

Interview with Lyle Sande

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Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

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Interviewed by David Overy

Overy ([00:00:03](#)):

Lyle Sande, could you begin by telling me where and when you were born and what you were doing when World War II broke out?

Sande ([00:00:12](#)):

Yes, I was born at Sherman, South Dakota on July 21st, 1923. I grew up in South Dakota and also partly in Minnesota. But when I went in the service, I went in from South Dakota and at that time we were farming and three of us guys got together one day and we'd just decided we were going to volunteer for this service. So we all up and volunteered to same day. And one went to the Marines, one went to the Navy and myself went in the army.

Overy ([00:00:49](#)):

This was 1943?

Sande ([00:00:50](#)):

This was in 1943. This is correct. I went into November of 1943. Then I went from there to camp Santan, Texas. That's close to Kilgore, Texas. It's an army base, just regular infantry training. And I stayed there from November on tail, the last part of April, which then we were shipped to the east coast and went from camp Shanks over to the boat and went from there to England. And we were on the boat for quite some time. I don't remember the total number of days now, but it

seemed like an awful long ride on the boat anyway. And we were all alone. And at night we posted quite a bit of the time because of submarines and the Germans were after us. So we took some different routes from what we probably would have if it hadn't been that way.

Overy ([00:01:50](#)):

Tell me about when you went to Texas. [inaudible 00:01:56] regular infantry training, right?

Sande ([00:01:57](#)):

Yes. It's just the regular infantry training, right.

Overy ([00:02:00](#)):

Did you volunteer for airborne? Where you put into airborne or how did that work?

Sande ([00:02:04](#)):

That came when we got to England. That came when we got to England. When we were in the states, we were just playing old infantry men. Then when they shipped us across, we were to go in to relieve some of the casualties they had picked up and in Africa and Italy and on the way up, and we were supposed to be replacements for that. Well, it turned out that when we got there, we got hooked up with the airborne and there was a gentleman standing there taking a, picking out each guy there. And he said, okay, you want to go to the paratroopers or the gliders? And I had a big strapping young fella in front of me and he said oh, he said, I'd never go to the gliders, he says, never. That's just made out of paper and stole pot wire and they fall apart as soon as they get in the air. I'd never do that so I'll go to the paratrooper. So I thought he knew so much about it so I followed him. And today, if I could find him, I would probably say something else. But anyway, I went to jump school in England for a period of six weeks I think it was. They dropped us off of shoots off of towers and let us go down and one thing or another. And then the first time up in the plane, they had to kick me out. And I went out. But after that, I just more or less said, I

can't take the paratroopers, I just can't do it. So they put me into the gliders and put the same outfit at three to five. That's where I got into the glider.

Overy ([00:03:39](#)):

Well, how was your training like in England? I understand that paratroops were an elite, much more hardened group than the normal infantry, or was that your experience?

Sande ([00:03:51](#)):

Yes, they are. To be a paratrooper, you really have to go through some rugged training. And I found that out also that it was really rugged. They made you do so many pushups and you had to run so many miles. You had to do this, you had to do that. And they really built these guys up to be tough men. And I can see where, like our General Gavin, that's general of the division commander at that time where he was very proud of the paratroopers, because he was a paratrooper himself and he was well-trained and there were a bunch of well-trained men. There's no getting away from it. The gliders was not easy either because we had to go through some of the same training too. But general Gavin always referred to that, that was his boys, the 504 and the 505 regiment with paratroopers and that was his group of men. He really always tried to get them into combat before he brought anybody else in.

Overy ([00:04:54](#)):

But you went through regular physical conditioning?

Sande ([00:04:58](#)):

Right.

Overy ([00:05:00](#)):

Did everyone else?

Sande ([00:05:00](#)):

That every everyone else went through, right. Correct.

Overy ([00:05:03](#)):

But what was discipline like?

Sande ([00:05:04](#)):

Oh, it was tough at times. And you wondered why you were there sometimes, but then they were good to you too. They were real, like I say, everybody was in the service for the same thing, same purpose. And they knew that, and they were tough on you sometimes, but sometimes they were good too. So yeah, it worked out.

Overy ([00:05:31](#)):

Was there any, I can understand not wanting to jump out of an airplane. I can't think of anything I'd rather-- Did anybody ever criticize you for that or what did you do say? I want to prefer to be in the gliders?

Sande ([00:05:48](#)):

Yeah. When they take and give you so much training see, and they kind of more or less grade you to a certain extent on your jumps and so forth and so on. And they're real nice about it. And they asked you what you thought about it, how you felt going through the air and all of this stuff. And I just said, I tell you, it's no place for me. I said, I can find on the ground, but I don't think I can find it in the air. But at the same time the gliders were in the air too. But there was a little different deal, you didn't have to jump out of an airplane.

Overy ([00:06:22](#)):

Did you feel a great deal of apprehension about going into gliders? What I'm trying to say, were you as aware of the problem with gliders before you handled them as you were afterwards?

Sande ([00:06:36](#)):

Yes, yeah. They gave us a complete rundown on the gliders from the time they make them and tell the time that they brought them back overseas and used them. Yes, they did. They give you a real good description, orientation of them. Yeah. And they really told you what it was. They showed you what it was made out of it and everything like that. But it was the 82nd airborne division. This is an All-American division. And it was the biggest one over there at that time with the 101. And you were the division over there. And so we were part of it.

Overy ([00:07:19](#)):

What things did they do to build a spree? You'd normally think about the paratroopers being the lead in the Marines. There's a certain built-in pride, but did they attempt to do this with you?

Sande ([00:07:33](#)):

You bet they did. They told us that we were no different than the paratroopers. We were just as good as the paratrooper. They built us up just the same way as they would build up the paratroopers. And they made us feel real good. They made us feel like, boy, we're bad stuff I guess you'd say probably, and let's go, we're ready to go. That was always our model for the 82nd airborne division. Let's go. And we were always ready whenever they called us to go. It was a tremendous experience. It's something that you'll never forget as long as you are on this earth.

Overy ([00:08:10](#)):

What was it like when you weren't training

Sande ([00:08:13](#)):

Oh, we were training all the time. There was never a day that we didn't have training. We were training all the time. After back from Normandy of course, then it was at the time that there was

a terrible many casualties in Normandy. So they'd brought over an awful lot of guys from the United States again to bring back in. So there you go, you're back into it. You have to start training all over again. You've got to get these guys set up just exactly the training that you had. And you had to go through the training again too, because you were a member of a company or a member of that regimen, whatever it may be. And yes, we were training all the time. We were out on the rifle range and firing, and we were out on, went through combat procedures on the area around London. And yeah, we were training all the time. There was not very much what you'd call the holiday as far as the army was concerned at that time. And they knew that the invasion of Holland was coming soon when they did not say anything, but they knew that the next one would be the invasion of Holland. And so we had to prepare for that. Well, we were training every day, every day. Marching many miles a day and running full packs and everything. They kept us pretty well in shape. We never got out of that.

Overy ([00:09:31](#)):

Did you have much contact with civilians when you were?

Sande ([00:09:34](#)):

The first thing over there? No, you could not contact. You were supposed to stay away from all civilians to begin with. After we'd been in England for a period of time, then they gave us permission to go to town, go to the bars if you wanted to or go to the dances, they had dances in town and you got to be circulating through with a lot of the English people and they treated you fine in England. They were glad you were there. And so we got acquainted with quite a few.

Overy ([00:10:05](#)):

You didn't feel any resentment about the fact that you were there?

Sande ([00:10:08](#)):

No, not at all. As far as the English people were concerned. When you got across over a little further away, yeah, we ran into some of that, but that's later on in the war.

Overy ([00:10:19](#)):

When you were in England, then you were near what town?

Sande ([00:10:22](#)):

We were near Lester, England. We were close to scrapped off England actually, where we had our base. But scrapped off England was just a little town. I suppose if somebody, the English could hear me say that it was just a little town, they probably wouldn't like it, but it was something where they had nothing for the United States men to [inaudible 00:10:47]. They didn't have any dancers, no show house or anything like this. And Lester, England was much bigger. So they would haul us to the period, I think it was 20 miles between our camp and Lester, which they would haul us in on trucks and haul us back and so forth.

Overy ([00:10:59](#)):

So you didn't see any trouble between the yanks and civilians?

Sande ([00:11:03](#)):

No. Lester, no.

Overy ([00:11:04](#)):

I've often heard that there were some, some resentment of America.

Sande ([00:11:07](#)):

Well, I think that some, we've heard this too. And I think that maybe you're always going to find a few guys in a division of 10,000 men. You're always going to find somebody that tries to make

trouble for somebody. But overall, the group that we were more or less associated with, no, we really had a lot of fun and they treated us good.

Overy ([00:11:31](#)):

As you were training in England, did you have any specific knowledge of what it was you were going to do?

Sande ([00:11:37](#)):

What do you mean? As far as what our next move was?

