

Recorded Interview
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Jim Enzor, Co. B 409th

I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. When the war started I was in high school. I was out punting a football in the side yard. My mother came to the back door and told me the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and that we were going to be at war. I told my mother that the United States would take care of the situation long before I would have to go into the service. My father was in WWI and was in the inactive reserve because he was in medical school.

I enlisted with the Air Force in Indianapolis when I was seventeen although they told me they would not take me until I was eighteen. By the time I was eighteen I was in Bloomington, Indiana going to Indiana University. The draft board there said they were not interested at all in anything I had done in Indianapolis. They needed to fill their quota in Bloomington, so off I went. It was a foregone conclusion at least in my high school that we were all going into the service; it was just a matter of where we went. At first my parents were very happy that I had not gotten into the Air Force. At that time we were losing a lot of pilots in the 8th Air Force during the bombing in England.

I ended up in IRTC (Infantry Replacement Training Center) for basic training which was located at Camp Croft in South Carolina and was obviously going into the infantry. After hearing that news, my parents had mixed emotions about where they wanted me to be. I ended up in sniper school. One day I was to protect headquarters which involved climbing a tree with a big firecracker which simulated a grenade. The enemy, in this

case the Captain and his radioman came and sat down underneath my tree; I was able to light my firecracker and drop it on them.

The company I was in was ninety-five percent first generation Italians from Bayonne, New Jersey many of whom could not read or write English. I had to read letters that they got from home. We had one soldier who was a sword swallower from the circus and an ex-British soldier from the Black Watch in England who was caught stealing and was taken off to the brig. One day the acting First Sergeant came to me and said that I had four options: apply for OCS; apply to become cadre at Camp Croft; go to ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program); apply to transfer to the Air Force and become an Air Corp Cadet. My dad told me that the ASTP would end shortly and I had no interest in that, so I pursued the US Army Air Corp Cadet Program. When I transferred to the Air Force I was told that this was a special group that was created by a Congressman who said the Air Force wasted too much time training pilots when any red blooded American young man with the proper physical and mental capabilities could become a pilot in a lot less time. I had to sign a waiver that if I did not become a pilot that I would agree to go back to the infantry. After going through flying school and washing out because I flew over a girl's dorm, I went back to the infantry.

I went to the 103rd Division in late July of '44 and when I arrived at Camp Howze, Texas carrying my own service records, I found out they were not expecting me. They were shocked that an air cadet had walked in there with his service record in a manila folder. They assigned me to a heavy weapons company and I was there for all of one week when they came to tell me that they wanted me to become part of the I&R Platoon (Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon). I spent the next month training, during which time

the company clerk came to me and informed me that I qualified for a furlough and considering that I was probably going overseas very shortly this may be my last opportunity. The officer training us was aware that some of the men might be given that option. Therefore, he said if you go on furlough you will be kicked out of the I&R platoon and sent to a rifle company. I weighed which way I wanted to go. Assuming that this was the last opportunity to go home I took the furlough. I did not really believe that they would kick me out of the I&R platoon but when I got back they told me to report to Company B. We were very close to packing up and heading to New York.

I sat next to Virgil Wolff on the train to New York. He had run out of money playing poker and wanted to sell me his watch. He did not want to borrow money from me in the event he might not be able to pay me back. He said his wife purchased the watch for one hundred dollars about a month before. I told him I had a watch but I was willing to help him and bought the watch for fifty dollars. I kept that watch all through the time I was in the service. Many, many years later (1995 or 1996) I found out that a Virgil Wolff lived in Atlanta and had been in the 103rd Division. So, I sent him his watch back. He sent me a letter and enclosed a picture of the watch. He sent each of his children a copy of the letter and a picture of the watch. I was certain the watch belonged to Virgil because his initials were engraved inside the watch.

We sailed over to Europe on the *Monticello*. I really don't have much memory of the trip. I ate candy bars most of the time. We were stuck way down in the hold and encountered a very heavy storm. Ninety percent of the men were seasick most of the time; it was a pretty miserable trip. We only had one or two opportunities to get up on deck during the whole voyage. It

was pretty awful trying to go up to get something to eat. When I did get to be on deck I saw that there had been a collision between a tanker and a freighter. The tanker was burning furiously, potentially marking the spot for the U-boats to find our convoy!

