

**Oral History Interview of
Lon Colvin**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
August 31, 2015
Lockney, Texas**

**Part of the:
*World War II Veteran Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features World War II veteran, Lon Colvin. Colvin discusses growing up in Lockney, Texas, attending school there, and helping on his family's farm. Colvin was drafted and served in the European theatre during World War II where he was captured by the Germans. Colvin returned to Lockney and participated in the Ex-Prisoners of War and went to Washington, D.C. with the Honor Flight.

Length of Interview: 00:58:56

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David Marshall (DM):

The date is August 31, 2015. This is David Marshall interviewing Lon Colvin at his home in Lockney, Texas. And can we just start by getting your full name?

Lon Colvin (LC):

Lon C. Colvin.

DM:

Lon C. Colvin, okay. And where and when were you born?

LC:

I was born in 1926, April 28, 1926 in Lockney.

DM:

In Lockney, at home or in a hospital? Don't know?

LC:

Don't know.

DM:

Never heard?

LC:

Never heard.

DM:

Okay, so you grew up right here?

LC:

Right here.

DM:

Now who were your parents? Can you tell me their names?

LC:

Yeah, my mother was Lena Colvin. My dad was James C. Colvin.

DM:

James C. Colvin. Do you know your mother's maiden name by any chance?

LC:

It was McCoy.

DM:

McCoy, had they lived here all their lives?

LC:

No.

DM:

How did they get here, did you ever hear?

LC:

My mother lived in Childress, and my dad lived in Flint, Texas.

DM:

Flint, okay. Well what brought them to Lockney?

LC:

I don't know.

DM:

Okay, what did your daddy do for a living?

LC:

He worked at a filling station nearly all of his life.

DM:

Okay which one, which filling station?

LC:

Consumers.

DM:

Consumers Filling Station.

LC:

Here in Lockney.

DM:

Okay, well they got here about what year; do you know when they came in?

LC:

It was probably 1915, '16. Way back there.

DM:

Yeah. Okay, so they'd been here a while before you were born.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Alright, now what can you remember about your childhood? Do you remember having to do any particular chores as a child or any events that stand out in your mind as a young child?

LC:

Not really.

DM:

Do you remember going to school for the first time?

LC:

Yeah, went to school.

DM:

Did you go to first grade?

LC:

First grade, yeah.

DM:

And where did you go, here?

LC:

I went here in Lockney.

DM:

Just one elementary, I guess.

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Well how big was the school?

LC:
It was pretty big, yeah.

DM:
Were there a lot more people here then than now?

LC:
Oh yeah. There are now.

DM:
What has caused that? Why aren't there as many people here now?

LC:
Just the farming and stuff, you know, this is a farm community.

DM:
Right, farming's gotten bigger and mechanized.

LC:
Yeah and people, a lot of them quit.

DM:
Right, right. Do you remember any of your first school teachers, their names?

LC:
Yeah, one of them was named Applewhite.

DM:
Applewhite, was that in first grade you think?

LC:
Yeah, that was first grade.

DM:

Okay, Mrs. Applewhite?

LC:

Mrs. Applewhite.

DM:

What was the school like? Was there one school for elementary, or were all the grades in one school building?

LC:

No, there was one big grade school and then the high school.

DM:

Okay, so there was grade school and high school. There wasn't a junior high school?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

I think the later years they changed it.

DM:

What do you remember about Mrs. Applewhite?

LC:

I just kind of remember she'd get on me every once in a while. (laughs)

DM:

You weren't being bad, were you? (laughs)

LC:

No, no. You know how that goes.

DM:

Yeah, I know. How many kids were in your class, can you remember? Not necessarily just first grade, but even later.

LC:

It was probably two to three hundred kids.

DM:

Really, in the whole school?

LC:

The whole school, the whole grade school.

DM:

Were most of them children of farmers?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

Then in later years it burned down.

DM:

The school. Where was it located?

LC:

Over on the east side of town.

DM:

Okay, I wonder if anyone has old photographs of that school, have you ever heard? They might have at the Floyd County Museum.

LC:

Yeah probably.

DM:

By the way, have you ever come across or seen a map of Lockney from back in the twenties or so that shows the streets and everything?

LC:

No.

DM:

Do you know—do you have any idea where I could find—who I could talk to to find something like that? Any people around here that are kind of historians, local historians?

LC:

Huh, I don't know where you'd—

DM:

I'll just stop at the museum and ask there.

LC:

Yeah, the Floydada Museum, right.

DM:

Right. I think Nancy Marble—is she from Lockney, by the way?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Yeah okay. I'll see if I can talk to her.

LC:

Yeah, I used to work with her dad.

DM:

Oh you did? She's a nice lady. She has a lot of contact with us at Texas Tech.

LC:

Yeah, she's nice.

DM:

Good lady. Okay, how many grades did you go through? Did you graduate from Lockney or did you go off to the army?

LC:

I went off to the army.

DM:

Oh, how old were you then?

LC:

I was eighteen.

DM:

Eighteen, had you been in school until then?

LC:

Yeah, yeah.

DM:

So what year was it? Your junior year or your—

LC:

Junior.

DM:

Is when you headed out to the army?

LC:

I finally got my diploma. They gave it to me here. Yeah, it's in there on the wall.

DM:

Well I sure hope so because instead of going through that senior year, you went through a lot of harder stuff.

LC:

Oh me.

