Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway

Oral History Interviews
August 24, 2010 – December 9, 2010

Andrew Z. Adkins III
Gainesville, Florida

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Timeline

9/22/1938	Joined National Guard while at Mississippi College on 18th birthday; 3-year enlistment
Fall 1939	Met Marion
October 1940	National Guard Federalized; transfer to Camp Blanding as 31st Division
September 1941	3-year enlistment up
12/7/1941	Pearl Harbor attacked
7/13/1942	Married Marion
August 1942	Started OCS, Fort Benning (3 months)
November 1942	Graduated OCS; started Paratrooper school (1 month)
December 1942	Graduated Paratrooper school; assigned Riggers School (1 month)
January 1943	Graduated Riggers School; assigned to 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment
Spring 1943	507th transferred Alliance, Nebraska
7/4/1943	Denver practice jump
December 1943	From Alliance to New York (heading overseas); shipped overseas arrived at England week before Christmas; move over to Northern Ireland
March 1944	Leave Ireland for England – camp
6/5/1944	Original D-Day ; prepare for jump on June 4
6/6/1944	D-Day; prepare for jump on June 5
July 1944	82nd back to England; Rufus becomes Chief Physical Instructor for new Airborne school in England
September 1944	Becomes aide-de-camp to General James Gavin
9/17/1944	Holland jump (Market Garden)
October 1944	Cross lower Rhine River
12/16/1944	Beginning of Battle of Bulge

5/7/45	End of war in Europe
Summer 1945	Transferred back to states
January 1946	Discharged

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway, M.D.
8/24/2010

R: Andy, what are we going to do with this – these interviews?

A: I think what I'm after is to understand a little more about you and what you did during World War II. What we do with this, I don't know. Because I published my Dad's book, that would be the ultimate goal – to publish a book or memoirs. Whether we use a commercial publisher or whether we just do this for family, I don't know.

I mentioned before that I think you have a very unique perspective because you worked both sides of the fence – you worked as a paratrooper, jumping in and fighting as a soldier and then the second part of your military career was when you were aide-de-camp to General Gavin. I think you have that perspective of "doing it" then "planning on how to do it."

R: Are you focusing now on my military?

A: Yes. But that doesn't mean we have to only do military.

R: The military was essentially a very important part of my life. Let's put it in plain English: a boy born in the middle of the poorest state in the country – we were poor. My parents had a great deal with my growing up, the two of them lost their fathers early on and each of them got through the ninth grade in school. But they were both very intelligent, they spoke well, read well, wrote well, and no slang. That was a good bit of my background. There was hardly a day when my mother wouldn't say, "You're going to amount to something."

That's part of the background. I didn't know how I was going to get up and get out of that. For a long time, I didn't see how I was going to get to college.

A: But you always wanted to go to college?

R: Oh I did. I got started at Mississippi College, it was a little Baptist school. It has since become quite a good institution and has a law school. But, it wasn't that good at that time.

A: You had mentioned before that you could not afford college. How did you get into Mississippi College?

R: My folks had a little insurance policy, a very few hundred dollars. Tuition over there was minimal and I worked. I did some work for the college, one of which was to sweep out the dean's office every day. I took that literally and thought I did a good job of sweeping out the dean's office. One day I came in and across the dean's desk written in the dust was "Rufus." They didn't tell me I also needed to dust. I thought I was only supposed to sweep the floor. After that, I cleaned his desk every day.

A: Did you get paid for that or was it part of the tuition?

R: I don't know if I got paid money for doing this, but it might have helped with the tuition.

There was a National Guard band at that time and we went to regular band practice. I guess it was once every three months, we dressed up in WWI uniforms, complete with leg wrappings, and went to regular band practice. We got, I think, $15 for that. Man, that was a lot of money; I could live three weeks on that.

A: How long was the time that you were with the Guard?

R: When I got over there to start college, on my birthday when I was 18 years old – Sept 22, 1938. I started in the band and they said this was the National Guard band and you get paid for it – sign here. I signed up for a 3-year enlistment with the National Guard. An action I came to somewhat regret later one.

It seemed to me that I worked several odd jobs. I had worked at the department store when I was in high school and I filled in there when I went home. Then in the fall of 1940, in October, my second year there, that's when the Guard throughout the country was federalized and that brought me to Camp Blanding.

A: What do you mean by "federalized?"