After we landed in Marseilles, we marched close to 20 to 25 miles up to our bivouac area. We pitched our tents in the pouring rain and I watched as the rain streamed through my tent. I was not part of the group that was sent into Marseilles to help unload the ships. We had turned our rifles in when we left Howze and were issued different rifles when we landed. The rifle I was issued was awful which prevented me from hitting anything close to the target on the practice rifle range in Marseilles.

The Squad Leader was Curtis Smith. Otto Peters was our Platoon Lieutenant and the Company Commander was Dennis Walton. The Battalion Commander, Colonel Teal Therrell, was from Bennettsville, South Carolina. I know that because after I began coming to the reunions he always came to our company hospitality room, spent most of the time there and we promoted him to Corporal. Our Regimental Commander was Lloyd whom I never saw once I left Camp Howze.

We were given only the information that had to do with our immediate vicinity. We did not have information about our regiment or division. We did know what was happening in our battalion but that was all. I was aware of the two divisions on either side of us because I ran into some areas where they had been overrun and found helmets of their division.

We took roads adjacent to the Rhone River through Dijon and turned east at Epinol where we went into the lines. We were out in the middle of the Vosges Mountains in a heavy forest when we first encountered enemy fire. When you face combat you are a little fearful; it is such an unknown

experience to you that you do not know what to expect. To describe that is difficult. After about three days we had replacements and they came up to me and said, "What is it like?" as if I was a veteran. We were in reserve behind the 3rd Division. We hit the road and I was on flank protection, scouting as we climbed the mountains. We had to run to try to keep up because the rest of the unit was down on this flat road. The first little village we went through the church bells were ringing and we thought they were celebrating liberation. We found out later that it was a signal to the Germans to point out our position. We found that out later when the artillery started to come in. The little towns that we were around were unknown to me but we got word apparently that there was a German unit that the Division wanted us to attack or try to capture. We went up the side of a mountain in the dark on a very, very narrow trail holding on to the person in front of us. We had a German speaking member of our company out in front who tried to talk our way past a machine gun emplacement. Something was wrong with what he tried to communicate and we were fired on. Without reacting, we went back down the trail. We slept on the side of a hill that night while it poured rain. We found out later there were German soldiers sleeping on the same side of the hill. Some of the men had reached out in the night and felt a German boot, recognized by the hobnail boots that they wore and we did not. The Germans were smart enough to recognize they were not where they should have been and moved out in the middle of the night before we could do anything about it.

The next day we took a different path and we were fortunate enough to have picked up the security of the Germans outside of the town of Steige. We caught the Germans in that town totally by surprise. Our whole company lined up on the top of a hill and a sister company, Company C, had

gone around the other side of the town. While the Germans were lined up behind their chow wagon for dinner, we sent a sheet of fire into the town. We were able to capture a couple hundred soldiers and eight officers. That night they counterattacked in waves trying to overrun us; we were barely able to hang on. We had no company officers who were not wounded or killed when they fired back. They were behind us and higher up. That was one of the times the further back we were the worst it was because the Germans were firing over our heads, hitting our 4th platoon people and our officers who were at the top of the hill. We had put our prisoners in houses under guard but some escaped when the Germans counterattacked.

The next night I was put in a house and we found a German uniform in the basement. We were pretty much aware that the family living in the house had a soldier in the German army. The road signs changed from French to German when we went from Lorraine to Alsace. Almost all of the people in Alsace were German; you had to be a little more cautious of the loyalty of the civilians in Alsace than you did in Lorraine. Two days later we were on the road again, this time to Dambach-la-Ville, a walled city. We had a lot of artillery support when we attacked this time. When my wife and I visited Dambach five or six years ago the town had just barely grown outside those walls. The walls, built by the Romans, were about twelve to fourteen feet high and six feet thick. The Germans were just about stuck inside that town with few ways of escape allowing us to capture many of them.

