

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
RAYMOND M. WHIPPLE
Paratrooper, Army, World War II.

2005

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Whipple, Raymond M., (1920-2009). Oral History Interview, 2005.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Raymond M. Whipple, a Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences in the 101st Airborne Division in the European Theater of World War II. Whipple touches on growing up in a large family, running away from home at age fourteen, getting married, and in 1942, being drafted into the Army. Assigned to be a paratrooper, he speaks of walking from Camp Claiborne (Louisiana) to Fort Benning (Georgia), paratrooper and glider training, getting leave when his wife was in the hospital, and his first jump. Whipple details riding an English troop ship to England, receiving field training in preparation for the invasion of France, and jumping into France at midnight on D-Day. He recalls fighting in the hedgerows and earning a silver star by taking out some enemy machine guns and an 88 millimeter gun that had his company pinned down. After three weeks of combat, he talks about the reorganization of his unit in England and jumping into Holland after their plane was damaged. Whipple explains why his unit refused to jump in front of British troops. He describes securing the Nijmegen bridge, taking cover from heavy artillery attack in an orchard, and being wounded in the arm. After three days in his foxhole, Whipple was transported to a field hospital and eventually to a war hospital in Spokane (Washington). He addresses his recovery, several leaves at home, and reporting for duty at Miami Beach (Florida). After passing an IQ test, Whipple mentions learning Japanese at the FBI Center at Camp Ritchie (Maryland), the promotion freeze after the war ended, and duty as a parade ground instructor at Camp Croft (South Carolina) until his discharge. After the war, he talks about his work in shipyards and on farms, his inability to get a GI loan due to lack of collateral, and eventually coming to own a farm in Door County (Wisconsin). Whipple reflects on the Army's tendency to lie and tells of being refused a membership spot in the local American Legion post.

Biographical Sketch:

Whipple (1920-2009) served in the Army from 1942 to 1945. He eventually settled in Sturgeon Bay (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by Terry MacDonald, 2005

Transcribed by Michelle C. Kreidler, Wisconsin Court Reporter, 2008

Checked and corrected by Calvin John Pike, 2011

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Interview Transcript:

Terry: This is an interview with Raymond M. Whipple, who served with the 101st Airborne Division during World War II in the European Theater, conducted at approximately 9:30 a.m. at the following address of 2498 New Settlement Road, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, on the following date of June 4th, 2005, and the interviewer is Terry MacDonald. So, Ray, can you tell us what year you were born and where you were born at?

Ray: I was born in 1927--1920 in Sturgeon Bay.

Terry: And how was your family--how many members were in your family?

Ray: My family--my mother and dad and them are all dead now, passed away, and there was only fourteen of us boys and girls in the family, and seven boys and seven girls. And there is only three of us boys--or two of us boys left, and one daughter is left.

Terry: Did you--

Ray: And my brother Roy, he is four years older than I am. He is up in the hospital with the Alzheimer's disease, and my sister is down in North Carolina, and I don't know, I haven't heard of her for quite a few years, and I live up here in Sturgeon Bay.

Terry: Where were you at in the ranking: oldest, or in the middle somewhere, or youngest?

Ray: No. My brother, Jack, was the oldest. My sister, Lucy, was the next one. My sister, Myrtle, was the next one. My brother, Erastus, he was the next one. He was in the South Pacific. My brother, Roy, he was with me in the North Pacific. My brother, Jim, was in the South Pacific. And me, I was in the North Pacific or North Atlantic. And my sister, Irene of Virginia, Irene, she is in North Carolina now. My youngest brother, Carl, he passed away by car accident. And my baby brother, he died after I was born, my little brother, Ralph.

Terry: So did you go to school in Sturgeon Bay then?

Ray: Yes. I lived in Sturgeon Bay here. I went to kindergarten, started in Sturgeon Bay, and then we went to Baileys Harbor, and I went to school in Baileys Harbor with Mr. Viste, and there it was only a two-room schoolhouse until I--until the eighth grade, and then from there we went to Egg Harbor, and that's where I finished my eighth grade school up there, and that was sort of all the schooling I had, up to the eighth grade.

Terry: And what did you do then after you got out of the eighth grade?