R: We were brought from being members of the National Guard, living and working at home, going to practice or summer camp, which we did a couple of times. Instead of full-time, active duty "federalized" – the war was really picking up in Europe and that was done on a one-plus vote, I think, in the Senate.

One day I was a college boy and the next day I was a soldier boy.

A: So you mean you went from part-time to full-time?

R: Yes, we're still in the National Guard, but I was full time and I was at Camp Blanding and not in Jackson, Mississippi. Of course, that was October 1940; in December 1941, there was Pearl Harbor.

A: So you had 14 months as a full-time National Guardsman?

R: Yes. I was a Private first-class. By that time, I had also reached my three-year enlistment and thought I should have gotten out, but that wasn't going to happen. So another soldier and I hitchhiked up to Washington, D.C. to talk with Sen. Claude Pepper. He was very gracious, sat us down in some lovely old leather-bound chairs and even gave us a little history on the chairs. He listened to us and was very sympathetic, but in the end said that the war was growing in Europe and that he didn't think we would be able to get out now. We thanked him and headed back to Camp Blanding.

A: Your goal going up to D.C. was to …

R: Yes, because my enlistment term had ended in September 1941. Besides, there was a pretty little girl to whom I was engaged to at that time. By that time, we were no longer considered a National Guard unit, we were the 31st Division.

A: When did this happen?

R: That happened the day we became federalized, October 1940. This was actually the "Army of the United States." The US Army was "regular army." The "Army of the United States" was everything else.

A: Pearl Harbor attack was December 7, 1941. Where were you?

R: I was still at Camp Blanding, still a PFC and blowing the trombone in the band. I rapidly thought that things were not going to get any better. Here I was a PFC with not a chance of getting out. We were at war and I needed to do something better.

That was rare. Very few guys in the band were willing to change. They liked it in the band, but I thought I could find something better. I applied for Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. I would have gotten in sooner, except during the physical exam, a Lieutenant medic, who didn't know what he was looking at, saw these calcified lymph nodes on the x-ray and thought I had cancer in the lung.

Well, I didn't. He was wrong – it turned out that it was a mold-type that was common in the south. I probably had those since I was a kid, growing up in the south, but I never felt ill or had any ill effects from it. I finally got that cleared up and that allowed me to enter OCS.

A: You didn't know you had that until it showed up on the x-ray?

R: I didn't know that. People didn't have x-rays back then unless they were on the point of death.

A: Or, going into the military.

R: I don't think I'd had an x-ray before, ever.

While we were waiting to get into Fort Benning, I married Marion July 13, 1942.

A: You were still at Camp Blanding?

R: No. Because I was part of a cadre to go to Fort Benning, I was promoted from Pfc to Sgt, then to SSgt before I went to Fort Benning to start OCS. We were married then and Marion went with me to Columbus, GA. We found a room with kitchen privileges with the local school superintendent and his wife. Lovely people. They treated us like their own children. When I didn't have to be at the base, I would come back there. Three months of OCS and I became a second lieutenant.

A: Do you remember when you went from Blanding to Fort Benning? Was it before or after you got married?

R: After we got married. We got married in July 1942 and I started at Fort Benning in August 1942, right after we were married. I graduated OCS in November 1942 as a second Lieutenant.

A: Is that what they called the "90 day wonders?" Or was that a term applied later?

R: I don't know, but I know we were called lieutenants. After I got to be a paratrooper, nobody referred to me like that. The Infantry School in Benning was next door to the Paratrooper school. Those guys look good to me with their shiny boots and looking better than everybody else, which they were. As an officer, I could get an additional $100 a month jump pay. Enlisted men in the Airborne got $50. And that was good money at that time.

A: When you came out from OCS, you were a second lieutenant and that would have been in November 1942?

R: You got it.

A: How soon after OCS did you go to paratrooper school?

R: Immediately. A number of us applied to Paratrooper school, but interestingly they only took about half of us.

A: Do you know what the requirements were?

R: No. The Airborne is, and always has been, volunteer. Nobody said, "Your next assignment is to the Airborne."

A: At that time when you applied for jump school, how long was jump school?

R: I believe it was four weeks.

A: While at jump school, what did you do?

R: Physical training, first. God, we ran constantly, exercised both in ranks and outside of ranks. It was tough, it was really hard.

