he and his two nephews. And the story goes on him, when he was captured, his two nephews were captured with him. And he went in at a hundred and fifty some pounds and he came out at fifty-three.

John: Wow.

Roy: And how he lived, I'll never know, after reading that book. And the name, Dilly, is in the book. So that is what got me going on it. So I got on the Internet and I write, e-mail, this guy down there who lives near where the cemetery is, and he did some research, and he came back to me, and his name is listed. His name was Louis. And the one nephew survived, and the other one died of pneumonia at Andersonville. So, you know, that is a story, too.

- John: This is a remarkable story. It really is.
- Roy: Well, I don't know if it is remarkable. I often think that a lot of these guys who were in the foxholes could tell some better ones.
- John: Well, I had a very good friend, Stephen Ambrose, the writer.
- Roy: Oh, yea. Yea.
- John: He just passed away, here a couple of years ago. And it was during a talk in Madison a couple of years ago to a bunch of World War II vets. And after the talk, they were kind of just standing around and chatting. And a lot of them were saying, in essence, "I really didn't do an awful lot." And Ambrose said, "Wait a minute!" He said, "You were giants! You went out and saved this world." And that is true. That is very true.
- Roy: Well, at the same time, you know, you look back on it and, like I said, here I am back in this aid station, reasonably comfortable. And only expose myself to a real danger under circumstances that can't be avoided. Whereas, at the same time, the aid man and the litter bearers, they would crawl to get to somebody. Drive a Jeep down to a river crossing that was under fire from artillery. Fill it up and come back any number of times. Time after time, and they survived. And I would love to get ahold, to talk to those guys today. And I haven't been able to get ahold of them. But I understand there is a way, of course, I think they charge something like \$68 or something, per person, that they will research an individual, and locating him for you. See, all I can do is, I got their name and address, if there is an address in there. And then send that in and see if they are the same one that I was associated with. Some I get replies from, some I don't. But all I need to do is get one here and there, you know. The doctor, Meboe, is dead. Stoller, the chaplain, he is gone. My battalion exec officer is dead. The guy who started out as the company commander, a captain, Shultz, on D plus 2, with an infantry company, he ended up as regimental commander when the war was over of the 358th Infantry. And he is eighty-eight years old, and he is still living. I wouldn't know him personally. He barely knew me at the time. But Doctor Meboe got to know him quite well. But, guess the thing I enjoy most is being able to try to find them.
- John: Sure. Sure.
- Roy: I remember a time in the shoe store one day. This was quite a few years ago. A guy walked in to the shoe store. In those days, they were giving out free samples of Lucky Strike cigarettes.
- John: Yea. I remember that.
- Roy: In these little cardboard boxes. That is what we used to get in our K-rations. And

he walked in, and he was touting some brand. Funny brand, or something. And I looked at him, and I said, "Is your name Lamphier?" "Yea," he said, "how do you know?" I said, "Well, you were the heavy weapons platoon commander over in Germany." And he looked at me, and we knew each other.

John: I'll be. That's great.

Roy: So, you see, it's a small world. You never really know. And I spent some time with Joe before he ended up. He was back in practice. I stopped to see him on the way back from National Guard camp one summer. I was attached to a tank unit. Medical detachment, I had a tank unit. And I stopped on the way back in Viroqua to visit Joe Meboe. And he was pretty much the same. And I don't this to go on the record, because the technicians, you know, they were T-5s and T-4s, and so on. Some of those boys that were with that aid station in combat all the way through, they were more adept at administering plasma, closing wounds, stopping bleeding. They had done it so much. I was amazed. I can remember one particular town - maybe I'm carrying on.

John: No, no. This is important.

Roy: And, of course, I looked on. I helped sometimes. But that wasn't my function. These guys had had hands on, you know. And I remember one lieutenant, his name was Lieutenant Adjenon. It was during the Bulge. He had been shot in the back with a .50 caliber. And it had come out, apparently, below his heart. Because when they brought him in, I thought it was his heart showing. There was just this gaping wound. And what it apparently was, was part of one of his lungs.

John: Oh, okay.

Roy: And somehow or other, that .50 caliber run through him and missed a major artery. But he was bleeding. I can remember this one technician, he got a compress out, packed it tight, covered it with Vaseline gauze, and he cut a piece out of a GI raincoat and put it over the top, and sealed it with tape. That's all he could do. We had a bunch of casualties because we couldn't get ambulances up to where we were to get them out of there. It was during the Bulge. But, finally, late that night, in the middle of the night, they managed to get a two and a half ton truck up in there, someday. And we loaded these guys up. We had a whole half a truckload of casualties. And it wasn't more than three weeks later we got a card from him.

John: Oh, yea?

Roy: He was feeling okay.

John: That is remarkable. That is something.

Roy: But that's what I mean about these guys, these GIs. These boys in the foxholes up there. They were patching guys up that were probably going back into combat. Maybe he never should have gone in again. And they did some crazy things. I had an opportunity to do it a couple of times, you know, give somebody some morphine, and know they were going to help them. And thank God for that. That morphine was wonderful stuff.