Ray: After that, well, it's hard to say. My youngest brother--or my old brother, that was Jim, he broke into a cottage, and the people next door claimed it was me, and my

dad took me in the wood shed with a buggy whip, and I told my dad, I said, "It wasn't me," but I got it anyhow. So about two days later I run away from home, when I was fourteen years old. I went up to Amberg, and I lived up there until I was just about twenty-one years old. In a stone quarry, I worked in gray granite. And then I come out of there, I went to Green Bay. They boarded up. And I went to the show house in Green Bay when Gone with the Wind come in, and I wanted to see that. So then I seen the first part of it. Then it was intermission. I went out in the lobby and got myself a Coke, and there was a guy out there was talking, and he was a farmer. He says, "Are you looking for a job?" I says, "Yes," I said, "I am." And he says, "I'm a farmer out in Green Leaf or up in Morrison," he says, "if you would like to work for me," he says, "okay." So I said, "Good." I worked for him for pretty near two years. And then I come home, and they had ____ [??] in Sturgeon Bay here. My mother and dad lived down on North 4th Avenue. We went to Andries in Sturgeon Bay. They had ____ [??] there, and that's where I met my wife, sixty-two ago, and we have been together ever since.

Terry: And what's her name?

Ray: Bernice. And, well, then we lived in town. I tried to get a VA veterans loan to buy a farm, but they turned me down on that because I had nothing. I just come out of the service, and I couldn't get a goddamn thing. Your local bank was your GI loan, and as long as I didn't have nothing, they wouldn't give me nothing.

Terry: So how did you end up getting to go into the service then? Were you still working in Green Leaf?

Ray: Oh, no. I was home here. We was married. We had just gotten married the 28th of February, and then I was drafted and when--shortly after that then I went into the service, December the--I don't know exactly. It was in '42. I went to the--went into the service. I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. First I went to Milwaukee to be inducted. Then I went from there into Fort Sheridan, Illinois, for my physicals and all that.

Terry: Was there anybody else from Door County that went down the same time you did?

Ray: Yeah, there was a bunch of them that went down, a whole bus load went down. We stopped at Stevie Arndt's place when she had the newspaper down there in town, delivered the newspapers and that, that's where the bus stopped, and had all of us picked up right there and went back to Milwaukee, and we was also there when we went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Terry: How did you get picked to go in the Army when you went down to Milwaukee? How was that picked out?

Ray: They didn't--they just told me that, "Well, you swore in, you are in the Army now, and you will be going home for a few days until we notify you when to come back."

So then we went back to--we got home, and it wasn't too long afterwards I was notified to go to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, so that's where I went down and got my physical. And after we had went around for two days down there in the winter time just with a rain coat and shoes on, going around from barracks to barracks for a physical, and then after the physical was all over with, then they said that we are going to ship you out to a different place, so we went to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. I went to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. We went through another physical. One bunch went one way, and some went the other way, and when they got all through, we got all together. The bunch that I was in, they says, "You are in the paratroopers."

Terry: No questions asked?

Ray: No questions asked. Wherever you go now, you'll be riding. You won't be walking no more. Three days later, full field pack, we walked from Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, to Fort Benning, Georgia. I took my training down there in Fort Benning, Georgia, and it was only a couple weeks, and then from there--

Terry: The training was only a couple weeks for a paratrooper?

Ray: Huh?

Terry: They only gave you a couple weeks training?

Ray: It was a couple weeks training because it was during the war, so we only had six weeks to train. That's all the training we had. Then we went from there to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and that's where I was stationed at, in Fort Bragg. And that was--I come home once when my wife was in the hospital with the little one. I come home for ten days. I went back again. And then they told me--the Red Cross told me that my wife was in the hospital. I told the company commander, I said, "Well," I says, "I'm going to go home." And he says, "You just was home." I said, "I know it, Cap, but," I says, "I'm going to go home. My wife is in the hospital." I says, "I am going to go home." I said, "If you don't let me go home, you might as well lock me up right now because at six o'clock tonight I'm on my way." So at six o'clock at night I had another ten day pass to come home. When I went back, I got all my shots. I was supposed to have shots before and shots after, and I couldn't even lift my arms for a couple days. But, anyhow, got to do a little training down there, and then we got all on the train, and we started out for New York.

Terry: Okay. Before you go on, can you tell us a little bit about what the training was like, how did you learn how to parachute and stuff?

Ray: We did that all down in Fort Bragg--in Fort Benning, Georgia, and when we got to Baxter, North Carolina, that's the whole deal right there at the base, that's where we took all of your training, our mock-ups and everything, jumped out of mock-ups, then we took our rides in order to qualify for jumping.