A: Did a lot of candidates drop out during the initial weeks?

R: I wouldn't say a lot, but some did. They just couldn't make the grade. But, I got through that. I had never been inside an airplane, until my first qualifying jump. I jumped out of an airplane five times before I ever landed in one.

A: In the process of training, how long before you took your first jump?

R: The last week was when we made our five qualifying jumps.

A: I remember at Fort Benning, there was a 34 foot jump tower. There was also the 250 foot jump tower. That where you practiced jump landing.

R: That's where they would haul us up with an open chute, and we would practice landing. But, before that, there was all this practicing jumping out of the side of a mock airplane, and how to properly land.

I made five qualifying jumps and got my parachute wings. For some reason, I was assigned to the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which was brand new, and I was assigned to the Riggers School – I didn't ask for that, I was told to attend. This was after I graduated from jump school. Riggers School lasted for about a month and was located at Fort Benning.

A: When you first went to jump school you did a lot of physical training and jumping out of the mock airplanes. Was there much classroom work during this time?

R: There had been a lot of classroom work at OCS, but I don't recall there being much classroom work at either parachute school or riggers school. It was mostly practical. We already had training in map reading and things of that sort, on the range. I was an expert in both rifle and pistol along the way. We also did weapons training in parachute school, even bayonets and hand-to-hand combat.

A: I have heard that when you earn your jump wings, there is a tradition of pinning the wings on the paratrooper. Can you talk about that?

R: They didn't put the covers on the pins when pinning the parachute wings on your uniform. Instead, they'd punch the wings and the pins went right through the uniform and into your skin. That was the tradition.

Then there was the "Prop blast" party. Shortly after you became a paratrooper (with the officers), there was a prop blast party. They got every kind of liquor they had and poured it all together in a big urn. Then they dished out a very generous portion that you had to drink all at once. "Drink, chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug." I didn't drink at the time, but I did here. They took me home and poured me inside. I remember that Marion was propped up in bed laughing at me and I was trying to get my pants off and fell on the floor. God, it was an awful site.

A: About how many men graduated from jump school with you?

R: I don't remember the total, but a lot of them that started with me did graduate. I would guess about 100 men graduated in my class. I don't know the ratio of officers to enlisted men, either.

A: When you graduated, did everyone go into the 507th?

R: I don't remember, but I would guess that probably not. The 507th was brand new and they were trying to fill it up. The 507th was newer than the 504th.

A: How often did they fill another class? Was it at the same time, or did they wait until your class graduated before starting another class?

R: I'm tempted to say they graduated one class every month and they didn't bring in another class until this one graduated.

A: You were assigned to the Riggers Section. How many officers were there?

R: I think there were three officers.

A: How many people total in the Riggers Section?

R: I believe there were about fifty men total. I have the yearbook that shows a picture of the Riggers Section.

[Looking in the 507th Infantry Regiment 1943 yearbook]
R: There's Colonel Millet. He was a big guy with a fat belly – he didn't fit. He was a West Pointer and General Gavin hated him. They were classmates. None of the rest of us had very much respect for him. He got to Normandy, got surrounded, and threw his hands up and said, "we surrender." He spent the war at a German prison camp.

These are the officers for the Riggers Section. There's me; there's Smith – a big ol' guy from Tennessee. A nice man, but not very smart, he was a weight lifter. Here's Sergeant Haley – he's old regular Army guy and a wonderful soldier. Although, one night when we were in Ireland, I was the OOD that evening. Haley came in, three sheets to the wind. He looked and smelled just awful. He said, "Lieutenant, let me give you one piece of information." I said, "What?" "After the third time standing up, it just ain't worth it."

We were part of the Service Company. Captain Robert Rae commanded the Service Company. And he was the one that led us shoulder-to-shoulder at the LaFiere Causeway.

A: You mentioned you were part of the Service Company. What other units were also part of the Service Company?

R: Motor Pool, maybe. There might have been a Communications Unit. It's under the Service Company in the yearbook.

A: When you were in the Riggers Section, you were still a 2d Lieutenant?

R: That's right.

A: After you finished Riggers School, where were you next?

R: In the 507th, in the Riggers Section, still at Fort Benning. Sometime in the Spring of 1943, we moved out to Alliance, Nebraska. The reason we moved out there was that there was a troop carrying airborne school out there for the airplanes. I guess they needed us to go out and jump from the airplanes.