Overy ([00:11:39](#)):

As far as what was coming up for you?

Sande ([00:11:41](#)):

No, we did not. When everybody came back from Normandy, it was really pretty quiet. Like I say, replacements and started training over. But within a period of time, when the rumors started flying that that invasion of Holland was the next thing for the second airborne division, which it was, we had three dry runs before we went into the vein of Holland, but nothing until oh, I would say probably six weeks before we were to go in. And we found out about what we were going to do.

Overy ([00:12:18](#)):

When then did you reach the continent of Europe?

Sande ([00:12:19](#)):

You mean when from I came from the States?

Overy ([00:12:25](#)):

Yeah. When did you go from England to Europe?

Sande ([00:12:28](#)):

We went to, September, we went into Holland when they made it to Holland in September 1944.

We'd already passed Normandy the day before '44.

Overy ([00:12:46](#)):

And so was your involvement in Market Garden your first combat operation?

Sande ([00:12:52](#)):

Yes. Yeah, right.

Overy ([00:12:54](#)):

Would you describe that to me?

Sande ([00:12:56](#)):

When we went into Holland, of course, the 82nd Airborne since, like I say, the 504 and the 505 paratroopers in the head, then the gliders went in two days later. We had what was known as what we call a dry run. We had three and we were the airport three times. Twice the weather was too bad for us to go in. And so they sent us back to scrapped off England again where we base camp. The third time we were ready to go, we picked up our sea rations, our ammunition, got all set to go in. Two o'clock in the morning they loaded up the paratroopers, they flew them in at two o'clock in the morning. They dropped in, got their DZ zone. And about time that it was light, the C47s took off with the blinders behind them. And the 325 went in to the invasion of Holland. And we went in our DZ zone was close to what known as the little town of Mook, Holland. M-O-O-K, Holland. Mook, Holland they call it. And there was a great big forest right alongside of Mook, Holland. So when the gliders landed, the glider that I was in, there was 16 of us in there. We came down, the glider pilot brought us in. When we came down, we came within an inch and a half of hitting a tree. He stopped the glider that good and we had lost one man that was shot

with flack when we flew over. One was not, he wasn't killed, he was just wounded. But the flack is coming at you and the gliders are so thin, they're made out of paper and they're so thin that nothing to stop the flack and they're coming in. But when we got down, why we had to of course get back to our company, get back to our platoon, to our squads to be ready to go. And of course, with gliders going here and there and all over, it's quite a problem to get them all together and get them back into the area where you wanted without having some shots fired at you and one thing or another. But we were very fortunate, we got back into the kitting bird forest is what they call it. And it's right at Mook, Holland. And this was where we were for two weeks when we came into Holland. We were dug into the trees and stayed there until the day came. Two weeks later, they told us to go out and go over an area, certain area over close to Mook, Holland. And there were a lot of Germans in there that were really giving us a bad time. And then our main goal was to go out and get, there was four houses out into what would actually look like a cow pasture. But this is where all the problem was coming from. So they told us that that was our mission for the day, we had to go out after them. And as soon as we got ready to go in the morning, it was so foggy you couldn't see anything at all. And as soon as the fog lifted a little bit, the Germans could see us, but we could not see the Germans. And the Germans of course started opening up right away. Well, I don't think I'd went a half a mile from the forest and I was hit. I was hit in the arm and in the back both. So my buddy as we have talked about before, stopped and he said, boy, he said, you're bleeding bad, don't move. He said, stay right where you are. And I, not thinking of course, you know at that time what's going on. I told him, go on, get caught up with the company, get up with the company where you belong. Instead of telling him to stay back with me or something like this, I was rushing him into the company. So possibly of him getting hit also. But I laid there for a period of time. And of course, when you go into combat,

they gave you two things, they tell you two things. Number one, if you get hit, don't holler for the medics. Number two, don't take a shot of morphine. My platoon leader came along, which was Lieutenant Smith, came along and he stopped at me and he said, boy, he said, you are really bleeding bad, aren't you, he said. And I said, yeah. And first thing I did when I got hit was call for the medics. So I got one strike against me already. And so he stopped and he said, I'm close to find Captain Pierce. Do you know where he's at? And I said, well, he went with the company up ahead, I'm sure I couldn't tell you where he's at, but he's there somewhere. And he said, well, I've got to find him. Lieutenant Smith was the officer of the day. And he was not supposed to be on in the battlefield at all. He was supposed to be back in the company CP, taking care of the business of the day. But he had to come on and find Captain Pierce so he found me first instead of finding Captain Pierce. So he gives me a shot of morphine. Okay. So I'm two strikes. One, I call the medics, two, I took a shot of morphine. So I'm already two strikes against me. So the medics would know that. So I laid there for a period of time and I was laying on my stomach and I had my head down on the ground and hurting something terrible and nothing really to do but just to lay there until the medics got to you and that's the only thing he could do. So I laid there and all of a sudden I looked up and I don't know yet why I looked up, but as I looked up, I seen Lieutenant Smith fall. So I thought, well, I know he's hit. I got to go up and help him. So I take off my spot and I'm crawling on my stomach. And I crawled up to where Lieutenant Smith was. Well, I touched Lieutenant Smith and he was dead. He got hit bullet right between his eyes. He didn't never knew what hit him. So what do I do? Dumb, but the best move I could think of, I turned around and went back to where I thought I would lay in the first place. And I laid there until the medics came along. Then they put me on the back of a Jeep and took me back to the CP medical Corp, right? They had it right in the same place as the CP was for us. So the first thing

the doctor did that looked at me, he said, boy, get this guy some blood quick. So I got some blood because I'd lost quite a bit. And they kind of patched me up the best they could do it because I was split in the back. So terrible bad, and my muscles resolve splits.

Overy ([00:19:58](#)):

What, did the bullet hit you straight on?

Sande ([00:20:00](#)):

Right. Directly on the side and worked itself right up onto my spine.

Overy ([00:20:07](#)):

It really split open?

Sande ([00:20:08](#)):

Split open, yeah. So then they put me on a Jeep and took me back to hospital in Holland. And of course the hospital was just beautiful. It was so clean and so nice and everything and it took such good care of you, but there was one thing wrong. The nurses couldn't talk English and we couldn't talk Dutch. So we had an awful time to communicate to what we wanted to get done. But then I just stayed there overnight then they loaded me on the plane the next morning and they flew me to England. And I was in a general hospital 188 for a period of time. I got penicillin shots. And that time penicillin was terribly high price in the United States. And the doctor told me, he says, you'd be worth a fortune if you were back in United States with the amount of penicillin you'd taken. And they took and sewed me up. And I don't know if there's something I should tell you or anything about it, but anyway, to a certain extent, it was quite a deal. Toward the end, it got to be kind of a funny deal. But anyway, I had a young doctor just over from the United States, just absolutely full of life. He was so happy and so good and just out of medical school. He knew everything. The army hadn't taught him a thing, he knew everything. So he took

it in and he stood me up with stitches on my back. Well, they put me back in my bed, then nurse come around the check and the stitches had pulled out. So she called the doctor back in again and he came in and he looked at them and brought me back in the operating room and he sewed me up again. And he took me back out into the ward and put me back in the bed. And I guess about two or three hours after that, the nurse looked at it again and the stitches are pulled out again. And they called the doctor back in, doctor looked at me and he said, Sande, he said, this is enough of this old stuff. He said, I don't like it. But he said, we're going to fix it, you're not going to lose any more stitches now. So he took me back in the operating room when he put three buttons on the top and three buttons on the bottom. And he sewed the stitches around the buttons and they never did come out. They stayed there all the time. So I do have three button marks on the top. And three button marks on the bottom of my wound in my back. But I stayed there, rehabilitation after I was able to get out of bed. The rehabilitation program I had was working in the post office sorting out all the mail. And I stayed there and the doctor called me in and he said, Sandy, he said, I've got good news for you. He said, we're going to discharge you from the hospital and you're going home. Home. That's back in the States. See, that's my thinking of it. I'm going back home, I'm through with the war and everything and I'm going home. And I thought, gee, this is a great day, good day to be alive, I'm going home. Well, I went home all right, but I didn't go back overseas. I went back to the old division. I went to back to see company 325. That was my home over there, which I never thought about, but it was my home there. And it wasn't over there so I didn't get to go home. But I left back in time to get ready to go to the Battle of the Bulge.

Overy ([00:23:42](#)):

Okay. Let me stop there for just a moment. When you're going in those gliders, say 16 men in a glider, right?