- Terry: Can you describe what it was like to jump your first time you jumped out of an airplane?
- Ray: Well, the first time I was just as scared as anybody else, and, in fact, I was pushed, but after that then you had to jump on your own in order to qualify. You pack your own chutes. Nobody else packed it. You had to pack it yourself because if it didn't open up, it's your fault, so they taught us how to do that. So that's how I got going into the paratroopers. And then from there I went into the gliders, glider training.
- Terry: Now, the glider training, that's where they had no--
- Ray: That's where you are sat into a dummy plane, and they put it with a big C-47, and that's towards last. That's what I was in towards last.
- Terry: And that, more or less, did a crash landing when it came in to land?
- Ray: That's right, yep. And we took our training in France--or in England. After we took all of our training in England, that's when the invasion of France.
- Terry: Okay. How did you--first of all, when you left New York, how did you go across the ocean, on a troopship?
- Ray: On a great big troopship from England. It was an English troopship, and we was on the way towards--over towards Newfoundland, and there was something wrong with the rudder in the back end. And we was in a big convoy going over, and we had to go into Newfoundland for repairs, so the rest of the convoy kept going to England. And after our boat was repaired, then we took off on our town over to England. Well, we made it. And we got over in, oh, towards Plymouth down there somewheres.
- Terry: Can you tell me what the living quarters conditions were like on the boat going across?
- Ray: Well, we slept in the cargo hole, and there is all hammocks in there, about four rows of hammocks, and there was no--ladders that was in there like nets, and you crawled--you are assigned to each hammock, so you climb. If you was up to the top, you had to climb from the bottom all the way to the top in order to get in your hammock. And going across was pretty damn rough. A lot of people sick and vomiting, puking all over one another, and it was a mess.
- Terry: And how did they feed you when there is that many men on the ship?
- Ray: They had the British gallery. You had -- they cooked it in the great big kettles and stuff like that, and we all had our little mess kit. We went around with our mess kit

and coffee, and we sat down and ate where we could do and then went back to our quarters and came back in the goddamn hole again.

Terry: There was really no room to do anything on the ship.

Ray: No, there was no room to do nothing. The only one that did anything was the guard that stood on the doors and stuff like that so nobody would jump over the side.

Terry: And how long did it take to go across the ocean, the trip?

Ray: I would say about a week it took us to go across. We stopped and had repairs and stuff like that about a week.

Terry: When you landed over--then you landed over in England?

Ray: Yeah, we landed over in England. And then--

Terry: And what time--what--can you tell us what time of month it was, or roughly, and the year?

Ray: It was in the summertime. I just couldn't tell you exactly because--

Terry: Do you know what year it was?

Ray: I think--if I'm not mistaken, I think it was in '43.

Terry: Forty-three?

Ray: Yeah.

Terry: Okay.

Ray: Because from there we took our training there, and then June the 6th when the invasion of France, that's when we went in, see.

Terry: Okay. So then it was '44 when you went over there then?

Ray: Yeah, '44.

Terry: So you were preparing the whole time when you were in England then?

Ray: Yeah.

Terry: Can you tell us what type of training they were giving you?

Ray: Regular field training like for roadblocks and stuff like that and then how to handle the hand grenades and hand-to-hand combat, all that kind of training that you never received before in the United States here.

Terry: Did you get any time off at all when you were--

Ray: No. No time off whatsoever while we was training. The only time we had off is when we went into France, invasion of France. We went in at midnight, jumped in at midnight. Then after we was fighting, I think it was about three weeks in France, it was pretty well organized across the peninsula. We cut across Cherbourg to Omaha Beach where we had the peninsula cut off to keep the Germans from coming in and Germans coming back. The 101st and the 82nd cut that area completely off.

Terry: Before we get into that too much, what was it like just before the invasion? I mean, the buildup, they knew that something was coming up. Did the soldiers kind of figure something big was coming up?

Ray: We knew it was coming up because we had briefing that, well, we was supposed to-- everybody was supposed to jump, and they told us that there was a German battalion up in that area. That's all.

Terry: Okay. So you were with the 101st Airborne.

Ray: Yeah.

Terry: And did you go across in a glider, or did you go across in a C-47?

Ray: I jumped across. I jumped. I jumped into France.

Terry: Were you behind enemy lines at the time?

Ray: Behind enemy lines.

Terry: On D-day?

Ray: On D-day. We went at midnight, went in.

Terry: Okay. So what was that like jumping at night then? Was that your first time you jumped at night, or did you practice that?

Ray: No, no. We jumped a couple times in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, at night with the plane. There was one time we jumped right over the top of the airport and didn't know it, and they said it looked like water down below. You unbuckle your chute so that if you hit water that the chute wouldn't pull you underneath. You unbuckle your chute, and just before you hit the water, you'd let go, you jump. But right over the airport, the runway sure doesn't look like water, and I hung on my chute and hung on

it until my foot hit the blacktop, and I knew what it was, and I was all right, see. A lot—some guys broke their legs. We had a couple guys that disappeared, I mean, that just didn't realize, you know.