DM:

That's interesting. When did they do that? When did they give you your diploma?

LC:

About two or three years ago.

DM:

Okay, I'm sure glad someone thought of that, thought to do that. That's great. But anyway, you had to carve out some of your life in those years.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Well let's see, before we get into your military experience, is there anything else you can remember about high school? Were there any subjects you were particularly interested in or did you like athletics or did you have other interests?

LC:

Yeah, I played football.

DM:

Did you? Okay and that would have been what year?

LC:

Been about '42 or '43.

DM:

'42 or '43. What position did you play?

LC:

I played end, right end.

DM:

Yeah, you like you could be a quick kind of guy. Did you catch passes?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Did Lockney have a pretty good football team back then?

LC:

Oh fair.

DM:

Who were your competitors? Who were the rival schools?

LC:

Oh it was Crosbyton and Floydada. That was our rival, Floydada.

DM:

Oh yeah, ten miles away.

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
How about Lorenzo, did they play y'all back then?

LC:
No.

DM:
Okay, how about Ralls?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
And Plainview was probably too big.

LC:
Yeah, they were too big.

DM:
Now did you work any while you were in school? Did you work a job?

LC:
Well, we'd grown up on the farm.

DM:
Oh you did?

LC:
Milked them cows.

DM:
So your daddy worked at the filling station, but he also had a farm.

LC:
Yeah.

DM:

Oh, that'll keep you busy. So you milked cows, what else did you do?

LC:

Hoed cotton.

DM:

Did you have any other livestock? Did you have any hogs?

LC:

We had hogs, cows.

DM:

Did you slaughter your own hogs?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Wintertime?

LC:

Wintertime.

DM:

You had cattle?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you slaughter your own cattle?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

And you milked some?

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LC:
Milked.

DM:
Did you have milk cows like Holstein or Jersey or—?

LC:
They were Jersey, most of them.

DM:
Oh, good cream.

LC:
Good cream. Separate that cream.

DM:
Did you have a garden crop? Did your momma do a lot of canning?

LC:
She did.

DM:
That's a lot of work.

LC:
Oh it is, it is.

DM:
Did you get to shell peas and snap peas?

LC:
Yeah, sure did.

DM:
Well which was the hardest part? Was chopping cotton hard?

LC:
Nah, it wasn't.

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DM:

It wasn't too bad? Well, did the farm keep you pretty busy or did you have time to socialize?

LC:

Yeah, we had time for that.

DM:

Well what did kids in Lockney do in the early 1940s for fun? If they got together, what would they do?

LC:

Just mostly talk and play games.

DM:

Was there a particular place here in town where they met?

LC:

Yeah, that old Dixie Tavern.

DM:

Dixie Tavern, is it still running?

LC:

No.

DM:

Where was it?

LC:

It was up there on Main Street, that's Fifth or Sixth Street.

DM:

What was it? Was it a burger—?

LC:

It was a burger—just an eating place.

DM:

Yeah, yeah, so people would kind of meet there.

LC:

Yeah, we'd just meet there.

DM:

Is that building still there?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay, well where was your farm from here?

LC:

It was four miles east of Lockney.

DM:

Okay, four miles east, so back toward Floydada. (phone rings) Do you need to get that? I'll pause this if you need to. (pause on recording) Okay, so the farm was four miles east of here, pretty much halfway between here and Floydada?

LC:

No, it was east, straight east.

DM:

I see, okay.

LC:

You know, Main Street goes east.

DM:

Right, and Floydada is a little bit southeast.

LC:

Yeah, it's kind of back.

DM:

Well, how did you get into school? How did you get to school?

LC:

We rode a bus.

DM:

Did you?

LC:

Yeah, they had a little old bus with a—they had a pickup with a cab built over it and hauled about twenty people.

DM:

Now even when you were a little kid, they had a bus running out there?

LC:

Yeah, uh-huh.

DM:

Well that's pretty good then. I was afraid you were going to tell me you had to walk.

LC:

We walked some before they got that bus. Went to Ramsey School.

DM:

Ramsey School—that was the name of it. That was elementary?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay, you have any idea where it got that name?

LC:

I sure don't.

DM:

I guess someone who lived in Lockney a long time ago.

LC:

Probably some of the Ramsey because it used to be some Ramseys lived here.

DM:

People that moved out, where did they go? Do you have any idea?

LC:

I have no idea.

DM:

I wonder if they went to Lubbock or Amarillo, Plainview, bigger city.

LC:

Probably some of them went to California.

DM:

Yeah maybe so, maybe so. Me, I like it out in the country. Okay, now this farm you were on, was it a pretty good sized farm?

LC:

Yeah, it was a half section.

DM:

Oh golly, mostly in cotton?

LC:

Yeah, wheat, mostly wheat.

DM:

Oh really, okay. Did your daddy harvest that himself or did he have harvesters come through and cut the—?

LC:

We had harvesters that cut it.

DM:

Pretty good. So what you worked was your livestock and your garden crops and that kind of thing.

LC:

Yeah, but dad, he died in 1950.

DM:

Oh did he?

LC:

So there was four boys and a girl, and we farmed it after he passed.

DM:

Oh, did you? You still have it out there?

LC:

No.

DM:

Sold it? Well tell me about how you got into the military, how you got into the army. Were you drafted?

LC:

I was drafted.

DM:

Okay, here you were in high school and you got a draft notice.

