Video Recording Log
Veteran Wesley Matthews

1. Name and address of collector of interviewer.

Name of Donor/Interviewer: H.F. Williamson
Address: 300 N. Goodwin
City: Urbana
State: Illinois
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Partner organization affiliation (if any): WILL AM-FM-TV

2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed at is appears on the Biographical Data Form:

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Wesley Matthews
Birth Date: 12/16/1923

3. Recording format
VIDEO type: Mini DVD

4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 145 minutes   Date of recording: 02/21/2008

5. Location of recording: WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.

00:00   Introduction
00:25   Beginning of war—working on farm—drafted in 1944—graduated H.S. in 1940
01:35   July, 1944—sworn in at Fort Sheridan—exams
02:25   Compiling service record—war bonds $18.75/mo—expected to buy—he refused
05:25   Assigned KP Fireguard of a Knight
05:45   Camp Wolters, TX—basic training 8 weeks—11 weeks heavy weapons
06:15   Infantry Replacement Training Center—told them cavalry replacement casualty was 2%—later discovered in ATO casualty rate was 3% per day
07:03   December 16th—Battle of the Bulge—21st birthday—sent to Boston to board ship—10-day delay en route, Christmas at home—Fort Mead, MD—friends
08:10   Training—cadences—trained for Pacific jungle conditions—sent to Europe midwinter
09:30   Ardennes Mountains—foxholes—if you got trench foot you were court marshaled
10:15   Camp Miles Standish, MA—Boston—trains
12:15   Thomas H. Barry—Army Troops Transport—January 1, 1945—15 days zigzagging to Le Havre, France—sunken ships in pier—debarked, walked 4 miles
In France near Belgium for 3 days—food, K-rations, cold coffee—on train, traded engineer for goat cheese, bread, wine

Living in old factory building—trading with locals

Truck across Belgium—very cold—near German border

Joined 3rd Battalion, 395th Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division, L Company Mortar Section—light 60’s, 80, 60 mm guns

Ammunitions bearer—45 lbs of ammunition and equipment—6 rounds on front, 6 back

Replacements—training—fighting to save own rear—carbine with 1 magazine—7 rounds, holds 15—begged rounds off of others

Didn’t know if gun would fire—not allowed to test it

Wearing arctic’s, carrying combat boots—traded combat boots for carbines

Sound phone to call ahead and tell when coming back to camp—someone walked up, guard missed the message—friendly fire

Carbine—2 magazines—machine gun belt—pistol belt—acquired 7 magazines

Cold weather—clothing—uniform—battalion surgeon told him over 100 men in battalion had frostbite—supposed to send them back but there were no replacements—given 6 pills of APC Anise

Bed rest with feet elevated—hospital in England

Last part of Battle of the Bulge—Battle Star—range, mop up line

Dug in, Siegfried Line—pillboxes faced wrong way—patrols every night—patrols wouldn’t go too far—go down to hill, sit down, come back

31st January—another regiment attacked—German dugouts supposedly empty—16 mm mortar sent out—ineffective

Germans shelling road—went to Herzberg—cut across country

Guard duty, went into house—240 canons fired, plaster fell off of ceiling

Going to clean out bunkers—standing single-file battalion long—2 mortar rounds fired by Germans—men getting hit around him—not hit but had shrapnel holes in clothes

Spent night in foxholes

Went to Wanes, Belgium—Elsenborn Ridge—Battle of the Bulge—his battalion only unit of 1st Army that wasn’t pushed out of position during Battle of the Bulge—field of fire under

37-mm canon—anti-personnel—deadly for Germans—attacked by 3 regiments of Germans—went back 37 miles

Worked for engineers during rest—went to small town in Belgium—tank battle near old stone houses—used destroyed houses to build road—done on half rations, pounding rocks all day—trucked back to battalion at night—doing double duty, everyone sick

Story about friend

“Mopping up”—Valentine’s Day—relieved by another division

Putting up tent in forest—shelter halves—snow storm

Belgium—5-day real rest—half trucked, half walked—Belgians took them in—house heated by cook stove—ate pies and drank wine—there 5 days

Boots, shoes
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43:55 Training program—firing mortar—volleyball—changed Army Corps
45:00 Speech—Germans in hole, time to rout them out
46:15 Went to Stolberg, Belgium—in mansion with ballroom on 4th floor—broke chandelier
47:10 In trucks—discovered girls watching them—played songs from U.S. on Victrola—fined $65 for fraternizing in German territory
48:00 Crossed river Rur to Düren—dozers to clear roads—fire on road—running with machine guns—took German POW
50:45 Bergheim on Erft Canal—fire fight—back in battalion group—artillery in big ovens—240’s, 155’s, 105’s—attached to 7th Armored—tanks—I and K Companies
53:00 Dove into open grave—Air Force came—3 P-51’s bombed and strafed top of cliff—Germans dug into higher ground of embankment
54:07 Dugout—German private and corporeal—trip wired boobytrap—6 POWs—BAR supposed to deliver them to HQ—took them around the corner and shot them all
55:45 Took town—running down cobblestone streets—burning German money
58:30 I Company discovered bank—bazooka fired on vault—town more or less secured
59:05 [Tape transfer]
59:26 Mortar squad ended up in house of music teacher—had jam session
01:00:30 Civilians—never ran into “real Nazis”—people would not admit to being Nazis
01:01:15 Left town—driving in trucks—fire fight—dug foxhole—strip mine going across Cologne Plain—more fire fights
01:04:05 1st Army same instructions: proceed to Rhine River—hit river 4 miles from Dusseldorf—bridge blew—German tanks appeared—tank—machine gunner—mortar—rain—retrieving ammunition
01:08:30 Germans dug tank trap—Americans set up mortar—3-4 miles to Rhine River—“Germans putting rolls and barrages over it”
01:10:55 German farmhouse—27 German tanks firing—took cover—his company lost about 40 men
01:13:00 At midnight went to hollow—medics wing was field hospital
01:15:00 Going to attack another town next day—barrage cut off—no one told cannon company—at 4 a.m. rousting Germans out of houses
01:16:25 Potluck meal—searched houses—chickens, potatoes
01:17:15 Trucked to another field next day—battalion awarded distinguished unit citation for Battle of the Bulge
01:17:50 9th Armored crossed bridge—put in trucks and taken up river with headlights on—“liberated lap robe”—went by truck to Ringen overnight—walked to Ludendorff bridge—Germans firing and bombing bridge—told to walk not run
01:20:35 His battalion went left and plugged hole between 77th and 78th Lightning Division—2-3 days—antiaircraft—Quad 50’s
01:21:30 Half-tracks
01:22:20 Moved out—found building with alcohol—HQ—problem controlling alcohol consumption
01:24:25 Going uphill—dug in under tree—screaming Mimi’s—saw man hit
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01:27:04  Saw spec coming in—hit while laying on back—pushed down—shrapnel went all the way through leg—cauterized wound