Terry: So when you jumped into France then at nighttime, what was your landing like there?

Ray: Well, it was hard to say. I resolved – jumped about five miles off course, and we had to get our bearings to quick get together and get our bearings together to find out which way we were going to go and what direction, and we finally got organized pretty good, about half a dozen of us together, got together and figured out what was going on, and so we took off. We started meeting this one, meeting that one, and we finally all got together.

Terry: Now, the Germans flooded a lot of land area space over there.

Ray: Huh?

Terry: The Germans, did they flood a lot of land area?

Ray: No, not in France.

Terry: Not where you were at? Oh, they did that in Holland.

Ray: That was in Holland, but in France it was all hedgerows.

Terry: Okay.

Ray: It was only about two, three acres, and it was a big hedgerow all the way around it, and they had no fences, just the hedgerows, and that's all full of brush and stuff like that with a lot of prickles on, and the Germans had built their machine gun nests and everything else in these goddamn hedgerows, so it was hard to fight through there, see, but we finally made it through and got out on some main highway. I don't know what highway it was, and that's when we start moving out.

Terry: Did you find a lot of resistance when you were--

Ray: Yeah, quite a bit resistance as we was going through, but then we got on the highway. Then it was going pretty fair. They sent me out as first scout. I was, I'd say, maybe about one hundred yards out ahead of the rest of them, and there was a motorcycle come down the road with a sidecar on. It was a messenger. So I picked him off. And then all of a sudden I heard a eighty-eight shell go off, and our company commander was back, he was talking on the phone, and the eighty-eight took his head right off. So then our company was pinned down. So I laid in the ditch for maybe about ten minutes, and all of a sudden I started crawling forwards. I crawled, I'd say, seventy-five to one-hundred yards I went that way, and I come up, I

seen a machine gun nest up on the left, and I got rid of three of those guys there. And I waited and I waited for, I'd say, maybe another ten, fifteen minutes I waited, and I started crawling again, and I noticed across the road they had another machine gun nest that was crisscrossing, so, in other words--so one guy picked his head up over the sandbags that they had there, and I got him. The other guy, he started running, I picked him off when he started running. And the third guy, he picked up the machine gun and was going to take it off, and I got him. And I waited again for a little while because I was waiting for that 88 to go off again, and I knew just about where he was. So I crawled back again, but I doubled back, I'd say, maybe about 50 yards to the left, and I started to back up straight ahead again, and I don't know what ever happened, but the one guy was throwing a shell into the 88. When I seen him throw that shell, he picked it up and was going to put it in, I shot at him, and I must have hit the shell, and the shell exploded.

Terry: Wow.

Ray: And it killed the whole three guys that was on the 88. So when I went up by the 88, it was all clear, then I went down the road, and I motioned the rest of the crew to come on up. And the first lieutenant, that was Lieutenant Reidell, he says, "Ray," he says, "I am going to order a silver star." That's how I got that.

Terry: A silver star, that's one of the highest awards you can get.

Ray: For saving the whole company, see.

Terry: So what was that like, your initial combat? I mean --

Ray: It was hell. I hate to talk about it, but every time I see the boys go over, tears come to my eyes. I still--I do dream quite a bit once in a while, but there is nothing I can do about it.

Terry: So were they able to get you that silver star when you were there?

Ray: No. I never received it until I got home here. That's when Mark Foster got it for me. He had it--it was on my discharge papers. He seen that I got it and all the rest of the medals that goes with it.

Terry: So the initial combat then, how many days were you on the line in combat?

Ray: I was over three days--or three weeks in France, fighting in France. And then we went back to England to be reorganized. Half of our unit was pretty well shot up. We went back to England to reorganize and then replace all of our unit. And while they was replacing our unit, they give us a seven-day pass for all of the boys that was in the service. They gave us a seven-day pass in England to go around and see places, so we took our seven days, and after that seven days was over, we went back training again and had our unit pretty well all filled back up again with new

members. And then Patton and the rest of the Army was pushing up through France up towards Holland. So then we got the word that we was going in. The British was supposed to come up a certain area. So all of our planeload that we had refused to jump or land in front of the British.

Terry: And why was that?

Ray: Well, the British, every time you got in by the British, that's all they was doing is had the big ball of fire and brewing their goddamn tea, and we had to run and guard their tanks and other equipment, and they turned around and sitting around free, and so that's why we refused to jump in front of the British. But our planeload--our plane got shot with a left mortar with--a right mortar with fire--with anti-aircraft. It started on fire. Well, the pilot says, "I'm sorry, boys," he says, "you will have to jump." So we jumped in France--or in Holland.