LC:

Yeah, right after my eighteenth birthday.

DM:

Right. They didn't waste any time.

LC:

They sure didn't.

DM:

What year would that have been? Your eighteenth birthday—you were born in '26, April of '26.

You think you got it in April or May?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

That draft notice? Okay so '44, does that sound right? 1944?

LC:

Yeah, somewhere right along that, about '44.

DM:

A little bit before the D-Day invasion?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

Well I got overseas D-Day.

DM:

Oh you did? Where were you during D-Day?

LC:

We was across the English Channel.

DM:

Yeah, were you in England then?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

You didn't cross on D-Day did you?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

It was right after that.

DM:

Right, okay. What do they call it, D-Day plus ten or something like that?

LC:

Yeah, something.

DM:

Do you remember when you crossed?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay, you just crossed.

LC:

Just crossed.

DM:

But by then the beach was secure and all of that. Well good for that. Well now, before we get into that, where did you train?

LC:

At Mineral Wells.

DM:

Oh yeah, Fort Wolters?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Oh okay, I'm from Weatherford area, so I know Mineral Wells real well, Fort Wolters.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Yeah, that was an important training base.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

When you were taken down there, here you were an eighteen year old boy, had you ever been anywhere besides Lockney? Now you were seeing other parts of the state.

LC:

I was seeing—hadn't been ten miles from home.

DM:

Well that was kind of different country, wasn't it?

LC:

Yeah it was.

DM:

Different from these plains.

LC:

I had an uncle who lived at Weatherford.

DM:

Okay, and what was his name, do you know? Do you remember?

LC:

Ed McCoy.

DM:

Ed McCoy, okay. That's not a name I remember, but who knows. That was your momma's brother then?

LC:

They come from Tennessee and went out in New Mexico and homesteaded out there.

DM:

Out in eastern New Mexico?

LC:

Yeah at Carlsbad.

DM:

At Carlsbad, oh okay, yeah. Okay, so you went to train at Fort Wolters. You went through basic training there?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

How long was that? About six weeks?

LC:

Six weeks.

DM:

Was it hard?

LC:

Hard and fast.

DM:

Yeah, did you get trained pretty well though?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Were you prepared for what was coming?

LC:

Yeah, we'd done pretty good.

DM:

Do you remember any specifics about your training?

LC:

No, it was mostly just boot camp and how to shoot the rifle and stuff like that.

DM:

Right, you've got a badge in there for what, marksmanship, right?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
So they trained you in the M-1, use of the M-1?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Okay, now during boot camp did you have any idea you were going into an armored division?

LC:
Had no idea.

DM:
Okay, so you finished up your training at Fort Wolters, and then where did you go?

LC:
Went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

DM:
New Jersey? Now you're really seeing some of the country, not the way you want to see the country. Well how long were you there?

LC:
We was there about a week.

DM:
Okay.

LC:
Then they shipped us over.

DM:
Uh-huh, so you hadn't had any training. Did you get any training in armored—in use of a .50 caliber machine gun?

LC:
No, I didn't see one.

DM:

Had you seen a tank?

LC:

No, not really. I told that old sergeant, I said, "Well I have never been around one of these things, I don't know what to do." He said, "They go to shooting you, you'll learn."

DM:

(laughs) When did you get assigned to the armored division? Fourth Armored Division, right?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

When did you get assigned to that?

LC:

This was probably '45.

DM:

In '45, okay. So you were in infantry in '44?

LC:

Yeah, just taking the basic training.

DM:

Yeah, yeah. Did you go over to Europe—across the English Channel soon after D-Day or was it months later?

LC:

It was pretty quick.

DM:

It was quick? Okay. And then as soon as you were over there, were you assigned to Patton's division?

LC:

Yup.

DM:

Do you know where all you went?

LC:

No.

DM:

You know, that's the way most guys are who were in. They were told to go there so they went there.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

And I always ask them, do you remember any of the names of the towns? Do you remember any names of towns at all?

LC:

Nuremburg

DM:

Nuremburg, okay.

LC:

I remember that. You know, you go through them so fast you're not thinking about the towns.

DM:

Well that's what I'm saying, you know, nowadays we look at a map and we go, "Yeah, there's that and there's that." But from what I understand with you guys, you were told to go there so you went, and it didn't really matter.

LC:

That's right.

DM:

Did you end up at all involved in what we now call the Battle of the Bulge?

LC:

No, I got over there after that. See there, old Patton sent us after his son-in-law, up ahead of the line. And we didn't get back.

DM:

Okay, what was the scuttlebutt about Patton? You never saw him, did you?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

You did?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

What did he look like?

LC:

Oh, he was a pretty nice looking fellow.

DM:

Stout kind of guy?

LC:

Yeah, had them pearl-handled pistols.

DM:

Couldn't miss him for those, huh? Did you hear him talk or anything?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

What was his voice like?

LC:

He was pretty stout voice. He was a pretty smart old guy.

DM:

Well, did most of the men who were under his command, did they like him or did they hate him?

LC:

Yeah, they liked him.

DM:

Okay, so they respected him?

LC:

Yeah, there's a few that didn't, but that's the way of all of them.

DM:

Right.

LC:

I liked him.

DM:

So what's the deal with his son-in-law? His son-in-law was—you kind of went on point for his son-in-law? Putting him ahead of these—

LC:

Yeah, and then they had moved him when we got there and he wasn't there.

