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HOFFMAN

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Paratrooper with 101st Airborne Division during World War II

DESCRIPTION: INTERVIEW #1:

Background and education; involvement in a junior ROTC-type program; enlistment as a paratrooper; developing attitudes; basic and heavy weapons training at Camp Croft; airborne interviews and testing; Ft. Benning and infantry OCS training; the four stages of jump school training.

INTERVIEW #2:

Continuation of discussion of training program; rigging the parachutes; jump practice; jump master training; demolition school; memories of the first jumps; assignment to the 542nd Parachute Infantry Regiment; Colonel Ryder; assignment to Army Ground Replacement Pool at Ft. Meade.

INTERVIEW #3:

Arrival in England; "Axis Sally"; assignment to the 501st Parachute Regiment, intelligence section; make-up of an S-2 operation; history of the 501st; Howard Johnson; morale in the 501st; the "Geronimos"; routines and training exercises; live fire exercises; battalion commanders; preparations for D-Day; maps and aerial photographs of the Cotentin Peninsula; briefings; objectives (Douve River bridges and the lock at la Barquette); the marshalling area and lock up; hair cuts; equipment generally; personal gear.

INTERVIEW #4:

Continuation of discussion of personal gear; June 5, evening; preparations for the jump (including splitting the regiment; battalion designations; commanders; last preparations; loading the planes; meeting the pilot and crew; the flight itself; weather conditions; air sickness; physical condition of men; combat conditions going into drop areas; the jump master's responsibilities); details of the jump and landing.

INTERVIEW #5:

Getting free of the parachute; next movements (including weapons; cricket use; hedgerows; crickets, Mauser bolts, and Cornelius Ryan); link-up with his men; moving toward St. Côme-du-Mont; the farm at Housville; regiment starts to reform; dawn and combat engagement; problems of getting to la Barquette; reporting to [Colonel] Ballard's command; securing the la Barquette-le Port objectives; reflections on being in combat for first time; personality of Colonel Johnson.

INTERVIEW #6:

Arrival of the tanks; the drive toward Carentan; the return to England; re-assembling the S-2 section; interrogation of POW's; strained relations between Johnson and Ballard; the S.L.A. ("Slam") Marshall field interviews (Army historical team); importance of interviews, techniques used and results; training for the Holland drop (including re-outfitting; analysis of errors in D-Day drop; accomplishments of airborne troops; positive aspects of training; Hugo Sims; responsibilities of pilots).

INTERVIEW #7:

Taking leave in England and Scotland (including travel conditions and accommodations; attitudes of the English and Scottish civilians towards Americans; rationing; anecdote about hospitality); the jump into Holland on Sept. 17, 1944 (including troops involved; objectives; thoughts about the second jump; Lt. Colonel Harry W.O. Kinnard, Jr.; the Sunday morning drop; reaction of the Dutch; forming up of the battalion; establishing regimental headquarters at Veghel; activities of the 101st Division); arrival of British troops; information flow; the Market Garden operation (including drop zones and objectives; target Arnhem; need for British armor; morale; underground activities of Dutch teenagers; difficulties of the Guards Armored Division to advance; holding the roads and bridges; German resistance).

INTERVIEW #8:

Continuation of Market Garden operation (including casualties of jump; anecdote concerning capture of German soldiers and a German medical jeep; arrival of British forces at Veghel; difficulties of keeping "Hell's Highway" open and securing the bridges; stepped-up German attacks; the 107th Panzer Brigade; the German attack on Veghel; Brigadier Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe; importance of holding Veghel; moving north; the German 6th Parachute; quality of German soldiers; Lt. Hugo Sheridan Sims, Jr., and the "incredible patrol").

INTERVIEW #9:

Death of [Colonel] Howard Johnson, Lt. Col. Julian J. Ewell; the Mourmelon-la-Petit base camp and refitting the unit; lack of winter clothing; the battle for Bastogne (including weather and travel conditions; German units; headquarters in Bastogne convent; make-up of American forces and equipment; the siege); the fight through the Hagenau Forest; end of the war and disbanding of 501st; theological seminary in Virginia; rejoining the 101st Airborne Division (327th Brigade) as chaplain (rank, captain); military decorations.

[Dwight D. Eisenhower Library Oral History, interviews by Dr. Maclyn Burg, July 28, August 4, 11, 18, 25, September 1, 8, 15, 22, 1978]