Terry: Now, was this Operation Market Garden?

Ray: Huh?

Terry: Was that called the Operation Market Garden that you were jumping into in Holland?

Ray: That I couldn't--my memory is getting hazy.

Terry: Okay.

Ray: But all I know is when we jumped into Holland there, we got organized together, and we were supposed to take hold the Nijmegen bridge, hold of the Nijmegen bridge. Well, we finally got that and secured it so that the Germans didn't have a chance to blow it up. Well, then we was sent by the captain into a wooded area, like a orchard, and we all dug in. And during the night the Germans, they threw every goddamn thing at us but the kitchen sink. And when I had dug my hole, my foxhole, I undermined it on the side, and there was an old outhouse that was in the orchard there, and I tore the damn door off. It was only on leather hinges. I tore it off, put it over the top of my foxhole, and I put all the dirt on top of that to try to camouflage it. I had just an area where I could stick my head out. Just a little ways from me there was another buddy of mine, and he was so thin, his hair was just as black as charcoal, and after that shelling, he stuck his head out, I overshot him, he stuck his head out of that hole, and it was snow white. But, anyhow, things was going along pretty good, and we was on a night patrol. I just had come back in, and then I was getting squared around to find out where the hell I could go for the rest of the night to dig in, and I heard a gun go off, and I had my rifle in my hand, and it knocked the rifle out of my hand, and the bullet went right through my arm, through here to here. I got a silver tube in there.

Terry: It broke your arm?

- Ray: It took the bone and everything right out, and I laid three days in a foxhole.
- Terry: With no medic--no medic or nothing?
- Ray: I had a medic come there and give me a couple morphine shots, bandaged it up. They couldn't get me out. They couldn't get me out. Patton come up with AmTracs, and they finally picked the wounded up and started taking us back, and we was going back through the German lands again. **[End of Tape 1, Side A]**
- Terry: This is Tape One, Side Two, Ray Whipple, and he is speaking of going back into a field hospital after being wounded.
- Ray: Yeah. I went in the field hospital, and what they done with me there, I--they must have put me out, and when I woke up, I woke up in England. I don't know how I got there. I laid in a British hospital in England, and every time--about every fifteen minutes, a half an hour, a nurse would come in and turn--roll me over and shove a needle up my butt and give me penicillin shots. I looked like a human pin cushion. So towards last I was feeling pretty good, so then they go and they shipped me to Plymouth, down in the hospital down in Plymouth. It's way on the coast, and they told me that I was going home. So I laid in Plymouth, I'd say, maybe about three days in the hospital down there, and then they finally took us--put us on a hospital ship at Plymouth, and we started back for New York.
- Terry: Before you got back, did you meet your brother over in England?
- Ray: Only twice. The first time I met him over there, when I went to see him, and the second time when he come over by me. That's twice that we met him.
- Terry: Were you in the hospital the second time when he came to see you?
- Ray: No. Roy was in the hospital the first time when I seen him, but I only could stay there just a short time, and then I went back to my unit again, but then Roy come over by me when I was in the -- on maneuvers, and they took me out, and we went to London then. That's when we went to London.
- Terry: Okay. What outfit was Roy with, do you recall?
- Ray: Roy was with the Engineers.
- Terry: Okay. And, Ray, you also had the bronze star. Did you get the bronze star--when did they award that to you, for what?
- Ray: I just can't remember now what the hell it was for.

Terry: That's okay. We'll go on then. Then you were getting ready to come back to the United States?

Ray: Yeah. I come back on the hospital ship back to New York, and we laid in a big auditorium or a big warehouse in New York on the floor, all on stretchers. And the nurses come by, and they said they was going to ship you the closest place to home. So I figured, well, Battle Creek, Michigan, would be about the closest that I would know of. But I got shipped all the way to Spokane, Washington, clean across the country, and it was a war hospital. They ship you wherever--if you had a head injury. You went to a different place if you had body injuries or something the other one. And I went to war hospital, and Spokane was a war hospital. So I went down there, and I was down there for about three weeks, and they said, "Well, you are getting along pretty good, so," they said, "we're going to give you a 30-day furlough to go home," so they sent me thirty days. I had to pay my own way. I come home, and then I was home for thirty days, and I was doing pretty damn good, so I wired back in for another thirty days, and they give it to me. So I figured, well, I'm doing pretty goddamn good, I will try again, and I called back in again, and they said, "No, you better come back to the hospital." So then I went back to Spokane. So I went back to Spokane. I was back there about four or five days in the hospital, and I got a twenty-one day leave to go home and report back to Miami Beach, Florida. So I was home for another fifteen days or something Miami Beach, Florida, and I had all my woolen clothes on down in the middle of summertime, hotter than hell. Laid in the hotel down in Alban [?] Hotel. Air conditioned, but they wouldn't turn it on. So we used to take a big Turkish bath towel, soak it down with ice cold water and then wring it out and lay it over the top of us on top of the bed to rest. And the only place you could rest decent was go to the show house where they had air conditioning. It was the same show on for all week, so you seen the same show pretty near every day for a whole week. And then they had--

Terry: What did they have you doing down in Miami? What did they have you doing, anything?