DM:

But you were there, right there on the front line?

LC:

Yeah, right there.

DM:

How much time you think you spent on the front line?

LC:

Oh, I don't know.

DM:

Well what's it like? You were on a Sherman tank, I guess.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you ever hear any of the talk about—did you hear people talking about how the Sherman and the Tiger were kind of mismatched? Were you worried about that?

LC:

Well yeah, a little bit. That old Tiger tank was pretty powerful.

DM:

Had a lot more artillery that was bigger. What 88s, right?

LC:

Yeah, bigger guns.

DM:

It seemed like Sherman was maybe a 70 or so?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Was that it?

LC:

Yeah, 76, I believe.

DM:

76, yeah. But here you were on top with the .50 caliber machine gun. There was only one, wasn't there?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

One .50 caliber on top?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you have any protection at all up there or were you just sitting up there?

LC:

Just sitting up there.

DM:

Did you have any kind of shield around that? Just right on top?

LC:

Just right on top.

DM:

That sounds like the most dangerous position on attack.

LC:

It was pretty, pretty dangerous.

DM:

Were there others on top there with you or was it just you up there?

LC:

Well, there was two or three up there, yeah.

DM:

Okay, you also had some machine guns that were operated from inside the tank, wouldn't you?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

What were those?

LC:

They were .50s, I believe, they might have been .30s.

DM:

Seems like it'd be a little safer inside there. (laughs)

LC:

Yeah, you bet that it would be out there. (laughs)

DM:

Well was there any talk about that? Did you talk to other .50 caliber machine gunners?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay. So how would you move through the countryside? Were you in a big company of tanks at any particular time?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

How many would be together at one time?

LC:

Oh, it'd be probably fifteen or twenty, you know, trucks and tanks.

DM:

Yeah, a whole column there.

LC:

Column, yeah.

DM:

And now how much infantry support—how many infantry men would be there with you?

LC:

There was probably two or three hundred.

DM:

Did they catch rides on those tanks, by the way?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

They'd hop on.

LC:

Hop on. It'd get too hot for them and they'd jump off.

DM:

What do you mean too hot, the metal or the fire? (laughs)

LC:

The fire. Sometimes it'd get pretty hot up there.

DM:

Golly, were you there that winter? Were you in France or Germany that winter of '44 to '45 when it was so cold?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

That was a really brutal winter.

LC:

It was cold.

DM:

Well what was it like on top of a tank going through the countryside?

LC:

You'd get pretty cold, but we had a lot of clothes on.

DM:

Describe what you could wrap up in—what did you have?

LC:

I had an overcoat I wore.

DM:

A wool overcoat?

LC:

Yeah, them things was warm.

DM:

They're long, aren't they?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

How long would it reach down on you?

LC:

It'd go below your knee.

DM:

Oh good, yeah. What did y'all call them? Did you call them watch coats or overcoats?

LC:

Overcoats.

DM:

Did you have wool gloves or mittens?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Cap? So that helped.

LC:

Yeah, it helped.

DM:

Did you wear goggles up there?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay, the reason I ask you is you know a column of twenty vehicles—that throws a lot of dust. It seems like you'd be choking up there on top of a tank.

LC:

Yeah, a fellow he didn't have time to think about all of it.

DM:

Yeah, yeah. Well you kind of had a vantage point up there it seems like. Were you watching for any kind of enemy activity up there?

LC:

Yeah, if you had any doubts, just shoot.

DM:

Could you catch a nap up there?

LC:

No, no you didn't, you didn't catch any nap.

DM:

It seems like it would be kind of rattle-y up there, too.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Kind of a rough ride, bounce around some.

LC:

They had that ole big gun up over you, and they'd shoot that thing.

DM:

Oh okay, so that gun was above you?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

That .76 was above you?

LC:

Yeah, it was above us.

DM:

Golly, did you wear ear plugs or anything?

LC:

No.

DM:

Did that thing go off with you right under it?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

That seems like that would hurt your eardrums.

LC:

Well it probably did. I can't hear good now.

DM:

Did you have any bleeding out of your ears?

LC:

No, I never did have that.

DM:

That's pretty rough. Well, can you tell me about any combat situations? Were you in some combat situations?

LC:

Not really.

DM:

Okay, you didn't take any fire, enemy fire?

LC:

No, we just drove through the country.

DM:

Well, it sounded like maybe you were fortunate than that, that you didn't get into any really hotspots.

LC:
Right.

DM:
Okay. Well how is it that you came to be—you were captured, right?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
How did that happen?

LC:
Well, when we got to this place, they was waiting on us, and they just captured us, just knocked our tank out.

DM:
These were German soldiers. Do you know if you were in France or Germany by this time?

LC:
No, we really didn't know where we were.

DM:
Just out in the countryside.

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Okay, so how did they knock your tank out?

LC:
They shot it with one of them ole big guns, knocked a track off, I think's what they done.

DM:
So they were sitting there ambushing you basically.

LC:
They were ready.

DM:

You came by, they fired something, one of their big artillery, field artillery pieces?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Not a Tiger, but just a big gun, knocked your track off. Well that's a good way to stop a tank.

LC:

Yeah, knock that track off.

DM:

Did they do that to any other tanks in your column?

LC:

Well, we lost all of our tanks.

DM:

Oh really? So they had a lot of artillery.

LC:

Yeah, they was ready.