I was the security guard at the battalion headquarters. Colonel Therrell sent me and one other rifleman out to protect the wiremen because the Germans had cut all the telephone lines to our battalion headquarters. We had to go out in the woods in the dark and try to find those wires. The

woods were just full of Germans but they were not very smart. They were jabbering away and we could hear Germans all around us. We were hugging the ground hoping not to be seen. The Germans were smart enough to cut the wires and then pull them as far away as they could pull them. We found one wire and spliced the three wires into it after which we skedaddled back to inside the town. It was a miracle that we found the wire at all in the dark. When we got back Colonel Therrell was talking on the phone to Colonel Lloyd, the Regimental Commander, telling him that he had control of the town. The next morning we found eighteen Germans in the cellar right below him! It was about November 27; we stayed there another day and then hit the road. We eventually went through a small village with a tank unit sitting in the streets. We were told that the Germans did not have any armor that side of the Rhine River in our sector. Since there was no point in keeping our bazookas or anti-tank weapon we had dumped them there.

We approached Selestat through vineyards which were high enough to cause us to have to go down through the channel between the vines. The Germans had a machine gun set up so they could fire down those lines. They hit a BAR man in front of me and pretty much cut off his leg. We stopped, outflanked the machine gun, and eventually captured the German machine gunner. It was about dusk when we attacked the outskirts of the town, crossed a stream and occupied about three houses. We were to set up defenses for the night; I don't think that happened. The next morning at almost daybreak I was on guard and I saw the Germans coming down the street like they were on a parade there were so many of them. I had a difficult time trying to wake up the other people who were on the second floor with me. We had no noncoms up there at all; I don't know why they were on the first floor and we were on the second floor. We did stop those

Germans but after a time we heard the rumble of tanks coming from behind us. We thought that the tank outfit that we had passed through was coming to our rescue until we saw the black crosses on the tanks. We had shot up a German command car that came from our rear the night we got to that area. Even though we had turned it over as a hindrance for anyone crossing the bridge the German tank knocked it out just like it was a toy. That tank came right up to the houses, swiveled their gun around and started blasting away. When I woke up at the bottom of the cellar I had a German soldier with an automatic pistol in my face telling me, "Hands up" in English. I thought that was interesting because we always used the German Hinde Ho! "Hände nach oben!" when we captured Germans. I was buried right up to my neck; it was impossible for me to move my hands. They got us in the street and by that time the artillery we had called for started coming in. Our men and the Germans all jumped into the ditch along the road. The Germans carried me on a door down into the ditch with them because my legs were pretty much beat up from the shrapnel. I thought it would have been a great opportunity to escape if I could have run. Eventually, they took me into what might have been a tent or a building where I had a smooth talking English speaking German officer interrogate me. They were a little shocked that I had my flight book with me. They could not understand why an American infantry private would have a flight book with him. I explained that I had been in the Air Force but it was not significant. He knew more about what was going on than I did. He knew the name of the commanding officer, where he lived, what he had done before he got into the service. He named all the officers down to the regimental level.

They shipped us by truck during which time we were dive bombed but not hit. We crossed the Rhine River and were housed in a barn. Some of us

were sent over to dig defenses which they told me they declined to do but were forced to do. We were put on a train for about a week to Stalag 12 A in Limburg. They told us we could take a shower which made us apprehensive after hearing about the showers in Poland in the concentration camps. Fortunately, the showers contained only water. When we returned from showering our uniforms had been taken. They had laid out pretty sad looking clothing for us to wear. We heard that they cleaned the uniforms and used them in the Battle of the Bulge.

They were very clever on the trains. They had tanks and artillery on flat cars in between the cars that we were in. We were jammed into the cars with nothing to eat or any sanitary provisions. One of our guys got shot accidentally and killed by a German guard and the Germans threw his body out of the car.

Limburg was where most infantry prisoners were sent. That is where they split up the non commissioned officers, officers, privates and pfc's and sent us in different directions. I was sent to Stalag 4B around the end of the first week or second week of December. Shortly thereafter we saw these American trucks coming in filled with American soldiers. We thought we were liberated but it turned out to be the 106th Division and they were all prisoners. We stayed there maybe two weeks or ten days at the most. The British soldiers always seemed better advised than we were about what to do if captured because they had been in the war a lot longer than we had. They told us to volunteer to go out on what they called commandos, which were small groups that would go out to work in fields, factories, railroads or something. So I volunteered to do that.