Sande ([00:23:52](#)):

Well, there's some gliders squads [crosstalk 00:23:54], it's not right, yeah. Some gliders are bigger than that. The French ships and gliders that are bigger than that, where they could set the people into the wings. And of course, American gliders weren't that big. But we did use French and American gliders both going into the invasion. And some of those gliders were big enough. They put in tanks, they put in big guns, hauled all kinds of equipment in the gliders. But 95% of the time when the gliders came down with anything real heavy, they would smash it up and some of the equipment maybe would be smashed right along with the glider. So to a certain extent, they learned a lesson with the invasion of Holland that maybe we don't use gliders to haul in big equipment with, we'll get that in some other way. So outside of 16, 24 men could get in a glider. Some were smaller gliders, some only took 10 men in. Different gliders, and of course it depends upon a lot too of what your rifle squad or your machine gun squad, your BAR people or what it may be, they always tried to keep those people always together, one glider because when you land, your BAR man is ready to go with his gun and he's got his people to help him and his machine gun is ready to go. They've got their men right there. It makes a difference what they have, but they try to keep the squads together as much as possible and try to keep each regiment and each company together as much as possible.

Overy ([00:25:27](#)):

Okay. Now, as you were going over to Holland in the glider, what was that like?

Sande ([00:25:33](#)):

Well, to me it was an experience that I shall never forget for the simple reason that when we took off with the C47, the C47 is already in the air before the glider gets off the ground. The glider does not have a motor. All it's got is some brakes to stop when you get on the ground. So we were up in the air and we're flying behind the C47s. The air current is just absolutely rough and we're just bouncing around, up and down. So it was not exactly what you would call a smooth ride. It was different because you didn't know what you were looking forward to going into. As soon as about the time you said that, well, here comes the flak. The flak is coming up at you, and it's going right through someplace and right on through the glider.

Overy ([00:26:31](#)):

This is what time of the day? Is it early or late?

Sande ([00:26:34](#)):

It's about 8:00 in the morning when we're getting into this area where we have to drop the gliders. So they had plenty of time to get ready for us. Plus that you didn't know what was going to happen when you hit the ground, because they had so many of our DZ zones wired with stove pipe wire, so that when the paratroopers come in, a lot of them hit that stove pipe wire and were killed immediately. The gliders hit it and tip over backwards and smash it all up, and the men in there. There was a lot of casualties from the glider regiments that went in. Moreso I think as far as, not from the flak that was thrown at you when you were in the air, but when you got to the ground because like I say, all they got is brakes and the little steering wheel, and you don't have no motor to pull you up or anything to do it. Whatever happens when you're on the ground and that's it, you don't go any other where. If you hit a tree, you hit it. There was glider pilots who got

to be congratulated and everything else for the way they handled to get those gliders down on the ground.

Overy ([00:27:50](#)):

When you were in the gliders going in, did the guys talk?

Sande ([00:27:55](#)):

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. We would talk. A lot of them even got sick in the air.

Overy ([00:27:55](#)):

Air sick?

Sande ([00:28:00](#)):

Air sick in the air. Yep. We were talking and most of the time we were talking about what we had done back at base camp before we got ready to go back in. You weren't thinking about what was coming up as far as getting into the battle zone when you got there. You were talking about what show you'd seen there and English girl or something like this. You're joking along. I had a buddy that was sitting right alongside of me. Name was O'Brien. He was from Wisconsin. He got hit in the bottom, but he had a comb in there. The flak stopped when it hit the comb. It broke the comb in half, but he didn't get a scratch, but the flak hit the comb and that was the end of that.

Overy ([00:28:43](#)):

So the flak was just kind of coming up?

Sande ([00:28:45](#)):

It was coming up all through the glider, and like I said, the glider is such a thin paper that doesn't hold back anything. So it went right through, some of it went right in between us and everything. We had one guy that got hit pretty hard. Was a casualty on the ground, but that was the only one that was in our flight that got hit. Like I say, the one that got hit in the comb.

Overy ([00:29:12](#)):

Was your company pretty well together?

Sande ([00:29:15](#)):

No, the company was not real close together. I'd like to go back for just a minute to Normandy, if I could. In Normandy, when the paratroopers went in, they went in with crickets, they'd run the crickets so that you would know where you were so you could get to your fellow buddies. But as long periods of time that they use these crickets coming down, the Germans got smart on it. Then they started using the clips of their gun that made the same noise as what the paratroopers did. So they got hit pretty hard on some of that. But getting back to landing in Holland. No, we did not land close together. I think that the squad that I was in and a machine gun crew that was with us, we probably had to go to walk a period of, oh, I imagine probably I'm sure we walked a good two miles before we go back to C company with Wayne Percy and his commander. It took us about two miles before we got back. So we were off quite a bit and some of them were off farther than we were when they landed. But there, again, bringing those gliders down is quite a chore as far as trying to hit the DZ zones for them to come in on.

Overy ([00:30:40](#)):

You were hit then, really in your first action. [crosstalk 00:30:45] action.

Sande ([00:30:45](#)):

Right. Yep.

Overy ([00:30:50](#)):

What goes through your mind when you know you've been shot?

Sande ([00:30:56](#)):

It's a burning sensation because the bullet hits you and it's really a burning sensation. Like I told you about the first thing, first two things you're supposed to do and not to do, but you're laying there and you're thinking, oh no, is this the end of me? They always say when you see a German, or not only Germans, a lot of people fighting, Japanese men too, they always say, "It's got to be them, not you." Well, I didn't get a chance to even fire a shot when I got hit. So I figured, well, he got me, but what is this going to do to me? How is this going to affect me for being hit like this? Of course, it's something that maybe a lot of people don't believe, but I even cried a little bit when this happened because I thought the war was all over for me as far as I was concerned. I didn't realize how bad I was hit or anything like that. I couldn't tell, and I thought, well, maybe I'm all done. Maybe I don't have any more time for the service. Maybe I'm going home, which I thought I was, but never did.

Overy ([00:32:08](#)):

How long do you think you laid there?

Sande ([00:32:11](#)):

I'm sure I laid there a good hour and a half before the medics ever got there because they were so terrible busy, we had a lot of casualties out of C company. We had a lot of men that were killed on the C company.

Overy ([00:32:23](#)):

Now were the Germans firing from hedge rows?

Sande ([00:32:26](#)):

No, they were firing from homes.

Overy ([00:32:29](#)):

Oh, from homes?

Sande ([00:32:29](#)):

Right. They had four homes out in the middle of this field where we went, that they were just thick. They were close to the river so they could bring a bunch of guys in and everything by boat and our company had gone to battle.

Overy ([00:32:47](#)):

Why weren't you supposed to call a medic?

Sande ([00:32:50](#)):

Well, I guess the most important reason is because the medics are so terrible busy in the first place. So they'll get to you as fast as they can get to you. I guess that's the only reason I could say that they say don't call for medic.

Overy ([00:33:04](#)):

I can understand the morphine, they don't want to load you up with too much morphine.

Sande ([00:33:08](#)):

See, when you get back to the medics, if you don't have anything on you that says you've been shot with morphine, you're going to get another shot of morphine, see? So too much is too much. The medics are very, very fussy about that. You'd think in a line of duty or line of war like that, the medics wouldn't be that way, but they have a job to do too. They've got to go by what you tell them. If you tell them you haven't had a shot of morphine and you've had one, and then they give you another one that's not good either. So the medics have a reason for that.

Overy ([00:33:46](#)):

How long were you in recovery?

Sande ([00:33:49](#)):

I was in about two and a half, three months in the hospital.

Overy ([00:33:56](#)):

Did they give you some rehabilitation or something before you went back?

Sande ([00:34:00](#)):

The only rehabilitation I had was just working in the post office and then we'd march a lot.

Overy ([00:34:09](#)):

Try to get your physical strength.

Sande ([00:34:10](#)):

Get back, right. Build back what you lost at the time, and they fed you good. They took good care of you.

Overy ([00:34:17](#)):

But let me ask you this. Now, here you thought you were going to go home and all of a sudden you're sent back. What were your feelings about that?

Sande ([00:34:27](#)):

Well, I was kind of disappointed. In fact, I thought that with the injury that I had, that I would be going back home and get a discharge for being wounded as bad as I was. But I found out afterwards, and I was really disappointed when I found out that I went back to C company, I was very disappointed to that point because I thought I was going home. But I found out afterwards, and I guess when you're in the service like this, you're fighting for your country. This is the main thing you want to do and this is the thing you're thinking about is fighting for your country.

When I got back to the company, I found out one thing and one of the reasons why I was sent back and that is because they did not have enough men coming from the United States to fill the

casualties that had been hit at that time. So, to a certain extent when I got back I felt, boy, maybe I'm doing it all right anyway. Maybe I'm a good guy, instead of feeling bad because I didn't get sent home and get sent back to the company because they needed men so bad back there. But yeah, it was heartbreaking. I figured I was going home.

Overy ([00:35:44](#)):

You must've gotten back there in December?

Sande ([00:35:48](#)):

Yes. Just in time to go to the Battle of the Bulge.

Overy ([00:35:50](#)):

I see. So on the 16th of December, you were in the Ardennes?

