

Veteran: Theran J. Heap, World War II Veteran

Interview Date: July 28, 2007

Interviewers: Alex E. Jolley and Holly Jolley

Vet: My name is Theran J. Heap I was born in Paragonah, Utah. I reside in Cedar City, Utah at the present time. I went into the army in January 1943. I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma and took basic training in the field artillery. Later on I went back East to Boston, Massachusetts. Then from Boston I got on a ship to Wakefield. Then I went to Liverpool, England on May 19, 1943, and I took a little more training there. They formed a package, I was in the artillery replacement. Then I landed in Normandy, France on the fifteenth day of June, 1944. Nine days after D-day, the fifteenth day of June. I was in a replacement depot for about two weeks and then they reclassified me and put me in the motor transportation service on the Red-Ball Express. I was on that until they abandoned the Red-Ball and put me on the AVC route. I was stationed in Paris, France for four weeks. Then I went to Belgium. I was in Belgium and hauled from Antwerp to the front lines. I hauled all kinds of supplies: Ammunition, troops, officers, and hospital supplies. At the time they had the Battle of the Bulge, we moved the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne to the front lines when they made their breakthrough. We continued to haul supplies the rest of the war. After the war, I was stationed in Hampstead, Germany for about six months. Then I went to Berlin, Germany for three months. I was in charge of civilian drivers while I was there. We would haul wood out of the forest into the city to divide among the people there for firewood.

Int: Did you enlisted or were you drafted?

Vet: I was drafted and then ordered to Fort Sill.

Int: So, you went into the army, right?

Vet: Right, in the army. I was in the truck company all the time I was over in Europe.

Int: Do you remember the highest rank you ever achieved?

Vet: The highest rank was T-5

Int: So you drove trucks most of the time.

Vet: I drove trucks the whole time I was in the army.

Int: Did you ever receive any decorations for your service?

Vet: I got just regular merit badges.

Int: Were you ever in combat?

Vet: Just when I'd go up to the front lines. The drivers wasn't in combat, but they was close to it.

Int: Were there any people of your acquaintance who have become prominent historical figures?

Vet: No.

Int: Did you come in contact at all with any famous people?

Vet: All of 'em was famous.

Int: You had something to do with General Patton?

Vet: Yes. General Patton's tanks – he screamed for gas to keep 'em going. We hauled ammunition to him. Then we hauled two registers across near the Rhine, and all kinds of supplies. Also we hauled the troops in to fight the front lines.

Int: So, did you meet General Patton?

Vet: Yes, but not right personally.

Int: When you reflect on your military service, what is the most vivid memory of your service? What do you remember the best?

Vet: I remember the fuzz bombs coming over every so often. They was a self-propelled flying object with explosives. When they run out of the fuel, they come down and exploded. I seen one in Antwerp, Belgium. They'd come over about every seven minutes, around December the 1<sup>st</sup>, until Christmas. They blew up a sugar factory, but they didn't injure very many men around them.

Int: Did you have any particular moments of religious, or spiritual experience?

Vet: Well, when we was loading ammunition at an English ammunition dump, a plane came over and bombed the trucks. We didn't loose any of 'em, but it was awful spooky.

Int: Could you tell us a little of your family while serving?

Vet: My father died with a heart attack while I was over in Liege, Belgium. I got word from the Red Cross, and letters from my sisters about it. It was kind of a shock to me. I was unable to come home for the funeral, like they do nowadays.

Int: What were your experiences of joy and sorrow during your service?

Vet: Seeing the dead people around. Cities were bombed out, and I seen a lot of 'em.

Int: Did you have any moments of joy?

Vet: Well, I met my wife.

Vet's Wife: You better say that.

Int: Could you describe some of your feelings of support from home?

Vet: Just the letters from my mother and father.

Int: Did you feel any support from your country while you were over there?

Vet: Oh, yes. Other soldiers and some of the English supported us.

Int: Could you tell us, what were the physical conditions under which you served –like was it jungle, or desert? You spent most of your time in Germany and France?

Vet: I spent, Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Holland, and Germany.

Int: So, did you sleep in a tent, was it hot?

Vet: When I first started the Red Ball Express, we pitched our tarps that came with the trucks, and we slept in them. We had cots we got from the hospital, that's kind of rough out in the cow pastures in the cold weather. When we moved in to Paris, we lived in a warehouse. It was big rooms that we lived in, just had our cots pitched. Later on we lived in the schoolhouses, is where we stayed when we were on the road hauling transportation. When we moved in to Berlin we lived in the SS Troops Hospital, there were rooms there for living in.

Int: Do you have any regrets about your service? Is there anything you regret?

Vet: No.

Int: Did you have a single most positive experience?

Vet: No.

Int: How has your service colored your current political, social, or religious views? Do you think your service changed how you feel about politics or religion?

Vet: We didn't have time for that.

Int: Do you think your service then had something to do with how you feel about politics and religion today?

Vet: Not necessarily.

Int: If you could give any advice to the service, military men and women of today, what would it be?

Vet: Do their best to stay alive.

Int: How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?

Vet: I feel awful, terrible. I don't think we should've ever gotten into the conflict in Iraq.

Int: Could you tell us about what you have in your frame? You have some medals of service.

Vet: Yes. This ETO Ribbon. The Victory Medal. These are the Battle Ribbons: Normandy, Southern France, ETO, Battle of the Bulge.

Int: You got a sharpshooter medal.

Vet: Yes. I was scared several times, but not to the extreme, you know. One of my closest friends over there was from Iuka, Mississippi. Verl Les Young was his name. We got along chasing around together and sight seeing.

Int: So did you feel like you were protected in your big truck?

Vet: Yep.

Int: Is there anything else that you want to tell us?

Vet: Well, when I was over the civilian drivers, I had one driver that translated for me from English to German. Out of the thirty drivers, he was the only one that knew English, so I used him as a translator.

Int: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Vet: I can't think of anything right now.

Int: Thanks for letting me do this interview, Mr. Heap.