John: That's remarkable. This is, what a story. Wow.

Roy: Well, it's pretty true. Like I say, I don't want to exaggerate, and I don't want to use the word "I" too much, because it was those guys up on the front end that did the troops. And the infantry boys. They knew it. Percentages were against them. I think the statistics on the 90th Division were that they lost, well, if they added it all up from D plus 2, all the way to the end of the war, I think they lost five out of every four soldiers. Percentages were probably one of the highest. You've probably heard that.

John: I've heard that about several units. Yea.

Roy: And over the course, because we'd get replacements, medics for the front lines. You know, these guys, they would lose our medics in the front lines often...

John: Let me hold up here and turn the tape.

**[End of Side B of Tape 1.]**

John: Okay, there we are. We're on the second tape. Great.

Roy: Well, like I mentioned, the chaplain, of course, and I were kind of free-lanced. We didn't do it all the time but there were times when we would be in a position where we would have to carry a litter, help carry, be a litter bearer or patch somebody up, or something of that nature. And the chaplain himself, Reverend Stoller, I can remember this Schultz, who was battalion commander at the time, he said he would have loved to take the chaplain's cross off and put an infantry badge on him, and give him a carbine. He said he would have been one of the best infantry officers on the line. Because he was just fearless.

John: Wow.

Roy: And he would often say, the chaplain would say, once in a while, like during the Bulge, he'd say, "Well, Roy, I'll go if you'll go." Which, he was a remarkable person. And to be with him, it would just seem like you'd be safe. Chances are better.

John: Okay.

Roy: So. The story goes, and I may be wrong. And I would hope you would research this before you print it. But the guys in the unit that were with him during the Normandy campaign, the hedgerows, you know. They tell the story of, at one time, the battalion was pinned down. They were trying to cross a field to get to the next hedgerow, or whatever, and there had been so many casualties, on both sides, from German machine gun fire and ours, and so on, nobody could get out to these casualties because of the heavy fire. Now I may be wrong, but it seems to me there was a write-up in *Life* magazine about this. And I know it was in, probably, one of *Stars and Stripes*, or something like that at the time, where the chaplain put up a flag, a white flag, and walked across the hedgerow to the German lines. And created a cease-fire long enough so that we could evacuate the boys, the wounded, on our side, and the Germans could do likewise on their side. And they did this. And he had the nerve to do that. And this was the kind of guy he was. And he had a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, he might have even had the DSC. And he was quite the boy. And so if that could be verified, I'd, that should be reprinted somewhere for the benefit of any of his surviving family.

John: Yes. That's remarkable.

Roy: Well, that is the kind of a guy he was. Yea. And of course, this incident where these poor boys of mine were killed, he was the first one down there. Yea. And I had pretty much had it. And he come back and he told me the details.

John: Yea.

Roy: So, I visited him later, too.

John: Did you? Where was he from?

Roy: He was from down in Tennessee, or somewhere down in that neck of the woods. He had originated as a Salvation Army captain in the Salvation Army before he got into the service. And, of course, he was a captain. He was a friend of a guy in the, I think it was the third battalion chaplain, whose name was Tony Sedotti. You can imagine he was an Italian.

John: I can imagine.

Roy: He looked like he should have been in the boxing ring. And I remember visiting him once in a while. When he would get close enough, you know. And he always had, Tony Sedotti, he was a Catholic chaplain. He always had a quart bottle of Benedictine. Liqueur. On his table somewhere, or on the aides chest. He says, "You can have all of that you want. It has a cross on the bottle." Ever seen a bottle of Benedictine?

John: I don't think so, no.

Roy: Well, it's got a cross on it. St. Benedict.

John: Oh, sure.

Roy: You remember goofy things like that. But, they were pals. Like I say, those two guys, if they'd have taken the Geneva cross off their helmets and joined an infantry unit, they'd have been leaders, *par excellence*. These were real people.

John: Yea.

Roy: They had one guy in the infantry. He landed on D plus 2, and he went through the whole thing, the works. With an infantry platoon, which the percentages were really against them. I remember him. He was just one of these guys. He never wore a helmet. He wore, he had a motorcycle helmet, the old kind with the strap under your chin. That was him. You could always tell where he was. And he never got a scratch.

John: Lucky.

Roy: But it is easy to remember those little things.

John: Yea. Sure.

Roy: And I am sure that there are some things that are better off not related, as far as. The guys in the front lines never had much chance to fraternize. Some of the finest people I met were the farmers down in the little villages in France. They were so grateful. They would have done anything for us.

John: I can imagine.

Roy: And in Belgium. And Luxembourg. Man, I tell you, we were king of the hill.

John: What were the German people like?