Sande ([00:35:54](#)):

Right on, right on. I got back in time. I think I was one day I was back in camp enough to draw. See, I lost everything when I went into the hospital. I lost my barracks bag, my duffle bag. I lost all my clothes. I lost everything to go with it. I had some stuff that I was saving to take home and everything. I lost everything. Who got it, I don't know. You'll never know. But anyway, I had to draw guns and ammunition and all of this stuff. I had one day to do it in when I got back and then I would load it on the truck and went on the Battle on the Bulge.

Overy ([00:36:27](#)):

Were you a rifleman?

Sande ([00:36:30](#)):

I was a BAR man.

Overy ([00:36:31](#)):

BAR man.

Sande ([00:36:32](#)):

Right.

Overy ([00:36:32](#)):

Browning Automatic Rifle.

Sande ([00:36:34](#)):

Right. Right.

Overy ([00:36:39](#)):

Where was your unit when you rejoined it?

Sande ([00:36:41](#)):

They were at, oh, now I got to stop and think of that town. We had a army camp that is being run by the French now. Just hold it a minute.

Overy ([00:36:59](#)):

You were at, was it Cesson?

Sande ([00:37:03](#)):

Cesson. S-O-N. Cesson, France. We lived in barracks and everything there. But I was only there for a day, so it didn't take long. Then we were loaded on trucks and started for the front lines in the Battle of the Bulge.

Overy ([00:37:27](#)):

Did you have any idea what was going on?

Sande ([00:37:30](#)):

Yes, we did because the company commander of C company had brought us all together and told us what was going on and how far we were going to go and everything. We knew pretty much what was going to go on.

Overy ([00:37:45](#)):

What was the mission of the 82nd Airborne in this operation?

Sande ([00:37:48](#)):

The 82nd Airborne division, along with the 101st Airborne division into the Battle of the Bulge for two things, the Germans had what they called the SS troops, which were the best and the most important men in there in Europe or in the German army, actually, the SS group. The 101st and the 82nd Airborne division mission was to take out the SS that was in there. They had about in the neighborhood of what they figured at that time, about 250,000 men that were in the SS troops. They were real tough. I guess you would say that probably the SS troops were figured something like the 82nd and the 101st, two of the best units in their German army. That was our mission to take out the SS troops at that time. The 101st and 82nd was given that mission. We found out that they were tough. That's for sure. At Christmas time, we were still in the Battle of the Bulge. They were going to send us turkey, but we never did receive any hot meal. Snow up to our waist. We retreated. They always say that the United States Army never retreats, but don't ever let them kid you, we retreated. We retreated for a day and a half. The way we retreated and it sounds funny, but we did, we took a hold of the men in front of us and the men in back of us and this is the way we retreated. Going backwards instead of forward. But we got back so far, we regrouped and we went ahead again, but we did retreat for about a day and a half.

Overy ([00:39:43](#)):

In other words, you went forward and then you ran into them?

Sande ([00:39:46](#)):

Ran into them and they just, excuse my English, but just kick the heck out of us. We went back so far and regroup, and then went ahead again, but we lost a lot of men.

Overy ([00:39:59](#)):

What did they have that you didn't? I mean, did they have more armor?

Sande ([00:40:04](#)):

Just had more men.

Overy ([00:40:05](#)):

Had more men?

Sande ([00:40:05](#)):

Right. They were just waiting for us is what they were doing. They knew we were coming and they were waiting for us. They had forced the men right there that outpowered us.

Overy ([00:40:15](#)):

Did your company lose a lot of people?

Sande ([00:40:17](#)):

We did. We lost an awful lot of people. When you're holding onto a man in front of you and he's shot and falls down, you got to hurry up and get caught up with the guy next one, because the snow was so deep and it was so cold that you just had to keep going or if you fell down, you were done. That's all there was to it.

Overy ([00:40:37](#)):

Did you have any special equipment or uniforms or anything?

Sande ([00:40:40](#)):

All we had was just overcoats and overshoes, is all we had extra as far as our fighting equipment was concerned, but it was cold and it was deep snow. In fact, when we were over there in '84 they told us that that was the worst winter they'd ever had in the history of Belgium and they haven't had a winter like that since. But we just happened to be at the right year.

Overy ([00:41:18](#)):

How do you survive in that kind of situation? Obviously just slept out in the snow.

Sande ([00:41:24](#)):

That's right. We did. No tents, no nothing. Every man for himself. You could dig a foxhole and get down far enough and get out behind the snow. It was fairly warm. You got away from the wind, but no, we had no tent, no nothing of any kind. You weren't allowed to use any fires of any kind because if you lit a fire, then of course that started drawing the heavy artillery coming in on top of you. So you were not allowed to do that either. It was just each man for himself and do it the best you can.

Overy ([00:41:55](#)):

Did your company stay together?

Sande ([00:41:56](#)):

Yes, sir. We stayed together all the time and that was something that really surprised us because you're going one way and some are going another way, but our company stayed real close again.

Overy ([00:42:08](#)):

It was pretty thick woods, wasn't it?

Sande ([00:42:09](#)):

Yes, it is. Yeah. Right. Then we came back to the town of Pepinster that we were talking about. We went through that town at Pepinster and along with many other, not many other divisions, but other divisions and helped to free Pepinster too. Then we got back up into the tough fighting of the [inaudible 00:42:32] and we were there for a period of about, oh, I suppose, 10, 15 days that we fought. Then they brought us back to Pepinster because we had awful lot of casualties and we were beat up pretty bad. So they wanted to take and pull us out of there. They moved up

another company in our place. So we got to go back to Pepinster, Belgium. As we were talking about, we lived in this blown out textile factory, and it wasn't much warmer there than it was on the front line. But there was more stuff you could do to build up around.

Overy ([00:43:13](#)):

When you were fighting in this way, what did the action involve? I mean, were you trying to take a hill or take a [crosstalk 00:43:25]?

Sande ([00:43:26](#)):

Well, actually taking a hill also, but most of the time you're getting a town in Belgium. Like Manhay was the town that we had to take. Pepinster was another town that we were taking. They give you so many different towns or miles or something. Each regiment like the 325 regiment let's say would take Manhay which we did, which was a big battle in Manhay. When we were back there in 1984, there's a corner there where the Germans had massacred 84 of our men.

Overy ([00:44:12](#)):

Were those 82nd people?

Sande ([00:44:14](#)):

Some of those, yeah, right in there too. They did that for the simple reason that the United States divisions are moving fast at that time. They're pushing the Germans back pretty fast and they didn't want to take many prisoners. So they lined up all those people, just riddled them with a machine gun and killed them all in there. We happened to be back there in '84 and we'd seen that place where it had happened. They have a monument there for them and everything. But no, most of the time you're given a town or a city, is your mission to take. Manhay was 82nd airborne division to take that town, which was taken over mostly by the SS troops in that area. So that was most of our fighting in Belgium was against the SS troops.

Overy ([00:45:19](#)):

What did you think about these men that you were fighting? I mean, did you think about them at all?

Sande ([00:45:25](#)):

Oh, yes. You definitely think about them. I'd like to tell a little story here. It's kind of hard to believe, but probably put a little humor in it along with a little serious business, but we had a machine gun nest sitting out in front of us. There was a group of trees out there. I suppose 20 trees or so. There was a machine gun nest out there that every time we would move, they would open up on us. It got to be so that it was just aggravating. Every time we tried to do something this machine gun would open up on you. So the company commander came along and he had 11 other guys along with him. He came up to my foxhole and my foxhole buddy and I, we were standing there. I'd been on patrol the night before, and I thought, boy, here I go again. So he told the other guy that was in the foxhole along with me, he told Bob, he said, "You get up and you go with these guys out, get that machine gun nest out in front." The kid froze. He didn't move. So Captain Percy told him again and the kid just stood there. He never moved at all. Captain Percy dropped down to his 45 and he lifted off the top of the casing there and grabbed for his 45. He says, "I can shoot you for refusing to do my command in the line of duty." That kid went out of that foxhole just like that. He went out and he got that machine gun nest. There was four of them in the party. He brought them back and he set them down in front of the company commander's feet before you could say Jack Robinson. He was that scared. He just went out and got it all alone, not a shot was fired. He brought them all back and sat them right down in front.

Overy ([00:47:13](#)):

Not a shot was fired?

Sande ([00:47:14](#)):

Not a shot was fired. Didn't even know that he was coming. He picked them up and brought them back.

Overy ([00:47:24](#)):

Just got the drop on them?

Sande ([00:47:24](#)):

He got the drop on them and put them back and brought them back with him. To a certain extent there's a little humor with it, but still at the same time, that's more, that's the way it goes.

Overy ([00:47:35](#)):

That's unusual.

Sande ([00:47:38](#)):

Never seen it done after and I didn't see it done before.

Overy ([00:47:41](#)):

He surprised the Germans. They couldn't believe he was doing this?

Sande ([00:47:44](#)):

Right. He zig-zagged out there and of course they would've fired on him. And I suppose they were even looking for him or something. There was four of them in the machine gun nest and he brought all along with the machine gun.