DM:

Did no one see them then? They got in there, the column got in there, and they opened fire?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

What did you think when you started getting fired on?

LC:

Well I didn't know. I didn't know what to think.

DM:

Did you feel any fear? Was it a frightening situation or did you just do what you had to do?

LC:

Just do what you had to do. A fellow, he didn't know what he was doing half the time.

DM:

Did your training kick in pretty good?

LC:

Yeah, yeah it done pretty good.

DM:

Okay. You know that's a very common response when I ask people, Well, were you afraid? No, we didn't have time to think about emotions. You just did what you had to do. Well, so they opened fire on you, they knocked the track off your tank. Did they capture the whole column of twenty or so vehicles?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

So there were a lot of Germans?

LC:

There was a lot of them there.

DM:

Once the artillery fire ended, did they come marching out of the woods?

LC:

Yeah, they all just come up there and surrounded us, and we just give up.

DM:

Yeah, what else could you do?

LC:

That's all.

DM:

Was it a wooded area?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Were you in an open area when they opened fire on you and with woods around?

LC:
There were woods around, yeah, on the side of the road.

DM:
But the column was in an open area?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Okay, can you estimate about how many Germans came in on you?

LC:
I have no idea.

DM:
You were pretty well outnumbered, though?

LC:
Yeah, uh-huh. Well, we were running out of ammunition and all that so we didn't have—

DM:
Do you know if they were able to disable other tanks and vehicles besides yours?

LC:
Yeah, they got all of our company.

DM:
So basically you were sitting ducks after they fixed the artillery fire. So you had no choice but to surrender?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:

And so they came up. How did they treat you?

LC:

Well, they treated us pretty nice.

DM:

Did you hop off the tank? Did you raise your hands?

LC:

We just give up.

DM:

Did the tank commander tell you, "We're surrendering now." Or was it everybody just—

LC:

Everybody just—because we knew it had already—

DM:

You knew that was it.

LC:

Yeah, yeah.

DM:

Well okay, so they marched you out of there?

LC:

Yeah, we walked thirty-one days.

DM:

Really, I assume well into Germany.

LC:

Yeah into Germany. We didn't know where we was a going or—

DM:

Do you know the name of the camp where you ended up?

LC:

I didn't end up in a camp.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

They just discarded us. There was about a hundred and some of us, so a hundred and something.

DM:

Were any G.I.s killed in that artillery?

LC:

Not that I know of.

DM:

But they captured over a hundred of you. There were about a hundred of you. How many of them were marching you east or into Germany?

LC:

Into Germany it was fifteen to twenty of them.

DM:

Fifteen or twenty, they stripped you of your weapons.

LC:

Yeah, and told us to walk.

DM:

Started following some road, huh?

LC:

Some road, we just stayed ahead of the lines.

DM:

Yeah okay. So the American line was still pushing that direction, but here you were ahead being marched.

LC:

Yeah, being marched.

DM:

Thirty-one days.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Was it difficult? Did you have food?

LC:

Not a whole lot.

DM:

What did they feed you?

LC:

Oh, just probably potatoes and stuff like that.

DM:

Potatoes at least cooked somehow?

LC:

Well sometimes they was cooked a little.

DM:

So you were eating a lot of raw potatoes?

LC:

Yeah, and just eat it how you could.

DM:

Were they handing out food then?

LC:

No.

DM:

Would they allow you to dig around for potatoes?

LC:

Yeah, they would furnish you potatoes. Sometimes we'd cook them in our helmets, in those steel helmets.

DM:

Yeah, how do you do that? Just have a fire and hold water?

LC:

Yeah, just put that helmet up there and put that fire under them. It did pretty good.

DM:

So you built your fire, you put your helmet down in the coals, and you'd put water in your helmet, and boil those potatoes in there as good as you could? Isn't that something? Were the Germans eating any better than y'all were?

LC:

No, not much better.

DM:

Was there any meat at all?

LC:

No.

DM:

No meat. What else besides potatoes?

LC:

Well, we would—every once in a while we'd find us some cabbage or something and eat that, just whatever you could find.

DM:

During this march, did you happen to go through towns or areas that had been bombed by the British and the American bombers?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

You went through some bombed out towns?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Did you pass German civilians? Women and children, for example?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Did you go past?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Did they say anything to you? Did they yell at you or anything?

LC:
No.

DM:
How did they look? Did they look—?

LC:
They looked—

DM:
Were they ragged or were they doing okay?

LC:
Well, they looked like they was doing all right.

DM:
Better than y'all probably. (laughs) All right, well do you think you lost any weight in this march?

LC:
Oh yeah, I don't remember, but I got down pretty slim.

DM:

Well did you march pretty much all day?

LC:

Yeah, yeah we'd march, and then we'd sleep in old barns and stuff like that.

DM:

That's something that about what fifteen, twenty men guarded over a hundred of you, but I know they didn't want to spare any soldiers.

LC:

No.

DM:

Well in the course of the march did you see any allied aircraft going over?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Like fighter planes or bombers?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Both? They didn't take any shots at y'all did they?

LC:

No, huh-uh.

DM:

Because how would they know if you were German or American down there?

LC:

Well, I don't know, but they never did shoot at us.

DM:

Oh, isn't that good.

LC:

You know, sometimes them planes would strafe those.

DM:

Would they take cover, would the German soldiers when they saw that aircraft, would they take cover? Get into the woods or something?