They sent us to a town called Richenberg, Czechoslovakia where I was then sent to a lazerette, a small hospital. They had British prisoners on

the first floor and French prisoners on the second floor that had been captured during the fall of France. I was actually sent back one day because they had a quota of two Americans. Somebody else was worse off than I was and needed to be there. I was sent back to a small barracks. The rest of the guys were sent up to work on the railroad to make the railroad bed more secure.

The lazerette was run by Cypriots who were in the British Army but did not speak English. Originally, they told me that my wounds were not all that deep. When my foot became infected, the only operational technique they used to try to clear up the infection was to stick my foot in boiling hot water; which I could not stand. After about two weeks they decided that my leg had to be amputated. They told me that I had to put my boot on my injured foot and get ready to travel even though I said that I could not walk. Fortunately, by then my leg was numb but gangrene was all the way up to my knee. I encountered a very strange phenomenon; the minute we got away from the lazerette and out of view, the German guard told me to get on his back and he carried me to the train station. It turned out he had grown up in San Francisco; his mother was American and his father was German. He went back to Germany on vacation in 1939 and they stuck him in the army.

I ended up in a town on the Elbe River called Tetschen-Bodenbach which was a larger lazerette. A French doctor who was a prisoner started to work on my leg. He used a pair of tweezers to pull the decayed flesh out of the wound every morning. I had to hop down the hall to his office. I was in an American ward and he noticed that I had lice and just panicked. He ordered me to be sent down to the barber who shaved off all my body hair. I got a tub bath, the first one I had in months and months. I was issued new clothes and put in a ward with the British. The Americans who were in my

ward where I had been all died of every disease known to man: diphtheria, small pox, typhus. Lice carry typhus, a deadly disease. A miracle happened and I was put in with the British and I survived. The doctor kept pulling that dead flesh out and after about two months he said that it did not smell anymore and that meant it was healed. By the time the war ended our guards did not get word to let us go. So, we were there two weeks after the war was over when the Russians came through. They pillaged and raped the whole town and we were scared to death because they were Siberian troops and were as wild as Genghis Khan.

We heard that a British padre, the equivalent of an American chaplain, had been there two years before and told the American authorities that there were Allied prisoners in that town. The Americans asked permission from the Russians to come in and get us. The Russians refused but the Americans came anyway. They flew us to Reims, France to the 10th General Hospital on May 21. Unfortunately, I then read in the *Stars and Strips* that all the American prisoners had been returned to the United States. I thought, “Wait a minute. What about me?” The personnel in charge had no idea what to do with an ex-prisoner of war. I had lost sixty-six pounds and weighed 106 pounds. It was a very strange phenomenon. By that time my leg was healed and I could walk to the mess hall. I would fill up my tray twice every meal, pour all the sugar and condensed milk that I could get on top of it and then eat every scrap. Then I would walk away feeling just as hungry as I did when I walked into the mess hall. If you read anything about ex-prisoners of war or anybody who has been starved to death you would know not to let them eat uncontrollably. But at that time they did not know that. This was a brand new general hospital that had just come from the United States. The day after I got there they had replaced the current general hospital personnel

with all new people. They did not know anything about the care of ex-prisoners; they let me eat like a starved pig. Not only did they provide three meals a day which I consumed, double trays at a time, but they had available food in the ward. In addition, they had a late night snack at the mess hall. I have heard that people who were rescued from concentration camps would die within a few days because their body could not tolerate the rich food. This would happen even if they took in small quantities of food. I was fortunate that I was young.

About the end of July they issued me some uniforms in exchange for the pajamas I had been living in all the time. I took a train to Cherbourg where I boarded a hospital ship which was a luxury liner. We were provided comfortable beds, sheets, blankets and all the food you could eat. In four days we landed in Boston where I was able to call my parents. My call shocked them because they had not heard from me in such a long period of time; they had almost given up. I took a hospital train to Billings General Hospital and Fort Benjamin Harrison, in Indianapolis, Indiana which was within a mile and a half from my home. I did not call my family and tell them I was there but I took the bus and walked a couple blocks down the street to my house. I knocked on the door and when they saw me they were shocked.

I never left the hospital until I got out of the service except for R&R. I had one wound on my foot that had healed but there was so much scar tissue in it that it hurt to walk. That was minor compared to other things; I just put up with it.

It was very difficult to supply us in the Vosges Mountains so we might go a couple of days without anything to eat. We would dig around in the dirt and try to find some potatoes that had been planted. We always had

plenty of ammunition and cigarettes. I really missed sleeping in a bed and taking a shower whenever I wanted.