Overy ([00:47:57](#)):

Did you ever see that kid again?

Sande ([00:47:58](#)):

Oh yeah. He was with us all the time after that.

Overy ([00:48:00](#)):

What was he like after that?

Sande ([00:48:02](#)):

He was fine. That what's it took. That's what it took to wake him. As far as combat was concerned, that's what it needed. He was a great soldier after that.

Overy ([00:48:13](#)):

It's almost like he had to get his feet wet. Someone had to make him do it.

Sande ([00:48:16](#)):

That's right. Yeah. That's the whole thing.

Overy ([00:48:18](#)):

Are you scared all the time in combat?

Sande ([00:48:20](#)):

Yes, we are. We are. It's a funny thing, but patrols are a very important thing in combat because for the simple reason you have the 82nd airborne division here, you had the 101st Airborne division there, but who's in between you? You don't know who is in between. So you have to go out and patrol and find out who's out there. Maybe the Sixth Division is in there, maybe the Fifth Division is in there. You don't know when you get up to the line, you don't know who's there. You got a slight idea of who's supposed to be there, but you don't know. So you're on patrol every night, you're going on patrol. This is a thing that there's an awful lot of patrols done at night. There's an awful lot of mine's late at night. You don't want to lay them in daytime because then the Germans can see what you're doing. So you lay mines on the road where the tanks are supposed to be coming down, the German tanks supposed to come down, you're laying these at night. You're on patrol. You're doing the biggest share of your work at night. It sounds funny.

You think the fighting would take place in the daytime, but it doesn't all take place in the daytime. Biggest share of it takes place at night because you're out on patrols and you're laying your mines and everything, getting set for whatever happens the next day. I was on a lot of patrols when I was in Belgium.

Overy ([00:49:51](#)):

What's that like?

Sande ([00:49:53](#)):

Well, it's really scary because you have one man in charge of the patrol and most of the time it's a staff sergeant to a certain extent. And he's in charge of the patrol. So he knows everything was going on. He's been instructed by the company commander at the CP. He knows what he has to do. You have to follow him. He tells you what the mission is. And many times all you do is you crawl on some of those patrols. Your hands are in the same prints that his it in; your knees are in the same print that his knees are in. This is the way you make your patrol going down--

Overy ([00:50:33](#)):

At night.

Sande ([00:50:33](#)):

At night, because you don't know what they've got there and they didn't have mines waiting for you. So you've got to do that in order to get through-- One night, we went across a area of about a mile and a half that we went through. And when we came back-- Next morning, we came back to the CP, we got through about-- Oh, I suppose maybe we were back about five o'clock in the morning. And they told us, he said, " You guys are absolutely lucky." He said, "This is a bad time to tell you, but there were 16 pillboxes surrounding that area that you went through. But you

see how quiet you go through, you didn't wake anybody up." And that's the way we went, hands for hands, feet for feet, knees for knees, on the way down.

Overy ([00:51:19](#)):

Because there was snow, you could see where the person.

Sande ([00:51:21](#)):

Right.

Overy ([00:51:35](#)):

So you said there were continuous patrols and--

Sande ([00:51:38](#)):

Yes, all of these patrols took place at night. You always had to go over and try to connect up with the vision that was on your right or your left, whatever it may be. The company commander would say, "Okay, division six is over on our right." You have to get in contact with them to see if they're ahead of us or if they're behind us or what the deal is. Because you don't want to get too far apart because the Germans have a tendency to, if they can sneak in between you, in the division. Now in the Battle of the Bulge, I'm sure you've heard that, the Germans got in behind a bunch of American men, dressed in American uniforms, and brought in a whole bunch of guys, and surrounded some of them in a pocket. And they're always looking for this to do, so you have to be up on where your divisions are. So you're always out to contact divisions on your right or left. And you do this at night and you crawl. And one night we were crawling down-- We were going toward the German lines. On the other side of the road, the Germans were going toward our lines. We were right across the road from each other, but nobody knew we were there. The Germans didn't know we were there and we didn't hear the Germans. So you're moving mighty quiet at night, and you're off to do your job with connecting up with the division on the right or

left, whichever you're up. I've been told to go get and same way with what we discussed about putting out mines. A lot of that is did at night. There's a man in charge and he has to know where each one of those mines are. Because if the tanks don't come down that road, which you plan on coming down, they have to go out and take those mines out again. And we've had a man that stepped on one of them and they picked him up in a bushel basket, because it just blew him all apart. So you have to know just exactly where everything is and when you do, because they get them out of there if they don't use them. There's another very important thing. And you don't want to lose any men on that party. So it's quite interesting when you go on patrols to find out where all these people are, and some of them are quite away from you. Some of them are just a short distance. But you still have to be real quiet when you're making the moves. Because the enemy is coming towards you, and you're going toward the enemy.

Overy ([00:54:10](#)):

That sounds like a heck of a dangerous thing to be out at night, trying to make contact with units on the other side of you. What keeps your buddies over other unit from shooting you, thinking you were German.

Sande ([00:54:25](#)):

Password. You always have a password and each day you have a different password. So when you come up to these guys and say that you're on our left and I'm coming up to you. And you'll say, "Halt, who goes there," and then you'll have to say it. Let's say that the password is Montevideo, is a password. If you've got the password Montevideo, and he knows that, then he come up. And you'll take it and come up in front of him and show who you are and everything like that. You have to go by password. If you don't have password, you're done, you're late. They'll shoot you. The first thing they do, because they don't worry about who's out there.

They've got to be careful who's out there. But if nobody answers according to the password, this automatically tells you who it is. And those Germans could speak just as good English as we can and caught a lot of times used our password. But that's what you go by password from one division to the next division.

Overy ([00:55:25](#)):

Did you have any contact with German prisoners when you were over there?

Sande ([00:55:29](#)):

Well, prisoners yes. Yes. We had a lot of-- More so when the war was over. We had an entire army give up to the 82nd Airborne division. So we had a lot of prisoners.

Overy ([00:55:41](#)):

But not during the battles.

Sande ([00:55:43](#)):

Not during the fight. No, I didn't have anything to do with prisoners during the-- We took a lot of prisoners, but I wasn't in the group that took them. I didn't have any--

Overy ([00:55:55](#)):

You said a lot of your action was in taking town, where these little villages that you were supposed to--

Sande ([00:56:04](#)):

Some of them were, some of them were bigger. Now you taught the town of Manhay, I get back to that because Man--

Overy ([00:56:08](#)):

M a n h a y?

Sande ([00:56:11](#)):

Yeah, right.

Overy ([00:56:11](#)):

There we go right there.

Sande ([00:56:13](#)):

And I get back to that because that was one of our toughest battles that we had. My buddy, that I told you about that was shot in the neck, was shot there. One of my other buddies that were real close to me was shot there too. They both living. They were-- But I would say that, right off hand, I would say probably Manhay was the size of the city of St. Cloud, in that neighborhood. And, like the 325 company C, or 325 regiment, let's just put it that way. 325 regiment was picked today to take the city of Manhay. That's their mission: Get that city. How long it takes you, that's another question. But that's your mission for the day to take the city of Manhay. Maybe you can't take it in a day. Maybe it takes more than two days. Depends upon the number of troops that the enemy has there. So you have to-- When you're out there fighting, you have to have, like I say, patrols and everything, to try to find out what there is. They're in the line of men, how many men. Get an idea of what their troops are in order to take the city. Maybe, when you take the city of Manhay, probably the next regiment, 326, will come through and relieve you and go on right through you and take the next city, say that it's Chicago or something, whatever the city happens to be thereafter. And that's the way they work. They work a regiment in the one town and you'll work a regiment into another town. In the Siegfried line-- When we were in the Siegfried line, they did that a lot. They put one regiment in and take another regiment out. And we had a regiment, 326, had a colonel that was in charge of the regiment, just a real Seinfeld, just full of life. But he never believed and never taken his emblems off his helmet or off his uniform when

he was in combat. He always left them on and he had this on his steel helmet when he went into combat. And they sent back his steel helmet after they had gotten in the big battle, they sent his steel helmet back. They had a bullet hole right through the emblem, on the steel helmet. But it went up and over the helmet liner. He never got a scratch. But after that, he never wore the ambulance on his uniform or his helmet, either one. Because they lay for that. They're looking for those and they want to get them kind of guy. But the regiments change off from town to town, hill to hill, whatever it may be that they're after. Forest after forest, or whatever you have to take. They like to change the regimens are on. They put them in there for so long, a period of time. Now, like a Normandy, they were in there for 32 days. Like I told you and only went 30 miles before they ever relieved. And that's the longest that I can say that the 82nd ever was in one battle of 32 days.

Overy ([00:59:27](#)):

Is it worse fighting in towns, than it is in the woods?