One notable day, the whole regiment went down for the first full regimental jump at the Denver airport. It was the 4th of July, a big blood bank drive. It was said that 100,000 people were at the Denver airport. There were probably 2,600 paratroopers there. We were transported from Alliance in airplanes and dropped on the Denver airport.

The epitome of perfection of a jump – you couldn't guide these chutes, they were big ol' 24' things. You could reach up and grab the runner and just at the appropriate time just before you hit the ground, you could give a severe jerk that would slow you down enough to make a standing landing. That was an A-1 grade of a landing.

Well, we had been jumping down in Fort Benning where the air was heavy and Alliance, Nebraska was not much lighter, but when we got up to Denver the mile-high city, we dropped fast – onto the concrete. We busted up a lot of guys from hard landings. They got into the hospitals, and with the nice looking nurses and girls coming to visit with candy, we almost never got them back.

A: Just out of curiosity, did anyone mention that the air was thinner in Denver, thus a faster rate of descent?

R: No, not at all, nobody thought about it. Nobody said it was going to be a hard landing.

A: So this was the first regimental jump of the 507th?

R: This was the first regimental jump of anywhere in the airborne.

A: Was the 507th part of the 82nd at that time?

R: Yes.

A: Going back to ask another question, when you were in jump school and made five qualifying jumps, were all the jumps the same types of jumps.

R: Yes. All during the day, all from the same height. But, later on, we made night jumps, but that was after jump school.

A: What was that like – a night jump?

R: You couldn't see much.

A: When you were jumping, you had very little control over the chute. Could you turn the chute? Did they instruct you to turn into the wind?

R: You couldn't control it. There was no way to turn the chute around. Now with today's chutes, you can drive them like sports cars.

A: When you were at Alliance, did you do other practice jumps other than the Denver jump?

R: Yes. One jump we headed to someplace in Kansas for a jump. It was a windy day. We were supposed to jump in anything over 20 mph wind. I think this day was 35 mph. This jump was under Captain Schwartzwalder – he was later on a coach for Ohio State, a great coach. He was a great guy. He said, “We came all this way; we might as well jump.”

When you hit the ground and if there’s any kind of wind, to deflate the chute, you take the underneath risers and pull, gradually deflate it. But here, every time I tried to get the chute deflated, I tried to get onto my feet, it would slam me down. I was bouncing along and it finally occurred to me that the only way to get out of this was to hit the Mississippi River. We must’ve been dragged for miles.

There were a few other jumps in the vicinity of Alliance. There was one commanded by a Major and unfortunately spread them out near the barracks, right over all the cesspools. We lost five or six men. It was just dreadful, dreadful. He never got promoted. He has attended several of the reunions. He was a nice guy, but just dumb.

A: Do you remember how long you were at Alliance?

R: We were there throughout the summer. I think we were there until we went overseas. We went from Alliance to New York. We went overseas in December 1943.

A: What was the main purpose to go to Alliance?

R: There were two main missions. One was to train the pilots who would fly us in formation. The second was for us to learn to jump in a large group, such as a regiment or battalion.

A: Do you remember how many jumps you made in Alliance?

R: A lot of them.

A: When you jump in training, after the qualification jump, can you describe what you are wearing as far as equipment?

R: A regular uniform with a steel helmet. You’ve got your main parachute. A small reserve 18’ chute on your belly. We carried some equipment, but nothing like what we carried in Normandy.

A: Did you ever have to use your reserve chute?

R: No. But, one of our riggers, he and I after a night of drinking, decided that on the practice jump the next day, we would not hook up and jump out and jump our reserves only. I don’t remember if we actually did that, or if the word got out and we were thwarted. We did get chewed out by our Major and he threatened to bust us down to privates.

A: How many men were in the plane with you when you jumped?

R: There were usually 18, including me. We also had the aircrew on board.

A: So, we covered today the time when you got to Mississippi College, joined the band and the National Guard, the federalization of the National Guard, applying for OCS and the delay, graduation and going into jump school and graduation. You were transferred to the Riggers Section and training in Fort Benning and additional training in Alliance. That brings us to the time you headed overseas. That covers a lot for today.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway Interview
August 26, 2010

A: I was listening to the tape earlier today – these are digital, so if you'd like me to email a file or bring over a CD, I can do that.