I was issued an M-1 and a Springfield O-3 which was a WWI rifle because I was a sniper and I had a sniper scope and a fitting for what they called a rifle grenade. Due to the inefficiency and greenness of our division I never got the shotgun shell that you need to fire a rifle grenade. I carried the grenade with me (why I will never know) for about two weeks after I was captured. The Germans thought it was food! It was in a cylinder and they never took it away from me. Later I decided to get rid of it because it was not a good idea to keep it.

One day we were taken back, out of combat, into reserve at a house. We used that time to dry our clothes and eat a decent meal provided in 10 in 1's. Those particular rations offered one day of meals—breakfast, evening supper, and a midday “snack”—for 10 soldiers. We were given Budweiser Beer in an olive drab camouflage can with the contents printed at the bottom of the can. Also included were Planter's Peanuts packaged in a similar manner so that the containers would not reflect any light that could be detected by the enemy. On the day before we went through the town where the church bells rang, we were all dried out and feeling good. As we went through that town the artillery started to come in. The first thing we did was dive in the ditch which was full of water and we were soaking wet again.

I would say that what kept all of us focused and determined was “duty.” I admired our Colonel because I talked to a lot of ex-servicemen who had Battalion Commanders who never appeared on the front lines. Therrell was the type of guy who was right out in front. I have been near him when he has asked one of the riflemen to give him their rifle so he could shoot. He was gung-ho.

We dug foxholes constantly. When the artillery ceased we were not sure the enemy was through. They told us to dig foxholes on the other side of the road. It was very rocky difficult soil to dig into. We would be just about finished with them when someone would say we were on the wrong side of the road. Then we would have to repeat the process. During one of those times some kind of artillery piece came in, hit between my legs; it was a dud and did not go off. It covered me with dirt.

When I was in route from Limburg to 4B we stopped because the train was delayed and I spent one night in Buchenwald. It was horrible. When I got liberated we passed a concentration camp and we observed people in stripped uniforms moving around in there. We were on our way from Limburg to Muhlberg, Germany (Stalag 4B).

On VE Day I was in the hospital in Tetschen-Bodenbach. No one told us. We had kind of a feeling that the war was coming to an end. We could hear artillery but we had heard artillery in early April. That was the Americans but unfortunately they stopped and did not come any further. The German army that had been in that area went through town pell-mell; a lot of them were on horseback riding as hard as they could. Within an hour the Russians in the Siberian Army came riding long haired ponies without saddles; just like Genghis Kahn. We knew then that the war was over. They came into our ward looking under beds for women. The Russian soldier that looked under my bed wore wrist watches from his wrist all the way up to his shoulder. The next morning there was a command car sitting out in front of their headquarters in town, a block down the street from us. A Russian tank came along and drove right over it.

When I heard about troops going to Japan, I felt that it would be slaughter. I was so much out of the war at that point that I knew it would be

frightening to invade Japan but I also knew it would not be me. It is hard to describe my feeling about the Japanese army and the German army. The German army was more humane but they were also better equipped than the Japanese. The Japanese were fanatics and they would have killed many American servicemen before we would have caused them to surrender. They would have fought to the last man and it would have been pretty rough.

I was in the 103rd Division in the United States for a limited time. I went with three different units in that short time only really getting to know the men in the I and R platoon. They were all ex-college students and we went to Denton every weekend together. Most of them were ski troops who had come from Denver and we became very close although we were together such a short time. Unfortunately, during the time between the end of the war and the time I started coming to reunions, I never heard anything about any of those men. I got to know Ed McGhee when I was in combat. One day my first wife told me that I received a phone call from a man called Schreckengost who wanted to know if I had been in the 103rd Division in WWII. I called him and recognized him immediately as a platoon sergeant in my platoon. He told me about the reunions and I started going at that point. Also, Jim White and I have become close friends. Our company, through Captain Walton, made a major effort to contact as many ex-Company B people as possible. He was able to contact, with some help from others, a number of people. Since I try to collect the dues for our company, we still have ninety people on our list, even after a number of deaths. Some people we were never able to reach.