Ray: Nothing, just relaxing and spending some of your money if you had it. And then towards that they had an IQ test, a 300 word IQ test. It was so goddamn hot. You couldn't hardly lay there and read and start thinking what the hell to do, so I started marking down, it was all true and false, so I just marked off whatever I thought was right. Two days later there was two of us wound up at the FBI Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, and I was one of the two. Got down there, and then I had my wife come down there. I had a--in a motel because I had a motel, but I had to stay in camp. It's intelligence. And they had American-Japanese boys there, and there was 90 percent of them was from New York. And we was learning Japanese, and we was for interrogating--scheduled to go overseas, over to the South Pacific, and when we was in there, I was buck sergeant, so they made me first sergeant, and one of the initiations--or the first lieutenant I was with, he made him captain--or captain, and we was scheduled to go overseas, and then the word come out that the war was ended, and it was a false rumor. So two days later then it finally come out that the

war was ended, so then all of our ranks was froze. We didn't get them. We never received them.

Terry: But you were still first sergeant, though, right?

Ray: No.

Terry: You didn't get first sergeant?

Ray: They had me down for first sergeant, to be first sergeant, but everything was froze when the war ended. That was it.

Terry: Okay.

Ray: So then we started eliminating and all that stuff, so then they go and they sent me to Camp Croft, South Carolina, and I was down there for a couple of weeks, and I didn't do nothing. It's a lot of new kids and stuff like that.

Terry: Oh, you were like an instructor?

Ray: Yeah, instructor, on the parade ground. I sat. I couldn't hobble around much, so I sat on a goddamn burro and I says, right, left, right, left, left, right, whatever, forward and back, and that's all I was doing. And then they finally said that I was going to get discharged all on points, on the point system. So then they finally said that I was going to go home.

Terry: And what time of year was this then?

Ray: This is in October.

Terry: October '45?

Ray: Yeah, October the 5th, 1945, when I come home.

Terry: Okay. Couple questions before we get into you getting out. When you were overseas, did you ever have any USO shows at all or anything like that?

Ray: No, we never had.

Terry: Because you were too much in combat?

Ray: That's right. I never seen the front lines. I was always behind lines, German lines.

Terry: Behind the enemy line?

Ray: Yeah. Hit and run all the time.

- Terry: Did you meet--did you have--make any good friendships with any of the men you served with?
- Ray: With one man I served with, was a big Pollock from Chicago, Nat Kritakowski [??].
- Terry: I don't want to ask you to spell that either.
- Ray: He was my best buddy I had, and we chummed together from the time we was in the service--first got into the service together until I got wounded, and that was the last time I seen him.
- Terry: And you never heard from him after?
- Ray: Never heard from him since. I don't know if he passed away or if he got killed over there or what happened.
- Terry: Did the 101st Airborne ever have any reunions?
- Ray: They had some reunions, but I could never make it. I could never make it. I never -- financial problems, I just--I just couldn't make it. Otherwise they had a couple of them, but I could never make it.
- Terry: So then when you were getting discharged, you had enough points because of your combat duty--
- Ray: Yeah.
- Terry: --and your being wounded and things?
- Ray: Yeah.
- Terry: And so what happened when they--when they discharged you, can you explain to us what happened then--
- Ray: Well--
- Terry: --as far as what took place?
- Ray: I come home, and I went back down in the shipyard, working in the shipyard. And the noise was so goddamn great, I couldn't stand it. Every time somebody would cut loose with a tip of the hammer, I took for a corner someplace and ducked, so I had to get out of there. So then Harry Martin had a farm out in Nasewaupee. It was 120 acres, and he wanted to know if there's a chance for me to run the farm for him. I says, "Yeah," I says, "I could." So my wife and I, we moved out there, and I had one -- two of the boys, we moved out there. They was small. We had 33 head of