R: I think at the end of the line we can do that, whatever you think is worthwhile.

A: What I thought we'd talk about today is your growing up, earlier years and depending on how much time we have, I would like to focus on Marion and the time around that part, too. We may need to do that another session, but let's see what time we have.

R: Good, I'm glad you're going back to that.

A: Well, like you said, it played a very important part in your growing up and of course, you didn't know it at the time back then. But, tell me about your home life when you were growing up as a young child.

R: I was born in Jackson, Mississippi, one of the poorest places in the United States – Mississippi that is. Jackson was the capital and at that time, it had a population of 37,000; the biggest town in Mississippi. A nice little town.

My parents were wonderful people. I was born in 1920 and I believe my mother was 21 and my father was 30. They were fine people. My daddy worked on the railroad as he worked for the Railway Express Company. His job was on the baggage car as an express messenger. He was responsible for everything that came onto that car and everything that went off, from small packages to pigs to whatever. Anything and everything that people wanted to be shipped by rail, and this was a very common way to ship them. He was responsible for that.

He never was without a job, but during the depression, '28 and '29, things were lacking pretty much. My parents were fine people. Unfortunately, they didn't get much of an education. Interestingly, both of their fathers died at an early age. Each of my parents had to drop out of school, out of the ninth grade. Nevertheless, they were intelligent people. They spoke well, they wrote well, they could conduct a fine conversation and they read a lot. They used excellent English – no slang was permitted. It has amazed me that out of that in the depression and not much of an education, they rose above that.

A: Did your mother have a job?

R: Yes she did. She worked at Kennington's Department Store – it was the biggest department store in the state and it was right in the heart of downtown Jackson. It was a nice store and I worked there a little later on and we'll get to that. Despite not much of a formal education, she rose to be a department manager until she married this young railroad man.

I was their first child. My mother was intent on – if she didn't get far in life – getting me along as far as I could. Back up a little bit. She was an excellent seamstress. She specialized in fancy dresses for the well-to-do ladies and little girls. She designed these. In another setting, she would have been an outstanding designer – very original, outstanding ideas. She knew what was right and what wasn't right, what fit and what didn't. She used an old Singer sewing machine, which was not electric at the time, it was foot powered. She could make that thing run. One my memories was late at night while going to sleep, my mother was pedaling that thing at top speed. She really did some very creative things.

Since she didn't get an education, she was determined that I was going to succeed in life doing something. As I grew up, there was hardly a day that she didn't shake her finger under my nose and say, "You're going to amount to something." And I knew that by God, if God didn't get me, she would. And that was an incentive. Every time that I had to write an essay at school, I would bring home the project and she and I would develop it and I had memorized every word of that essay to be written so that when I got back to the classroom and started writing the essay, I had it all inside.

I made top grades. One is because I wanted to and two, I knew I'd better. An "A" at 95 wasn't good enough – it had to be 100. Each and every time, without exception. And I took various little prizes here and there. We were Baptist – everybody in Mississippi was Baptist. If you weren't Baptist, you were going straight to hell. There were no exceptions. There were other denominations, but that was the dominant religion in that part or the country.

At church, there were various little contests and I memorized all the books in the Bible and essentially knew everything in them. That's where my mother kept pushing me – she wanted me to do that. Interestingly, one of her ambitions was for me to be a Baptist preacher. I'm not sure I appreciated that at the time, but looking back, I think she saw that as one of the few ways up and out of this poor part of the south. A Baptist preacher was someone in an elevated position in the community. Most of them, the good ones, had gone to southern Baptist seminary in, I think, Richmond.

She would shake finger under my nose and say, "You're going to be a Baptist preacher." When I said my prayers at night, I'd say, "Dear God, please don't make me be a Baptist preacher." I thought there was something else God might want me to do instead of being a Baptist preacher. To project further on, when I called and let her know that I had been accepted in Harvard Medical School, she sort of sniffed and said, "You could've been a Baptist preacher."

A: Now, you're a doctor. When did you know you wanted to become a doctor?

R: Early on. Our family doctor was such a fine person and that was a position in the community also – one of the best.

A: Did you ever talk to your mother about being a doctor?

R: Yes, and she wanted me to be a Baptist preacher. She was very definite about that.

A: So, it wasn't just a position of elevated status?

R: No, it was focused on helping people. The doctors helping us when we got sick, and I thought that was the thing I'd like to do.