Sande ([00:59:30](#)):

Much worse fighting in town. Because there's so many different places those guys could be. They can be in church steeples. They can be in upstairs apartments and they got lead right on you. They can just blow you right out of the town. So it's very hard to fight in town. You have to be also careful.

Overy ([00:59:51](#)):

What do you do when you fight offensively in times when you got to dig somebody out of there?

I mean, how do you go about--

Sande ([00:59:59](#)):

The main thing that they've always done is they've put in the big artillery ahead of you. They'll put in the fifties, the hundreds they'll hire them off into the town. They get the range from one of the guys, they'll say this is so many ARDS. And they'll fire the heavy artillery into the town first. Then they will send you in to go in after. But when you go into it, you don't run in right down main street or anything. You go in and you get around the house or a store building or something, and you kind of come around the corners. Just like you're looking for-- You're playing hide and go seek or something. You're looking for an enemy up and down the street. You got to watch every building there is, because they sit up in the apartment buildings or they sit up the highest on the roofs. A lot of people-- A lot of them were on roofs, looking right down at you. So you got to be very, very careful. You just don't come into town, right down the street. You hide yourself, actually. And you have one guy goes a little ways this way, and maybe the other one will follow and he'll jump for another five or six feet and hide himself. And you've got to be very, very careful because, like I say, it's you or them, and you don't want it to be you. You want to be back with the rest of the guys when it's all over.

Overy ([01:01:19](#)):

What do you think keeps you going? I mean, you're probably hungry. You're tired. You're scared. What keeps you going into [crosstalk 01:01:29] this kind of situation?

Sande ([01:01:29](#)):

I guess it's kind of an instinct in you. That you're there for one purpose, and that is to win the war. You don't want to ever get the idea that you're going to get beat or get whipped. If somebody fires a shot at you, you may never fire a shot back at him, but you got to be on your toes all the time. And you've got to be thinking, "We got to do this. We've got to take this town.

We've got to get it done as quick as we can so that we can be relieved and go back and get us some food, some sleep, and some little relaxation." But you're always thinking about "We've got to win the war. We can't stop now. We've got to keep going." And you do. You're so tired. You're dragging, but you still keep moving on. And a lot of guys will tell you that the officers keep pushing you. The officers there don't push you anymore. Sure. They say we got to go, but the officers are right out there fighting with you. The company commanders, right on the front line, he was carrying a M1 rifle. I seen General Gavin in Holland come in the troops. And they were firing on us. He picks up a new M1 and he sat right along or laid down right alongside of me and was firing all the rest of the M1 rifle. But he's out there on the front line-- The officers are right there. They're not pushing you anymore. Some people say they do. That's all they do. They push you. They push you. They keep with their deal. They're fighting with you. Those officers are just exactly like you. They're human beings and they're there because they have to be there. But they're there for the same purpose you are. You want to go home. Anyone wants to go home, as soon as the war is over.

Overy ([01:03:13](#)):

Did you have a lot of respect for your officers?

Sande ([01:03:16](#)):

I had an awful lot of respect from officers. I like to talk a little bit about-- At that time he was Colonel Billingsley. Tremendous man. Before he left the service, he was promoted to a one-star general. Colonel Billingsley was in charge of the 325 regiment. Tremendous man. And he spoke to us in St. Louis, Missouri, a couple of years ago. He, since then, has died, but he wouldn't expect anything out of his men to do-- That he couldn't do himself. He was right there with them regardless, all the way through Normandy, all the way up. If he had to do it, he wouldn't tell just

his men to do it. He go do it with them. And same with our company commander, Wayne Pearse. Just a fine officer. He'd always be. Lieutenant Smith, the same way. They just kept going right with the men. Like I told you, Lieutenant Smith was killed in Holland. And the only reason he should have never been on the battlefield on that day, because he was CO. But he wanted to get a hold of Captain Pearse because something came up, but don't know. The officers. I really-- I felt that they had a tremendous bunch of officers and they were always willing to do whatever you had to do. They never asked you to do it. They would help you. And I think that's why the 82nd is been out to-- Come out to be the division that it is, the All-American division, they call it. Same went the 101st. Well, the 101st was started from the 82nd Airborne division. The officers from 82nd went to the 101st. But no, I think they're a great bunch of members.

Overy ([01:05:03](#)):

Where, where did you go from the Bulge?

Sande ([01:05:10](#)):

The Bulge. We went back to Cesson, France, that's where we went back to. We got kind of more or less regrouped and got out some more men.

Overy ([01:05:22](#)):

Lots of losses in the boat.

Sande ([01:05:23](#)):

Right. Awful lot. In fact, one company came back with 13 men and had to be replaced with all different guy. And then we moved up to the Elbe River and President Roosevelt died while we were on the Elbe River. And we were standing on one side of the Elbe River and the Germans were on the other side. And here we were standing at attention in memory of President Roosevelt, and they were firing at us from across the other side. And I didn't think that made

much sense, but what was I to do about it? I was just a PFC at that time anyway, so what could I do? But we went from there into Berlin, Germany. We were stationed in Berlin for three and a half months before we came home. We came home as a division of 10,000 men strong. We paraded in New York, after we got home, I have a tape that I've gotten from the 82nd airborne division showing us parading on Fifth Avenue in New York. We were at Camp Shanks and they brought us in and we paraded in New York. But my little granddaughter stood over there and watched that parade one day and she looks at me and she says, "Grandpa, which one are you?" So there's fun in all of it, to a certain extent.

Overy ([01:06:46](#)):

But did you see much combat after that-- In the early months of 1945, as you were going toward the Elbe?

Sande ([01:06:52](#)):

Oh, yeah. We were in it all the time. Right.

Overy ([01:06:52](#)):

The Siegfried line.

Sande ([01:06:54](#)):

Right, right. Yep, yep. We were in it all the time. Yeah. In fact, we were right up to the city of Berlin, practically. The Russians got there before we did, but we fought all the way up Siegfried line and lots of combat in there. Lots of combat.

Overy ([01:07:17](#)):

Is this where you began seeing German prisoners? In this, in--

Sande ([01:07:22](#)):

We always had some German prisoners, Dave. We've always had German prisoners. But, like I say, I never had too much to do with German prisoners. But when the war ended, a whole army gave up to it and that it's in this book. There's a whole army that gave up to-- Then we had a lot of German prisoners. Then we had to handle a lot of them. But upon until that time, I didn't have much to do in Europe [inaudible 01:07:48]. Because they seem like they always had-- The GI is back at the CPs, at the company CPs that took care of that stuff like that. And so I never had too much to do with prisoners. But we took a lot of prisoners yet.

Overy ([01:08:05](#)):

What about contact with civilians in Belgium, in Germany? Were you around civilians very much?

Sande ([01:08:13](#)):

In Belgium, like I say, we were contacted with civilians. We were back in Pepinster. Yes. We had a lot of contact with-- There, again, we weren't supposed to, to begin with. But all the time, after a certain period of time, they eased off of it, and then you could do whatever you wanted to do. So we had contact with a lot of civilians in Belgium and also in Holland. Underground troops worked a lot with us in Holland and also in underground troops. It's hard to imagine, for me at that time, to think of the people that were-- The underground people, to help you. Some of your main people in the city, let's just take a Pepinster, Belgium for instance. A lot of your-- Of course you really can't call them big wheels, but I guess that's what I'd call them. The leaders of the town, and so forth, being in the underground because they would know their position in the city. They would be shot if they were found out that this was what they were doing. But there was a lot of these people that were in the underground that would contact you in Holland. They

contacted us the first time when we landed. The underground was right there to tell us all about the situation and everything. And it's surprising me, the people that is in the underground, aren't they? The leaders of your town, which you were any wheres you're near, like Brussels, Belgium. A lot of under underground people working with you. And sometimes when you first contacted them, you wonder if they're with you or against you. Because of some of the things that we have run into where they were against us many times. You'd think that it would be a farmer or a produce or something that would be not so big as your mayor or your village clerk or something like, that are the underground. But that's what a lot of people were, the big wheels of the city. I call them big wheels. I suppose you should call them government officials of the city is really what should be called, but I call them big wheels. But it's very surprising on some of the people that were the underground.

Overy ([01:10:52](#)):

I've often heard that a combat brings up both the best and the worst in people. How would you react to that?