Someone had an 8"x10" sheet of paper and a pencil on the boxcar going from where I had been captured to Limburg and they asked everyone to write their name and where they were from. That person, who ever it

was, retained that list and was able to turn it over to Schreckengost. In turn, he was able to contact me because I had written down the city that I had been drafted from when I was in college. The only phonebook he could access was an Indianapolis phonebook that he found in his library. I was the only Enzor in there, so he connected with me to try to find people in Company B. He did a great job. He sold his business and dedicated almost all of his time trying to locate servicemen in Co B.

It was not easy to share my experiences in the very beginning. I told my children that I was a barber and had never left the country. That was my way of avoiding telling anything. The first time I really shared any of my story was probably at the reunions when I sat down with other veterans that I had known. That is when, together, we re-fought each of the battles in detail into the small hours of the night. After the war, I had nightmares on occasion but not many anymore, fortunately.

Experiencing war has a significant bearing on your philosophy of life. I had written letters home and my parents kept them all. I think being in the war has a significant bearing on your philosophy of life. You are more appreciative of being alive and having been very, very lucky.

I did not get into medical school but I transferred to Butler University and thought I would become a teacher. There were no jobs available for anyone who wanted to teach history. I then trained to be a fire protection engineer and became an insurance agent for about twenty-five years. That involved setting the wind storm rates and the fire rates for every commercial building in the state.

After the war, I married and had a family. Unfortunately, my wife died in 1991. I remarried and we are very happy in our seventeenth year of marriage.

Mr. Enzor notes

(Cadre: non commissioned officers who remain at the camp and train incoming groups of people who have enlisted or drafted.)

Trenches are a lateral ditches deep enough to get into where a foxhole is for one or two people maximum. You would have a lot of foxholes. You would only have one trench.

They refer to WWI as trench warfare. Trenches: used in WWI; were 8 feet deep. Those trenches were 8 feet deep and very long.

<http://www.iandrplatoon.org>

Battle of Normandy

The 51st Division landed in Normandy on 7 June, as part of [I Corps](#). After spending a brief period supporting [3rd Canadian Infantry Division](#), it was sent across the [Orne River](#), and spent two months supporting the [6th Airborne Division](#) in its bridgehead. During this period it fought many difficult actions at places such as [Breville](#) (11–12 June) and [Colombelles](#) (11 July). Its performance in Normandy was, overall, considered disappointing, particularly by General [Montgomery](#), who stated in a telegram to Field Marshal [Brooke](#) that the division "had failed every mission it was given" ^[5]. This led to the replacement of its Normandy commander, Major-General D.C. Bullen-Smith, with Major-General Thomas Rennie, who had served with the division in France, North Africa and Sicily before being elevated to command of [3rd Infantry Division](#) for the Normandy invasion ^[6].

On 1 August 1944 the division, along with the rest of [I Corps](#), became part of the newly-activated [First Canadian Army](#). The division fought alongside this army in [Operation Totalize](#), before advancing to [Lisieux](#). It then continued east over the river Seine and headed, on Montgomery's order ^[7] for [Saint-Valéry-en-Caux](#), the scene of the division's surrender in June 1940. The division 's massed pipes and drums played in the streets of the town, and a parade included veterans of the 1940 campaign were with the 51st in 1944. A similar event occurred at [Dieppe](#) when it was liberated by the [2nd Canadian Infantry Division](#).

[\[edit\]](#) After Normandy

Leaving St Valery, 51st Division was engaged in [Operation Astonia](#), the battle for Le Havre. After the successful capture of the town, the division went on to take part in the [Battle of the Scheldt](#) in October 1944, finally passing into reserve and garrisoning the [Meuse](#) during the [Battle of the Bulge](#), now as part of [XXX Corps](#). It was not involved in heavy fighting during the early stages of the battle and was deployed as a stopgap in case the Germans broke through. In January 1945 the division, along with the rest of XXX Corps, helped to cut off the northern tip of the German salient, linking up with the US [84th Infantry Division](#) at Nisramont on 14 January ^[8]. Following this, the division was involved in [Operation Veritable](#), the clearing of the Rhineland and the later [Rhine](#) crossings, ending the war in the [Bremerhaven](#) area of Northern Germany. During the North-West Europe campaign 51st (Highland) Division had suffered a total of 19,524 battle casualties ^[9]