A: Back in those days, there was elementary school and …

R: Yes, elementary school, junior high, and then senior high school.

A: What were the grades for elementary school?

R: Through the sixth grade, then seven through nine for junior high, then ten through twelve for senior high school. There was elementary school and junior high building next to each other, just a few blocks from where we lived. I walked back and forth to school each day. But senior high was downtown, in the middle of what we called downtown Jackson. I was always a good student and we had good teachers.

Miss Hutchinson, my eleventh grade English teacher, had gone to school at Columbia School Teachers College in New York. She taught me how to read and write appropriately and how to express myself, the love of poetry and literature in its broadest sense. She was one of the main people in my life. At my 50th high school reunion, Miss Hutchinson was still there and I got to tell her this. We hugged each other and both cried. So, I felt a good education and music figured prominently in my life, too.

A: You had mentioned earlier that you had played in the band, which got you into the National Guard. When did you get interested in playing instruments?

R: In junior high school. The band director for both junior and senior high was an Italian named Dr. Luis Pullo and he was hot headed. I was trying to blow this trumpet and he'd stand over me with the director's wand. I'd hit a sour note, and he'd crack it across the music stand. I don't know how many wands he broke trying to get me through, but we finally decided that my lip just wasn't that kind of lip for that small cup on the trumpet. I got onto the trombone and took to that like a duck to water.

A: What were you playing before that?

R: I was trying to play the trumpet, but I couldn't do that, my lip didn't seal. But the trombone, I really did very, very well. I was top of the heap and I always played solo trombone in the band. And I always managed to do that.

As a matter of fact, we had a division of the national high school band contest and of course, Mr. Pullo wanted me to enter that. Three weeks before that, he called me in and said, "We've got enough people covering trombone, although I think you're top of the drawer. I need somebody to play baritone horn; do you suppose you can do that?"

Well, essentially they're the same, except there's no sliding in this big horn. I said I'd give it a try. I won first place in the regionals. Some girl at Blue Mountain College, where Marion attended, was having her senior recital. For some reason, she wanted me to come up and play in the intervals between her piano. And it went very well, I played three pieces.

A: How did she hear about you?

R: I don't know how we met. There were various student conferences. But, I went up and there was a girl in Jackson, who was a wonderful pianist and I got her on as an accompanist. Her mother was horrified at first, but someone went with us as a chaperone. I wasn't going to do anything, I just wanted her to accompany me when I played. It was music that got me further along the way.

A: You had mentioned several times that growing up in Mississippi, you made the comment early on that you grew up on the poor side of the tracks. When you were growing up, did you ever feel poor?

R: Yes. Particularly as I got further up along in junior high and senior high, especially senior high. We were in west Jackson, not the very best part of town. Interestingly, our house was on Rose Street, it was a nice house. But in the next block was the Black section. We went to the same grocery store and, as you know, there was a very sharp division at that time between blacks and whites. Blacks generally were not accepted as human beings – they were inferior. Although my father said to me on more than one occasion, "Son, those are human beings just like we are. They are a different color. They come from a different background." But there clearly was a division point.

I was sensitive to the fact that we came out of the poor section of town. In my senior year in high school, I got along pretty well with everybody and had a lot of friends on the north side. They persuaded me to run for class president. There was a good politician on the other side because they got another boy from the west Jackson to run also, which divided the vote and George Gellespie from the north Jackson got to be class president. I had a pretty good shot at it and I think I would have done a good job.

A: You mentioned that your dad was telling you that Blacks were human beings. Did your mom share that sentiment?

R: I think to a good extent. We frequently had a black woman come over and help clean the house and help out. They were also treated very politely. Nobody at our house ever yelled at them or put them down or made them feel any more inferior than they were.

A: And you also have a younger sister, Evelyn?

R: She was my only sibling, two years younger than I.

A: I grew up in a different generation and there were double standards. Did you and Evelyn experience double standards, so to speak, in your growing up years?

R: I don't think so. Do you mean as far as race is concerned?

A: No, just generally growing up. Guys to these things, girls do these things and you don't cross over.

R: Not too much. She thought that I was the favored one; I wasn't so sure about that. She was treated as the girl. And she was a lovely young lady. She really was. I was proud of her as my baby sister.

A: Did you ever have to defend her? Fight off some guys?