01:28:45  Lost 50% of company in friendly fire—company retracted—squad said would come back for him—made litter out of field jackets—hopped downhill between 2 men through brush—others stole Jeep for him

01:31:30  Aid station—surgeon—shock tent

01:32:55  Captain called him waste of time because so much blood loss—ether—surgery

01:34:25  Air field—went from Paris to England—C-46 or 47—take off by series of hops

01:35:30  Train across England—old English hospital

01:36:00  New man in experienced troop—infantry replacement training—horrible method—newly trained boy going with more experienced men who went through Battle of the Bulge—treated well, gave suggestions—from ASTP, transferred to 99th after ASTP disbanded—Louisiana Maneuvers

01:38:15  Mortar section—friend Roger section runner—distance between squad level and CP—food and rations—CP had better food

01:39:45  Went into Army 165 lbs—came back 120 lbs

01:40:15  Hospital in England—Kirchner wire drilled through knee—developed case of Osteomyelitis—bone rotting—smell—Penicillin shots

01:43:15  Doctors thought he wouldn’t survive

01:43:45  Paul—another replacement—got gangrene, amputated leg

01:45:45  Osteomyelitis—part of 1 leg muscle left—nerves, blood vessels, hair messed up

01:47:00  Hospital—another patient—requesting music for intercom

01:49:00  Overflow group—got caught with English girlfriends spending the night

01:50:45  Train to Scotland—went on U.S. Aquetania—3rd biggest passenger ship—troops taken out on lighters because ship too big for port—took 5 ¼ days to get to U.S.A.

01:52:00  Halloran Hospital, NY—June, 1945

01:53:00  Went to Bruns General Hospital, Sante Fe, New Mexico—temporary doctors—former TB hospital—waiting for orthopedic surgeon

01:54:00  Major arrived—goal to get everyone out of bed—broke his leg trying to bend his knee—denied breaking leg, left him with broken leg—someone forged a signature so he could get an X-ray, but then no one would look at it since they hadn’t ordered it

01:55:15  Surgeon said he would give him bone graft—cut the bone in 2 and put him back in bed—blood ran out of his leg and through 2 mattresses onto floor—got 5,000 cc’s of blood transfusion

01:56:35  Skin traction—shoe traction—frustration

01:57:50  Trying to bend leg

01:58:00  Framework hammock for leg

01:58:30  Surgery to break leg—Osteomyelitis, broken leg—bone graft—given full-leg brace

01:59:00  Gave nurse $20 to get a pair of shoes in town—left as bed patient carrying brace
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02:00:00 Lamy, NM—train—went through window into compartment—went to Galesburg to Mayo Clinic
02:00:45 Laying on litter at night at Galesburg station alone
02:01:20 [Tape transfer]
02:01:30 Moving from NM to IL—could only get transferred for humanitarian reasons
02:02:25 Wrote letter to Senator Brooks regarding horrible treatment at hospital—Brooks asked for Senatorial investigation of hospital—hospital was due to be closed—IGs came—he refused to make official complaint because they were due to send him home in 10 days and he didn’t want to ruin it
02:05:00 Train to Galesburg, IL—taken to hospital
02:07:25 Went home on weekends on Greyhound bus to Springfield, IL
02:09:00 At hospital 3 months without therapy or treatment
02:10:20 Going back and forth from hospital to home—went from brace to crutches to cane—performing his own physical therapy
02:11:20 CDD certificate—VA—examination and exit process—last day, discharged—hitch hiked to Springfield, IL
02:14:20 Fishing
02:16:00 50% disability unfair—handicapped in too many ways—should have been 60% or 80%—learning to do things with left hand and extra tools and aides
02:18:20 Hospital did what they should have in England—should have done more therapy in NM—nothing at all was done in Galesburg, IL
02:19:10 Was his dream to run the first 4-minute mile when he was young—prevented by injuries acquired in War
02:19:45 Wrap up—Walter Reed hospital and Iraq War—Army hospitals have always been bad—Congress, Surgeon General’s fault—people slack off in big bureaucracies of any kind—should have trained replacements as units instead of individuals—McNair erred in saying the Sherman tank did not need to be improved for WWII—took 3 American tanks to take out 1 German tank—guns, bazookas
02:22:25 Accepted war as daily life—civilian misunderstanding—way veterans look back
02:24:25 Can’t really describe it—[Wrap up]