Sande ([01:11:00](#)):

Well, I think that when you say it brings out the worst in people, we'll start with that first. But I think when you say the worst in people, I think in anything that you get into where you have a large group of men, especially of the different nationalities of all of the people that are in the service, in World War II, or even into service today, let's say that; you're bound to find some guys that are nothing but, I'll call them, goof offs. Whatever they can do to get away from what they're going to do. I've seen a lot of guys picking them up one rifle and point it to their foot and pull it off to get a hole of their foot. They go back to the medic center, they get their foot sewed up. They're out for two weeks. Then they come back. To me that's-- I never could see anybody

doing it, but there's many people that did it. I seen many people do it. I think a lot of times you think yourself, that's the way to get out of here, but why do that? Because you're going to come right back anyway. But getting back to the good part of it. There's many people that have, for combat service, gotten a Medal of Honor. Some of those guys have done some things that you can't believe that they would do. Have went in and gotten people out of places where there was no way that you would ever get out of there alive. These guys had gotten the Medal of Honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, and what so deserved. And so there's-- I think in any group of people that you get, or any group of men, I guess we should say, because most of it with men all the time, you're going to find some good ones and you're going to find some bad ones. But I would say that with me, I think there was most of them good ones. There was a lot of bad ones, but maybe [inaudible 01:13:13]. And there were some guys that would do anything for you in the line of battle. They'd do anything for you. And that's the kind of guys they've got for leaders. That's the kind they've got for officers. So, like I say, in any group of the people, I guess there's bad ones and good ones in the service. It seems to be that you're always going to have a bunch of people that are not the kind you think that should be there, but they are there. So it didn't--

Overy ([01:13:46](#)):

Did you hate the enemy when you were in combat? The feelings of hate?

Sande ([01:13:52](#)):

Yes, I did. More so, I think after I got here than before. Before I never thought about so much as hating the people. Because I always figured that the people that were there, the German people that were fighting didn't want that war any more than we did. And they were just people like us, of all nationalities. They were farmers, they were grocery men. And they were people that did this and that, carpenters. And they didn't want that war any more than we did. But after I got

wounded, I took a little bit of a change and turned the other way and decided I didn't want to have them, so-and-so. I hope they wipe them all out. So I changed. I was a little bitter. But after I got back to the hospital and seen the shape that I was in and the shape that some of my buddies were in that hospital, I guess I changed a little bit back to before. Because I wasn't wounded bad. There was fellow that you should have seen that are lost arms and legs.

Sande ([01:15:00](#)):

--tell us that you should have seen them. That had lost arms, and legs, and eyes, and a part of their head, and all of this stuff. In fact, I came around a tree in Holland one day, and I seen soldiers sitting up against the tree and I came around the tree, and the man didn't have a head on. His head was blown off. Many, many things like that, that makes you feel that you were so mad against the enemy for what they had did to you and your friends, or your buddies, or whatever it may be. It's changed a little bit, I guess, after I've seen one that was in the hospital. I didn't get hit so bad as a lot of those people did, so I kinda got back to [inaudible 01:15:51] Didn't really hate the enemy too bad. I hated them for quite a while, but they were there for the same reason we were, Dave. They were fighting for their country. We were fighting for our country and they didn't want the war any more than we did. The SS did, yes, the SS did, but the other--

Overy ([01:16:09](#)):

Did you see any Americans commit atrocities?

Sande ([01:16:13](#)):

No--

Overy ([01:16:13](#)):

We would consider atrocities like shooting prisoners [crosstalk 01:16:17] or anything like that.

Sande ([01:16:17](#)):

No, never did, but I know this took place, because we had a bunch of-- Taken a bunch of prisoners. No, I shouldn't say a bunch of, I meant maybe in the neighborhood of 20, 22 people, prisoners, and the company commander says to Sergeant Jones, "You take these guys back to the prison camp." The prison camp was probably three miles back from where we were, and pretty soon you heard shots and then here he comes back. So you know that those prisoners never got back to the prison.

Overy ([01:16:17](#)):

How'd you feel about that?

Sande ([01:16:57](#)):

I didn't like that at all. I'd thought that was terrible. Right down terrible, because I thought-- Now as I think about it, more so when they took him-- Massacred those 84 people that-- Man, hey, it brought back more hatred to me than ever, but, as I say, I didn't have anything to do with that. You heard plenty of this stuff when it was going on.

Overy ([01:17:20](#)):

Yeah. Let me ask you some questions, just generally. Of your military service and all the experiences you went through, what kinds of things really frustrated you about being in the military?

Sande ([01:17:48](#)):

Well, I tell you, the thing that frustrated me most, as far as I was concerned when I was in the service, was the way they treated us at basic training. As I said, I was in Texas in the basic training, and I guess I still hold it against the State of Texas, and I shouldn't, but we had, like I said, just training for a regular infantryman down there. But the people that we had for noncoms

and for officers were just, as far as I was concerned, were just horrible people. I know they're there for one reason, that is to train you, to get you into physical shape and everything, because they know you're going into combat and probably they're going to go with you, and you're going to be their friend the next time. But they treated some fellas, not particularly me, I never was beat up or anything by noncoms or anything like that, but I seen a lot of guys that were. The noncoms beat them up, because they didn't do the thing that they were expected them to do. When you're taking basic training, you're there for a simple reason, they're to teach you what to do, instead of beating you up. It's just like taking a little kid today, and if he doesn't pick up his toys you spank him and say that you got to pick them toys up. They spanked them because they don't, and that's the way they were down there. If you didn't do the things that it was absolutely the way they wanted it done, they would beat you up, they would knock you down. They would double up their fists and hit you. Like I say, I got started in Texas and I got off on the wrong foot, I guess, because I just hate Texas. I don't know why. I shouldn't, because Texas never did me anything, but Camp Fannin did, and it just got me going the wrong way. I thought to myself, are all people this way? Are they going to treat you this way? All the way through? So what are we here for? Then we can just as well go right overseas and get in there and start fighting, because this is not the way that they told me that the basic training was going to be. I don't know if it was just Camp Fannin, Texas, if that was the only camp that did that. If they did that over the United States. I don't know. I've heard some awful things about other camps too, but that's not human. You're a human being, and they're there to teach you how to shoot a rifle, how to do pushups, how to run the mile, how to get this done and that done instead of, when you don't do it, beat you up, that's not right. Like I say, I still blame that to Texas, and I shouldn't do that, because it's not Texas, it's the camp that done it. The personnel and the camp.

Overy ([01:21:03](#)):

People always say that one of the qualities that makes humans humans, we have a sense of humor. Were there things that made you laugh when you were in service?

Sande ([01:21:13](#)):

Oh yeah.

Overy ([01:21:14](#)):

Things that were funny--

Sande ([01:21:15](#)):

Oh yeah, we run into a lot of that stuff too. A lot of stories, one thing, nothing that people would tell you, but also a lot of things that they would do. They put on shows for you at the camp, bring in Frances Langford or Bob Hope or something like that. And you know yourself, you're in stitches while you sit and watch them guys talk all the time, because they had humor along with it. They had recreation for us and so forth like that, but it still doesn't make up for this beating that you're taking on the side. Like I say, I never would've done that. Maybe I was more of a-- How'd they call it, pussycat or something, when you're in service? Maybe I was a little bit too much that way. Some guys were different, but more, some of them should've [inaudible 01:22:04] than that.

Overy ([01:22:07](#)):

Did you have funny things happen to you?

Sande ([01:22:10](#)):

No, not really. Well, yeah. It was funny. You can't call it funny, but I caught the mumps when I was in the service.

Overy ([01:22:15](#)):

You were a little bit old for the mumps. Where was this that you caught the mumps?

Sande ([01:22:23](#)):

Texas.

Overy ([01:22:25](#)):

Oh, of course it would have to be Texas, wouldn't it?

Sande ([01:22:28](#)):

Outside of that, nothing really. Nothing. After I got out of Texas, I can say that what we did and when we did it and so forth, not saying combat or anything, but when we were on a combat, we had a lot of good times. When the war was over, we used to go visit the family in Germany. He used to be a big newspaper publisher. He showed us the pictures of his building. A brand new building he had. He was a rich man at that time, and we used to go visit with him and talk with him after we get through working our shift during the day. We had a lot of good times. We had a lot of fun. After we got to fraternize with the German people, we found out a lot of good things about how good people-- And there's a lot of good people in Germany too. This fellow would show us pictures of his family, pictures of his employees, and pictures of the buildings that he had for his newspaper. And after the war was over, he didn't have a nickel. He didn't have anything. He had to stand in line to get brown bread. He had to stand in line to get potatoes. This gentleman I showed you in there, Guy Munson, him and I used to go over and visit with him and we'd go and have supper with him. And we did that for a long period of time, and all of a sudden you stop and thought one day, "What are we doing this for? We're just robbing them from what they're supposed to have to eat," because all they get is potatoes and they make potato soup, and sometimes they'd have little potato soup with parsley in it, and dark bread.

That's all they had to live on, and we were going there for an evening meal and we were taking this potato soup away from them. It took Guy Munson, he said to me one night he said, "What are we doing this for? We're taking food right out of their mouth. They don't have any in the first place, and we're taking it right out [inaudible 01:24:20]. So we kinda excused ourselves from it. We came back and visited with him afterwards, but we didn't go over there and take their soup away from them. That's all they had. People don't realize what the city, and not only the city of Berlin, but any town in the country of Germany, went through to get food, because there wasn't any food to be gotten. Like I said, they lived on potato soup and parsley, and a little dark bread, and they had to stand in line hours and hours to get that. And here we are.