cattle on the farm. We had three years of manure all on one pile outside. He had one horse that was in the barn. He had manure and his hind end was touching the ceiling. He was laying in dirt. I took out 13 manure spreader loads of horse manure out from behind that horse alone to get him down. And the young stock that was in the barn, they were walking just about up to the ceiling in dirt, and I worked over a week to get that barn cleaned, get everything all out of there, get it all out on a pile. And he had an old manure spreader there, and I pitched manure on the manure spreader, and I hauled it all. I covered ten acres as heavy as that spreader would spread. I never put a dent in the pile. But, anyhow, he had an old 1020 McCormick there, and my neighbor across the road, this was up in April, my neighbor had already ten acres of oats sowed, and I didn't even have nothing done, so I started, and I had five acres more sowed after I got done than he did, and I-- So then he took and he got sick and went to the hospital. He couldn't--well, I had--it was all arranged. I was going to buy the farm for \$12,000, 120 acres with thirty-three head of cattle and that in there, and I went to Arnold Loggerquist [??]. I tried to get a loan, and he said, "If you can run the farm till fall," he says, "I will see that you get the farm." A verbal agreement. There was nothing on paper. So when Harry Martin got sick, he had no money to pay the doctor bills, the hospital, so he had his brother Hollis come out, the veterinarian come out, and they vaccinated all the cows and all that, and they had oxen right out ____ [??]. So my dad, he had a farm out in Nasewaupee or out in Clay--Institute, out in Carlsville. He had 80 acres out there, and he was just going to start a farm, so he said to me, "Ray," he says, "pick out five cows," he said, "the best cows you got in the barn and let me know." I said, "Okay, dad, I will." So I give him five cows, the best cows that I had in the barn. He got two of the oxen, he bought those five cows, put them on his farm. Well, then I was out of a place. Then Mulvits [??] he had a farm in Kewaunee. It used to be pretty close down there somewheres. He wanted somebody to run that farm with the option to buy it, so I went down and looked at it, and he had a big hollow, and that son of a bitch was full of manure, and it's only 80 acres on the farm. And he had pretty damn nice cows there, but I just couldn't--I couldn't see -- he wouldn't sign no papers or nothing. He wouldn't. So I couldn't see that either, so I quit. I come back home, back to Sturgeon Bay, and then I went back down to the shipyard. I got down there in the dry dock. Well, then it was pretty good down there. So then towards last, I got laid off, I didn't know what the hell to do, so then I had a few dollars that we had got ____ [??] out paid that I had saved. And we bought a piece of property on Superior Street, Sturgeon Bay, and I go and I tried to get a loan to build a house. I couldn't get a loan noplacement.

Terry: So the GI Bill didn't work out too good for you?

Ray: The bank wouldn't even look at you because you had nothing to--collateral, you know. So Howard Klapp used to have that Cloverleaf store right by Petersons down there where the swimming pool is. He says, "Ray," he says, "I couldn't get a loan either," he says. He says, "I got a loan," he says, "from the state." So I called into the state, and they said they would give me \$1,000 to start out with. Well, \$1,000 wasn't much, so I went ahead and I talked to--my wife and I were talking together,

and I talked to the building and loans down in Sturgeon Bay here, different ones. They wouldn't even look at me. I says, "Yeah, I heard quite a bit about this cash and carry in Green Bay," I says, "let's go to Green Bay and find out once," so we started to Green Bay, was going past Brussels, and Leroy's, they had a lumberyard down there and feed mills and that down there, so we stopped in there, and I talked to him, and he said, "Well, I tell you, let's figure it out," so we figured everything out in 16-inch centers, and, well, we were short. So they got down and figured it out in two foot centers. Well, we come out pretty close. And he said, "I tell you, Mr. Whipple," he says, "if you got \$1,000 to spend," he says, "I will give you \$1,000 credit." And I was working in Algoma Foundry at the time, getting \$90 every two weeks. But, anyhow, we got the loan. I go and I give him the size of the house I wanted. So on a Saturday a great big dump truck come in the yard, lift up the box, dumped all the goddamn lumber off that he had given me. So then I had my brother come over with his little cat, dug out the basement. I finished digging it out by hand, laid the footings down on the bottom, all--poured it all by hand and then started laying cement blocks in the basement. Got the basement--cement block basement all done, and then I started the floor. Eleven o'clock at night I'd quit because I couldn't--the neighbors--after eleven--or ten o'clock it was, you had to quit. So I would go back up to the government home we live in, eat something, go back to bed, and get up at five o'clock in the morning and go down to Algoma, go to work again. Come home at night and say, oh, shit, every night, day in and day out. I finally got it built up, but I didn't have enough money to put windows in it. I only had enough money to buy a door, so I put a door in, and I couldn't afford to pay rent in two places, so my wife and I, we decided let's move into two by fours, so that's what we done. And every week I--or every two weeks I got my check, I got enough money -- had enough money in it, I went ahead and bought a window, cut it out, and put it in, and that's where we was going until I finished the house. My kids was all going to school down there, and they taking agriculture and that, and they couldn't raise no animals in town, so then I was looking for a place out in the country, and I finally found this one out here, so I traded my house in town for this one out here, the house here with 20 acres on, and then I bought the 40 across the road afterwards. And that's--I have been living out here ever since, since 1960.