R: Not that I remember.

A: Did she ever have to defend you?

R: I don't think so, I didn't get in trouble. I didn't get in fights. Although I got sent home when I was in first grade for kissing every little girl in the first grade.

A: I think all little first grade boys kiss the girls.

R: My mother looked at me with sort of a half-cocked grin on her face and said, “Don’t ever do that again.” I was afraid I was going to get a beating, but no. I got spanked occasionally.

A: You never got into any fights when you were growing up?

R: No, I didn’t. There may have been a little pushing and shoving but I never got a bloody nose or a black eye or gave anybody one.

A: Were you ever into sports?

R: I thought of going out for football in high school. And suddenly I got this vision of Bruiser Canard. Bruiser Canard was a senior and I was a junior in high school. I thought I’d go out for football. Bruiser was big, but great guy, gentle. But boy, could he hit. And I got this vision of being hit by Bruiser Canard and that’s when I went out for band. No, I did not do any sports at that time.

A: Were you into camping and outdoors?

R: I was a Boy Scout – and Eagle Scout. I really didn’t have a choice. I got my merit badges in line and the last two or three, I was busy doing other things in high school. My mother said, “You’re going to finish those and get your Eagle.” Well, I got busy and finished those and got my Eagle. At that point, I didn’t have much choice. I was proud to be an Eagle scout, it was a lot of work.

A: What grade did you start scouts?

R: I don’t remember being a Cub Scout, so it would have been in junior high school.

A: Outside of scouting, did you ever do any camping or hiking?

R: Not on my own, not that I recall. When I was 15 years old, I was a good musician and a good bugler. At that time the CCC camps (Civilian Conservation Corps) – that was one of the great things that this country did – all these poor folks, particularly the poor southerners. It gave them something to do, the physical work, they built all the bridges and roads and a lot of the buildings up in the mountains.

There was a CCC camp south of Jackson somewhere, and they needed a bugler. My scout master came to me and said, “Rufus, how would you like to go down to the CCC camp and teach bugling to some of these guys?” I said I’d give it a try. And sure enough, I got them to do the routine bugle calls like Reveille and Taps. Things went on with those old country boys that I couldn’t understand, let alone talk about. Nevertheless, it was a good experience for me.

A: You were just working for the CCC camps? Were you working full-time?

R: Yes, full-time for my two weeks. This was a one-time shot and I was still in high school. I also went to work at Kennington’s Department Store. My parents didn’t have any money to give me for an allowance. Furthermore, I liked to wear good clothes and they couldn’t always afford it. I remember one winter, other boys had suit coats, but I didn’t have one to fit and I wore a zipper jacket of some kind and I was embarrassed every time I put it on, because I wanted to look good.

So, I got a job in the children’s department at Kennington’s, mostly doing shoes. I got to be a pretty good shoe salesman and made a little money. I’d come from high school to work and it was a job which I needed.

A: You said your dad work for the railroad. Did he have to travel a lot?

R: Oh yes. Jackson was on the line between New Orleans and Chicago. He would alternate those runs. They had an interesting system, based on seniority. They bid for the various routes and as he got more senior then he got the better routes. He would go to New Orleans, stay overnight and come back the next day. And occasionally, he’d go north to Memphis, then change and come back.

A: Did you ever ride with him? What was that like?

R: I think – I’m tempted to say when I was six years old – I was all eyes and ears. They had a wooden water pail. I think it may have been for drinking. It had a cross piece of wood on top to keep it from splashing out and I would look at the mechanics of that thing and wondered how it worked. He was a great carpenter and made all sorts of things.

He took me on this trip to Memphis and we stayed at a rooming house, where he normally stayed on his trip. They had fried shrimps and somehow there was a smell about those shrimp and I wouldn't touch a shrimp for years. Funny what you remember and what you don't. They were nice folks and we came back the next day.

I was also fascinated with the mail hook. You know what I'm talking about? They'd hang the mail bag on some device; as the train came along, I didn't know if they'd slow the train or not through these small towns, but they would swing this device out and pick up that sack of mail and pull it back into the rail car. I just thought that was the greatest thing I'd ever seen.

A: Did you make a lot of trips with him?