Overy ([01:24:55](#)):

What kind of things about your experience in Europe-- What kinds of things have stuck with you the longest? You remember most vividly?

Sande ([01:25:06](#)):

You mean as far as combat [crosstalk 01:25:08] is concerned?

Overy ([01:25:06](#)):

Just your experience in Europe.

Sande ([01:25:06](#)):

Just anything in Europe?

Overy ([01:25:11](#)):

Yeah. Just whatever--

Sande ([01:25:12](#)):

I think the biggest thing that I'll remember is one of the things that-- I will remember [inaudible 01:25:24] is when they'd come up to the Siegfried-- Or not Siegfried Line, but they Elb river.

The company commander sent a messenger up and he says, "They want to see you back at the CP," and so I put BAR and I wandered back to the CP and he said, "Do you know?" He said, "Sandy, you've been fighting for quite a while, haven't you?" and I said, "Yeah." I said, "I've been on the front line every day," and I said, "Okay." He said, "I'm going to give you a pass to Paris." He said, "I got a three day pass here for Paris." He said, "Get in that truck and get going for Paris." Just like that, right out of the blue sky, I had three days in Paris, and I went along with the company commander. And he said, "No." He says, "When we get to Paris, Sandy," he says, "I don't want you to go to the enlisted band's quarters." He said, "You stay right with me." And I said, "Yeah, well I can't do that. You're a captain and I'm a private." I said, "That ain't going to work." He said, "Let me take care of that." And the two of us, we had the grandest time that you could ever think of. He was a captain and I was a private, but yet he treated me like I was his commanding officer, and we just had a hell of a time. That three days in Paris, right out of the blue sky, And I'm on the Elb river, fighting. Here I go. The best thing that ever happened to me. It was only three days, but boy, that was three days away from the line. He went right along with me, and we, I tell you, we toured Paris, and we did everything, and it was great. And about the only thing that I can say that I really had a good time all the time I was in combat. Until the war was over, then we done some things after the war was over. The 82nd had a football team and we played a lot of football teams, and we'd go to football games, and we'd have dance halls and bars and all this stuff that everybody always goes to, and we had a lot of fun. After the war was over.

Overy ([01:27:32](#)):

And you were in Berlin all the time after the war?

Sande ([01:27:33](#)):

Yes. We were in Berlin, Germany, all the time after the war. Three and a half months. We were the honor guard in the city of Berlin. Anybody that came into the city of Berlin of any great importance, many countries. Churchill, or any of these big guys that came to Berlin, the 82nd Airborne, went out there with their white gloves on, and their scarves, and their brand new shiny boots. We were the honor guard for the United States Army in Berlin. For three and a half months we were there, so actually we had a great time. We didn't work very hard. Didn't have to do much KP, not much guard duty. Went to football games, went track meets. We had it pretty good when we-- After the war was over, but we didn't have it so good when the war was on. But you stop and think, after the war we had a lot of fun. Good times.

Overy ([01:28:32](#)):

What would be the saddest thing that happened to you over there?

Sande ([01:28:36](#)):

The saddest thing, to me, was when I moved Lieutenant Smith and seen that he was dead, because there's a lot of people that say, "We worshiped the ground they walk on." I think I did that for Lieutenant Smith, because he was a tremendous officer, and he treated me great, and I treated him great too. We were close, we really were. When we were back there in '84 we went to the cemetery that Lieutenant Smith is buried in, and they can tell you, that book right in their office, they can tell you where every grave is and everything. All you got to do is just go in and ask him for the name of the fellow that you're looking for. So, Bob Taylor, which was my foxhole buddy at that time, and when the war was over him and I were together quite a bit of time, we went in and we asked her Lieutenant Smith's grave. When you go out there, you can put a flower on. You can put one flower on the grave, but you can put a bouquet of flowers in the

chapel for the cemetery, in memory of him, but you can only take one flower and put it on the grave of where he is buried. I had the privilege of doing this when I was over in '84. The saddest thing for me was to see him laying there dead, and another sad thing for me to do was to put this flower on his grave. But yet I think of all of the men that were killed in service, that he was not the only one that died too. There was many, many more. So it was hard, and I shed a few tears. Both ways. Both when he was hit, both when I was there in '84. But I thought it was a great privilege that I could do that for officer that I thought quite a bit of.

Overy ([01:30:54](#)):

Okay. Looking back, how do you think the war affected you, looking at what happened to you after the war? What affect do you think the war had on you?

Sande ([01:31:04](#)):

Well, I tell you, it had quite a bit of a-- When I first came back, it was awful tough for me. I came back, discharged from Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, after we paraded New York, I came back to South Dakota. At that time my folks lived South Dakota, so I came back and I had a lot of bad dreams. I'd wake up at night screaming. Sometimes I thought that maybe I'd been shell shocked or something, but never affected me that way when I was in the service. Never bothered me at all, but I guess I came home and I, like I say, I didn't talk to anybody about what had happened and what I had seen. Some of it I never will talk about, and what I've seen. But I used to have some terrible nightmares and dreams and one thing or another for about, oh, I imagine the first year that I was home. It was really rough. I was trying to get myself back on a basis where I got a job, went back to work. I got a girlfriend, started dating my wife. Many times she noticed it on me that I was not, how should I put it, was not paying much attention to her. I was way off in left field or someplace, and I guess I was thinking about the war, but still, I never told anybody about

it. I wanted to forget it. Some of the things I seen, I just didn't want to talk about it at all. So I think that probably the first year that I was home, Dave, was probably a real tough year for me. I got a job, got going back. I started working for Redall. I worked hard, and we were married and I came out in '46 and we were married late '47, Joyce and I, and she's been with me on my side ever since. She helped me a lot, but yet she didn't know what my problem was because I never told her anything of what happened. At the time the friends that we had, I was the only one that had been in the service. So, I didn't say much. I didn't do much of anything as far as the army was concerned. But after we started getting back with our friends, my wife probably found out more about me than I really knew, as far as the war was concerned, because some of my buddies had told what I had done. Not that I had done any great thing that I'd be a hero in anybody's army or anything, but I had done some things that my wife didn't know about. My year was actually the worst. It was the toughest. From then on, it seemed to pick up. Things seem to go good, married, like I say, in late '47. We raised five beautiful children. We're not the richest people in the world, but we have a nice living and we have-- Can do whatever we want to, and been treated good. The government pays me pretty good money to keep walking, and doctors to watch me. Ever so often they call me and-- Excuse me, call me into Fort Snelling, to the hospital. They checked me over every time. They have a magnet now, that they could cut my skin, get that bullet out of there. But when I was discharged from the army, the guy that gave me my discharge, he says, "Never let anybody touch it," and I just stayed with that statement all the time, because there's so many nerves that run around your spine, and they cut one you might lose this arm or that one or something like that.

Overy ([01:35:44](#)):

Does it bother you?

Sande ([01:35:46](#)):

Oh yes. Yeah. I suffer a lot from it, but I'm alive today, and I am home, where there's a lot of people that aren't. There's not a buddy or something nowhere near me. So I feel myself pretty fortunate that way. Even if I do suffer a lot from it, because I can only carry so much, I can only do this. I can only do that. The doctor said that he didn't think it'd hurt me as far as-- Unless I was in a car accident and hit from behind, it might move, but outside of that, he said he didn't think it would. I feel myself pretty lucky that I am living in Willmar, have a good family, a happy family, where a lot of them didn't make it home. Especially my buddy, Lieutenant Smith.

Overy ([01:36:38](#)):

Is there anything that you would like to leave on this tape? An experience, a feeling, that I haven't asked you. Something that you would like to like written down for people in the future to be able to look at and listen to as far as your war experience is concerned?

Sande ([01:36:59](#)):

Well, no. Not that I can think of, Dave, that would be really any importance to somebody else. I guess I just a plain old soldier seeing a plain old war and fought a plain old war and did my best while I was there. I've seen a lot of horrible experiences, or not horrible experience, I shouldn't say. I've seen a lot of horrible things that were done, like these concentration camps, some of that stuff that we liberated, and one thing or another. You never believe that they could pile people in the corner and pile them like cordwood, and leave them there, and live that way and so forth and so on. I don't know. I think as far as I'm concerned, I tried to do my best when I was there, and came out in fairly good shape, and had quite an experience when I was there. But I guess I don't really say anything for future use, as far as the-- Your book is concerned or anything like that.

Overy ([01:38:11](#)):

Do you have any regrets? Do you have any resentments that you had to go in and serve?

Sande ([01:38:16](#)):

No, I don't. I don't think there's anybody that ever was in the service, or is going into the service, that should have a regret that way, because it's for your country. There isn't anything better than the good old United States. I'm sure you've seen some other countries, and I'm sure you listen to news and everything like that, and there's no better place than the United States. No, I don't have any regrets about that at all.