LC:

No.

DM:

Okay, I guess maybe they were so used to it they just kept going.

LC:

Yeah, it was there close to the end of the war.

DM:

Right, right, and also y'all were going away from the front instead of towards the front. Could you hear the front behind you? Could you hear any artillery?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Really, while you were marching away?

LC:

Yeah, you could hear them planes bombing, dropping them bombs.

DM:

So you were pretty close to the front.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Were y'all thinking, I wish they'd catch up with us. Well after thirty-one days, you didn't end up at a camp. Were you liberated?

LC:

Yeah, there was an old boy rolled up in a Jeep and said, "The war is over."

DM:

Golly, so you were there marching towards Germany or into Germany right to the end of the war.

LC:

Right.

DM:

And someone drove up in a jeep. Was it a German or an American?

LC:

An American.

DM:

They caught up with you.

LC:

Yeah, they caught up with us. He said, "The war is over."

DM:

What did the German guards do?

LC:

They just—

DM:

Just gave up?

LC:

Yeah and said, "You can go wherever you want to."

DM:

What did they do? I guess they lit out.

LC:

They lit out. Yeah, I don't know where they went.

DM:

I bet they were glad it was over, too.

LC:

We finally got to an American camp.

DM:

Okay, do you remember the name of the camp?

LC:

I don't remember.

DM:

That's a really interesting story. Marching ahead of the front, hearing the activity and the combat behind you, and then they catch up with you to tell you the war is over.

LC:

The war is over.

DM:

How did you get back? Did you have to walk back?

LC:

No, we caught a truck and they were taking us back to camp.

DM:

Did they feed you?

LC:

Yeah. Let's see, me and this other ole boy from Ralls, he was with me.

DM:

What was his name?

LC:

Yule Author.

DM:

Yule?

LC:
Yule.

DM:
Y-u-l-e, I guess. What's the last name?

LC:
Author.

DM:
Author, like A-u-t-h-o-r, Author? Like a book author?

LC:
Yeah, yeah he lived in Ralls.

DM:
Is he still living?

LC:
No, he passed away a year or two ago.

DM:
Did you see him often after the war?

LC:
Oh yeah, we were still big buddies.

DM:
Oh golly, having gone through something like that together. He was there as a captive along with you?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Isn't that something?

LC:
We went in together and got out the same day.

DM:

Golly, were there others from this area that were in?

LC:

No.

DM:

That is amazing.

LC:

It is.

DM:

Y'all don't have any pictures of yourself together, do you? In your uniforms or anything?

LC:

I don't know.

DM:

I'll have to look through your newspaper clippings and see if I see anything. Okay, well let's see, do you remember how the American G.I.s treated you after they liberated you? Did they have to—since you had lost weight, did they have to bring you back onto food, regular food, slowly?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

How did they feed you starting out?

LC:

They just fed us so much. Yeah, there was one ole boy there, he ate a bunch of doughnuts and it killed him.

DM:

Oh golly, you can't do that.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Did they have you on soup and things like that? Liquid?

LC:

Yeah, liquid. They wouldn't let you eat a whole bunch.

DM:

Yeah, but I bet you were ready to eat.

LC:

I was ready.

DM:

Living off of potatoes and cabbage. Okay, well do you have any idea about when it was that you were liberated? Well, it was right at the end of the war, late April of '45, I guess.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Right around your birthday.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Is that right?

LC:

Yeah, it was right after my birthday.

DM:

Right after your birthday. That's a pretty good birthday present. How long did you stay in Germany after that or in Europe?

LC:

Me and this ole boy from Ralls, we stayed over there about a month or two just running around, got us an old car.

DM:

Oh really?

LC:

Yeah, drive around.

DM:

Was this in France you think?

LC:

This was Germany.

DM:

It was in Germany. That's amazing.

LC:

I told him, I said, you know, if we going to get back home for Christmas, we better get going back to camp. So we went and signed in, and we were just running around over there.

DM:

So things were a little bit loose when the war ended.

LC:

Yeah, it was.

DM:

You didn't have to report in too much?

LC:

No.

DM:

Where did you go? Do you remember any names of the towns where you drove?

LC:

Not really.

DM:

What part of Germany it was?

LC:
I don't.

DM:
Well what did you see? Did you see bombed out towns? Did you see German people?

LC:
Yeah, you know, they were nice, the people, the German people.

DM:
Could you communicate okay with them?

LC:
Well pretty good.

DM:
Did they speak some English?

LC:
Yeah, you could kind of talk to them.

DM:
They didn't seem bitter?

LC:
No, not the ones that I talked to.

DM:
I'm glad no one took any shots at you. Did you find any souvenirs? Did you bring back any souvenirs from Germany? A lot of people did, you know, little Nazi stuff and all that. Okay, so you got back to camp, you decided to go back home. Did you go back on a transport ship?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
The same way you came across?

LC:
Yeah, we went over on the old *Queen Elizabeth*.

DM:

Oh you did? That's kind of luxurious.

LC:

Oh, that was a mess.

DM:

It was a what?

LC:

That was a mess.

DM:

It was a mess?

LC:

Yeah, they had it fixed up for transport troops.

DM:

It was a mess because there were so many people on it?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay.

LC:

Well, I'll bet there was twenty thousand.

DM:

Golly, well that doesn't sound very sanitary.

LC:

No, it probably wasn't.