Terry: Wow. So, Ray, on your GI bill then, you didn't use--you didn't get to use any of it?

Ray: Didn't use nothing of it.

Terry: And you were telling me that probably six or seven years ago Mark Foster, who was the veteran's service officer in Door County at the time, he helped you get the medals, huh?

Ray: Yeah, he is the one that got all my medals for me.

Terry: And I see here you got the--Ray has it all encased in a nice glass case showing his purple heart from his wound, silver star that he was awarded, a bronze star, and then ribbons for France and Holland.

Ray: Yeah.

Terry: And he also a few years ago was awarded – when France came over and awarded certificates for people who served over in France.

Ray: That's right. I had that at Corpus Christi Church. That's when Mark Foster had everyone over there.

Terry: Good. And, Ray, so what do you--overall what was your opinion of your military service? I know you got your active into the service and stuff but at the time--

Ray: Well, I enjoyed the service quite a bit. The only thing I didn't like about the service is that they lied to you so much. They tell you one thing, and five minutes later they come back and tell you something different. That's one reason why, otherwise I would have stayed in the service if they--longer than what I did, but that's the only reason why I got out. I just couldn't hack it. I mean, if they had told the truth at the beginning, but, I mean, what can you do. It's just like this president that we got right now. I mean, I – I just can't see that war with Iraq or nothing. Just because one man wanted to get somebody else out of the office, and he did it. This is no goddamn war, and our men are getting died over there for it. That I could never see.

Terry: So overall on your--you know, what about your combat experiences that you endured during Word War II, what kind of impact did that have on you?

Ray: As far as I'm concerned, I had a job, and I figured I could do it, and I done what I could do. They were shooting at me, and I was--I made my thing where I was going to shoot somebody else too.

Terry: When you got out and have you--did you join any of the veterans organizations around?

Ray: When I come back home here, when the American Legion had the Bay View Hotel – do you remember the Bay View Hotel? It used to be right off of Arndt's place.

Terry: Where was that located?

Ray: That was right across from the motel from where the--you know where the--

Terry: In downtown Sturgeon Bay?

Ray: You know where the Clark's filling station used to be? The building was right in back of that. It used to be the Bay View Hotel. Now, the American Legion was running that, and they went in the hole. So then Butch Sorenson was the bartender, he took over, and he thought, all right, he had made money for the American Legion. So I used to go in there quite a bit, my wife and I and my mother-in-law

and my father-in-law used to go in there quite a bit. And I started talking to Butch and he says, "Ray," he says, "did you ever do a lot of painting?" And I says, "Yes, "What would you charge," he says, "to paint this building here?" I says, "Well," I says, "Butch, I tell you," I says, "it won't cost you a penny." I said, "You buy the paint," I says, "I will paint it for you." He says, "Good." So they went over Door County hardware store and got all the Dutch Boy paint, white paint and that, and I painted that whole damn building. And they had that great big sign that was up above that was all in silver or gold. That was taken down. I brought that home, and I refinished that all up at home, went back and put that back up again. And then Butch says to me, he says, "How would you like to join the American Legion?" And I says, "Yeah, I would like to join it," I says. So he talked to some of the boys there, and there's a couple of them that said, "We got enough members. We don't need no more."

Terry: Really?

Ray: That's right. That's exact words what they told me, and I said, "Well," I says, "then you can take your American Legion then and shove it right up your ass," I said. And right today I got no use for the American Legion, and the American Legion has got nothing today on account of that. They got just a little goddamn shed up there by the ballpark, and that's it.

Terry: And the VFW or--

Ray: Yeah, none of them ever asked me to join, so I never--I never--

Terry: Okay.

Ray: --went ahead. I would have liked to have joined some of them, but they never asked me, and I am just too damn old now.

Terry: Okay. Ray, do you have anything else you would like to comment on for the interview?

Ray: No. I--I don't know. I just don't like to talk too damn much about stuff because I get so uptight, you know, that--

Terry: Okay. Well, we thank you very much.

[End of interview]