Roy: Well, you know, the people that we saw, for the most part, an infantry battalion isn't walking into the big cities. Like Darmstadt, or any of those. It is always the little towns where the combat took place. Where there was the most demoralization from artillery and so on. And you'd meet those people in those little farm communities and stuff, and they were very gregarious. Very grateful that it could be over. And they weren't Nazis, or nothing like that. And it was the same way with the soldiers. Most of them were *Wermacht*. Ordinary GIs like we were. The chaplain and I helped carry a German SS captain. He had a shattered leg from a bullet wound, after the Bulge, in one of the Moselle Valley things. And he was typical upper-class German soldier. His words were mostly cussing. Even though we were helping him. We had lots of offers from some of the GIs that they would be glad to take him and carry him for us. But I knew exactly where they would carry him.

John: Yea. Yea.

Roy: So the chaplain, of course, wouldn't allow that. That sounds like a story, too, but it is just so common. Our battalion had got into a fire fight up in the hills with a German SS company. And they were first class soldiers. And that is how we got to carry this guy. That is another incident.

John: Yea. Listen, when they write the story of World War II, this is the stuff nobody will have in their book, stories like that. The guy with the motorcycle helmet. Or the chaplain with the Benedictine. That is real.

Roy: And so real it almost seems onerous. And there is one other thing I got to say. It wasn't just our soldiers or their soldiers that suffered. This little town of Metz-sur-Vis, or Metz-sur-Esch. It's just over the border into Germany. That little town, we got into it, had a, I saw this later, three or four years ago when I visited. They had a bulletin board about as big as that picture over there, and on it the names, they had listed the names of all the children that had been killed during the war. And I mean, it was probably fifty or sixty childrens' names.

John: Oh, wow.

Roy: It made you think a little bit.

John: Yea.

Roy: And I can remember another incident, if you don't mind, we had come back from across the Saar River before we were going to go up into the Bulge, and they sent us back to get a hot meal. And in an area where we could all take a shower. And on the way back, on the highway, as we were in the Jeep, I was sitting in the back. And we were on this road, and the tanks were coming towards us, going toward the Saar River. And we were going back to this area where we would have a little more time. And as we were driving along, as we were going about maybe thirty-five or forty, and these tanks were coming this way, all of a sudden, a little German boy ran back of one of the tanks that was coming towards us, and by the time we saw him, he was right in front of the Jeep.

John: Oh, wow.

Roy: And we smacked him right head on, and he went up in the air and down into the ditch. I mean, this is war.

John: Yes.

Roy: And we stopped the Jeep, of course. And picked him up and took him up to where there was a congregation of GIs and medics, and I remember the doctor, we laid

him out and he was breathing. And I remember the doctor, I think I am right on this, I think the doctor, he was unconscious, the doctor had to take his tongue and pin it to his lapel so he wouldn't choke on it.

John: Oh, wow.

Roy: And then he instructed his medics to be sure they got him to a hospital, or whatever. But, see, now, the thing that touched me most was that in his hands, he had a handful of cigarette butts.

John: Oh.

Roy: That's what he was doing.

John: Scavenging cigarette butts.

Roy: He was out gathering cigarette butts. He was probably nine years old, or something.

John: Wow. That is heart-rending.

Roy: Yea. I remember that more than the river crossing. And Doc Roher, his name was. Later, I was with him one night, in this little village, that was practically in flames from artillery, and the GIs had radioed back, or wired back, to send the doc up there. They had an emergency. Had an emergency. This girl was having a baby. A German girl, you know. And but these infantry boys, that was more important to them than a whole lot of other things.

John: Yes.

Roy: So the doc and I went up into this place and the doctor delivered the baby.

John: Oh, wow. Wow.

Roy: It is things like that...

John: That stay with you.

Roy: They are part of it.

John: Oh, yea.

Roy: And how many times did this go on? During a war? Because these little villages, they were really bombed out. Any people, if there were any left, they were gathered in some cellar that was still reasonable. A lot of times we'd go into one of them, and find casualties. They were either civilian, or even a German soldier.



Try to load them up and get them back.

John: Well, that is remarkable. This is quite a story. It's really a story.

Roy: It's pretty much first hand, and I think, as I said at the beginning, if I hadn't made the trip back, it's pretty traumatic. When we first got in, I walked up Omaha beach, that is where we landed, because of the view you know from the channel. And I remember walking up the pathway, and it was pretty much the same pathway that I sixty years previously, and of course, that is where a lot of the cemeteries were, Pont du Hoc, where the Germans had this point on the channel where we lost so many men trying to take that point. Well, the little girl that conducted the tour recognized that I had been there, and she let me sit in the front seat with her, of the van. Her name was Karen, and she spoke good English. So I got in on a real good tour. I was able to point somethings out to her. I might have violated a little bit something, but I brought home a chunk of one of the emplacement pill boxes that the Germans had, and were shooting down to the channel. I just happened to find a little piece of that, surreptitiously put it in my pocket, and I wrote on it, to give to one of my great grandsons. He'll look at that some day.

John: What a story. What a story.

Roy: Well, I hope I didn't bend your ear too much.

John: Oh, no. No. This is great. This is so important. Okay, let me. If you think of anything else, I can turn this back on.

**[End of Interview.]**