DM:

Pretty filthy on that ship?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
You came across the Atlantic on that?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Did you get sea sick?

LC:
No.

DM:
Good for you, here you grew up on a farm in Lockney, a long way from the ocean one day and the next day you're going across the Atlantic Ocean. How about coming back? Did you come back on a nice ship or a transport?

LC:
Yeah, I forgot what—but it was nice.

DM:
Do you know where you shipped out of to come back home? Out of England or France?

LC:
Left La Havre.

DM:
La Havre, yeah. Golly, a lot of men came in and out of La Havre in World War II and World War I. My granddaddies came in at La Havre in World War I.

LC:
I guess that's where most of them land and then they cross the English Channel.

DM:
Yeah, okay. Where did you end up in the U.S.? Did you come in at New York?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
See the Statue of Liberty?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Was that kind of thrilling?

LC:
That was something.

DM:
That's where you went out of, too, wasn't it?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
I bet you were glad to be home.

LC:
I was glad to be back.

DM:
How did you get back to Lockney, by train?

LC:
Yeah, rode a train.

DM:
Once you got back, what did you do? What did you do for a livelihood? Or were you still in the army a while?

LC:
Well no, let's see, when I got out of the army, I got me a job working at a [cotton] gin.

DM:

Yeah. Right here in Lockney?

LC:

The old Lockney gin.

DM:

Yeah, okay good. That's a busy place to work. Get lots of hours.

LC:

Lots of hours.

DM:

Especially in ginning season, at least. How long did you do that?

LC:

Forty-two years.

DM:

Oh wow, okay, so that became your career?

LC:

I worked there at that gin twenty-two years, and then I worked at the co-op out here about eighteen to twenty.

DM:

Co-op here in Lockney?

LC:

Yeah, it's right out here.

DM:

On the west side?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

All right, so when did you retire?

LC:

Oh, I've been retired near twenty years.

DM:

Well that's about right. You worked till a pretty good age then because you're ninety—

LC:

I'll be ninety on my birthday.

DM:

Ninety on your birthday next April, yeah. So you must have worked till about seventy or so?

LC:

I was sixty-eight I think.

DM:

Did you see any major—in those years that you were working at the gin, did you see any major improvements in gins?

LC:

Oh yeah.

DM:

They were always coming up with some new something.

LC:

Something new, yeah.

DM:

Can you mention a thing or two that they, innovations or improvements that they made?

LC:

Well they made improvements that you—the gin stands was automatic, and they'd kick out and you'd just mash a button. But they made a lot of improvements.

DM:

You know, from the time that you were born out here and grew up on a cotton farm and then through your life, your career at the gin and at the co-op, you must have seen a lot of changes in cotton production.

LC:

Oh yeah.

DM:

The new machinery coming out, good grief these tractors that they use now.

LC:

Yeah, it was a lot of improvements.

DM:

When you were a child here, was most of the harvest by hand?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Picking cotton?

LC:

They'd haul it to the gin with teams and a wagon. Then the module come along. That was a good improvement.

DM:

That was a huge innovation.

LC:

Yeah, it was.

DM:

Well that in itself is interesting about the time period that you've seen as far as cotton production is concerned. Also irrigation, was there any irrigation out here when you were a child?

LC:

Oh Lord yeah.

DM:

Was there already?

LC:

You bet.

DM:

Okay, were they running gas pumps? Gas operated pumps out here?

LC:

Yeah, a lot of butane gas.

DM:

And pivot came in what, in the seventies or so?

LC:

Yeah, that was a good—

DM:

So there's another huge innovation.

LC:

Yeah, we had, I think four irrigation wells.

DM:

Oh really? Out there at your farm?

LC:

Uh-huh.

DM:

Oh, and they were the gas operated ones?

LC:

Yeah, some of them were electricity.

DM:

Okay, I'm going to pause this a second. (pause in recording) So after you got back from World War II, got back from Europe, was there any big to-do made about your service over there? The fact that you'd been a prisoner of war and all that?

LC:

No.

DM:

Now, I noticed in there that you are a member of American Ex-Prisoners of War? Okay, when did you join that or was every POW just automatically a member?

LC:

I guess it's just automatic. I don't know when I joined.

DM:

Did you ever go to any of the chapter meetings like in Plainview or places like that?

LC:

Well, a few of them.

DM:

Okay, did you have much contact besides Mr. Author in Ralls? Did you have contact with other people who had been through a similar experience?

LC:

No.

DM:

Did you have any trauma after the war? Did you have any dreams or nightmares or—?

LC:

No, I done pretty good after that. When I got back I just forgot it all.

DM:

Right.

LC:

I didn't think I had any use of it.

DM:

You went on with your life.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay, that's probably a pretty healthy thing.

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Just move on. Okay, now this Honor Flight came together several years ago, but you went last year?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Okay, that was in October of last year?

LC:
Yeah.

DM:
Well tell me about that, how did you—did someone ask you to go or did you hear about it and make a phone call?

LC:
I heard about it, and I called them.

DM:
Good. And now did your wife go with you, too?

LC:
No, she wasn't able to go. She's got back problems.

DM:
Okay, so the people you went with, were they from around here?

LC:
Well, it was two or three that I knew.

DM:
Oh really, okay. And then the rest were what—from Lubbock or somewhere?

LC:
Yeah, from Lubbock and everywhere else.

DM:

Right.

LC:

Over to New Mexico.

DM:

It was a pretty big group though, wasn't it?

LC:

Yeah, a hundred and something.

DM:

Really?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

So what did they do? Did they have you come down to Lubbock Airport and take off from there?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay and how was it? You went straight from Lubbock to Washington, or—?

LC:

Yeah, straight in, they just left there and landed in Washington.

DM:

You didn't have to stop in Dallas or anywhere?

LC:

Uh-uh, it was a through flight.

DM:

Right, right how nice.

LC:

Boy, it was nice. I really enjoyed it.

DM:

Did they take care of you pretty well?

LC:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Did they feed you pretty well?

LC:

Oh every time you turn around they had a box of food for you.

DM:

Really?

LC:

My nephew from Plainview went with me.

DM:

Oh good.

LC:

Jerry Morgan.

DM:

So they fed you a little better than the Germans did when they marched—?

LC:

Yeah, they really fed us. My nephew would say, "Boy, every time we turn around they've got a box of food for you."

DM:

Not bad, well instead of losing weight like you did in Europe, maybe you gained a little bit on that trip.

LC:

Yeah, they were really taking care of us.

DM:

Were they pretty good about getting you to different places on time?

LC:

Yes.

DM:

I've heard really wonderful things about the logistics of it all.

LC:

Yeah they did. If you didn't feel like you could walk, they'd get you a wheelchair and push you.

DM:

Well what all did you see—had you ever been to Washington before this trip?

LC:

No, not really.

DM:

So what did you get to see in Washington?

LC:

Well, we saw that airplane that bombed Japan, it was up there.

DM:

Oh yeah, the *Enola Gay*. So you went over to that Air and Space Museum, I guess.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

—where they have planes.

LC:

Way up in that building, boy they got them.

DM:

The Wright Brother's plane and all that—those space capsules. How nice.

LC:

Yeah, that was interesting.

DM:

Did y'all go over and see the Star Spangled Banner, the American Flag with all the holes in it? Golly, good trip. Did you go to the White House or to the Capitol building?

LC:

We went to the Capitol. They was a working on it.

DM:

They've got scaffolds all over it.

LC:

Boy, yeah, they had it all ready.

DM:

I guess you went to the World War II Memorial. What did you think about it?

LC:

It was all right.

DM:

It's on the Lincoln Memorial side. Now what about the Korean War Memorial, did y'all go over there also?

LC:

Yeah, we went over there, where those soldiers were.

DM:

Platoon walking through there.

LC:

That was deep.

DM:

That's kind of spooky at night.

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Yeah, those things kind of—you can see them kind of glowing over there. Did you go to Arlington Cemetery?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Where they're raising the flag over Iwo Jima and all that.

LC:

Yeah, we went to all that.

DM:

Where'd you meet Randy Neugebauer?

LC:

In his office.

DM:

Oh, you went—at the Capitol?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Pretty good; pretty well-rounded trip.

LC:

It was, it was real—

DM:

What are we leaving out? Was there anything else that sticks in your mind?

LC:

Well, no, I was going to go a year before last and then I got sick and couldn't go.

DM:

Well I'm glad you got that trip in.

LC:

I am, too. I started not to go and my wife said, "Yeah, you're going."

DM:

Good, I'm glad she encouraged you to go on. I'm glad your nephew got to go, too.

LC:

Yeah, he enjoyed it.

DM:

Oh, boy. Oh, when you came back from the war in '45, you were back by Christmas, weren't you?

LC:

Yeah.

DM:

Were you worried that you were going to get sent over to Japan, because the war wasn't over there yet.

LC:

Well I was—they'd called me up to go back, but I was a prisoner of war, and I got out of that.

DM:

Right, and as it turned out the war ended pretty quick over there anyhow, but golly, I know a lot of guys were concerned.

LC:

Yeah, they called me. They called me back.

DM:

Can you imagine if you'd gone through all that in Europe and then had to go over there and fight in Japan?

LC:

Yeah, boy that would be something. I told them, I said, "I kind of dread that."

DM:

I imagine. Well we've just kind of hit some of the highlights today, but are there other things that you ought to mention about your war experience? Things that I don't know to ask?

LC:

No, I guess we've covered pretty good.

DM:

Pretty good, and then you have these newspaper articles here and that'll cover some more. And I'll just mention on the recording, because people will listen to this recording someday, that we'll also have some images of newspaper clippings about your experiences. And then I'll take a photograph of your medals in there also if that's all right.

LC:

You bet.

DM:

With the .50 caliber machine gun [bullet]. Was that one off of your machine gun, out of your ammunition on your gun?

LC:

No.

DM:

Just picked one up?

LC:

I just picked one up.

DM:

By the way, you sure learned how to shoot a gun and a machine gun. Did you do any hunting or anything afterwards when you got back? Did you ever mess with a gun after that?

LC:

Well yeah, I still got an old shotgun and pistol. I got a .38.

DM:

You just didn't do much hunting or anything like that?

LC:

No, I never did.

DM:

Did enough shooting in the war?

LC:

Yeah, well I used to hunt a lot when I was young.

DM:

Before the war or after?

LC:

Before the war, yeah.

DM:

Did you guys get to bring any of your stuff back? Any of your weapons or anything?

LC:

No.

DM:

Too bad.

LC:

Too bad.

DM:

Okay, well I'm going to turn this off if that's all right.

End of recording

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