R: I'm tempted to say that that was the only one, but I'm sure there might have been others. Every spring, he would be sent down to Hammond, Louisiana, which was the center for all of the fruit that came up, in particular the strawberry season. Late afternoon, the strawberry farmers would come in, usually in wagons pulled by mules and they would start loading these refrigerated cars. They had big sections of ice, both at each end and in the middle of the car, so these were refrigerated cars. They'd load big crates of strawberries. Every now and then, he'd bring home a crate of strawberries.

I went down a couple of times to watch him a day or two. That was some industry. You know molasses was made down there, because they didn't have maple trees to make syrup. When you got to the high class light syrup, it was just very delightful. They would have big vats for sugar cane stalks they would feed them into. The driving mechanism was a long pole and at the end was a big mule. The mule would walk slowly around and it would grind the cane. Underneath these tremendous vats, they would have wood fires, boiling away and 80,000 yellow jackets all over the place. They weren't interested in people, they were interested in the syrup. So those are some of the memories of life as it was.

A: When did your parents die?

R: My mother died at the age of 72. Interestingly, she died of lung cancer. She never smoked a day in her life. My father smoked a pipe and one of the great memories I have of him is him sitting in his bedroom in his rocking chair with the daily paper, still with his hat on – men would wear hats until it was time to go to bed. He loved his pipe and I remember smoke coming out from his pipe.

Pipes usually aren't hot enough to bring the tars and nicotine out in smoke, not compared to cigarettes. But, I can only conclude that her years of exposure to his pipe must have had something to do with her getting lung cancer. At any rate, she died of that.

He was 84; really a lovely old man. By that time, he was living with my sister, Evelyn, and her husband. He got a myocarditis infection of the heart muscle, and this was by some kind of organism, a disease. I kept in touch with Evelyn almost every day and he was in and out of the hospital a couple of times. Then came the day when she called and said I had better come.

By the time I got there, he was doing better. After a couple of days, he was ready to leave. On that last morning before I was to leave that afternoon, I went over to the hospital. He wanted a shampoo. There was a basin in his hospital room. He had gorgeous curly hair, beautiful gray hair – a very handsome old man. That's where I get mine.

I got him over to the sink and gave him a nice shampoo; he accused me of trying to drown him. I shaved him, powdered him, and buffed him – he looked beautiful, he truly did. He said, "Why don't you go downstairs and get a cup of coffee." I didn't need any more coffee, I had enough with breakfast. He insisted that I go down and get a cup of coffee. When I came back, he was gone. Just like that. He must have known and didn't want to die in front of me, or something like that. Anyway, that's the way it happened.

A: What year was that?

R: I'm not sure, you might need to ask Evelyn.

A: You were married to Marion, and the war was over?

R: Yes, and I was practicing in Miami.

A: You went to Miami in 1954.

R: He was 84 years old and he was born in 1898, so that would be in the early 80s. Becky would have been in high school.

A: You mom died in what year?

R: I think she was 21 or 22 when I was born in 1920.

A: So, she would have been born in 1899 or 1898?

R: I think so, and she died at the age of 72.

A: So, she died in the 1970s?

R: Yes.

A: So, your dad lived another 8 to 10 years?

R: Yes.

A: You mentioned that he was living with Evelyn and her husband those last few years? In Jackson?

R: Yes.

A: Let's talk about the next era, when you met Marion.

R: I liked girls. I was a pretty good looking boy myself. I usually had a girlfriend. Never any monkey business – we talked a little bit, but I was still a virgin.

A: How old were you when you had your first date? Was it before you left for college?

R: Oh yes, I dated a lot in high school.

A: Did you date when you were in junior high?

R: I don't think so.

A: I think, at least for me, that's the age when I started noticing girls.

R: That's when you realized that girls were girls, and what they were for.

A: Yea, but you didn't know what to do with them.

R: As a matter of fact, there was one beautiful girl, the daughter of the leading undertaker in town, when I was growing up. I was talking to one of the guys and I said, "I like to hug her up, but how do you start?" He said, "Put your hand on her stomach." That was poor advice. I put my hand on her stomach and she slapped the hell out of me. That's the last time I did that.

Another girl I liked was Martha Francis Sheffield, whose father was a doctor out in west Jackson, a nice man. She was an attractive girl. I remember when I was at Camp Blanding, her father brought her over because her brother was a lieutenant at Camp Blanding. They'd come over to visit him and Martha Francis and I would get together – again, nothing serious. I guess she was considered "my girl."

A: How did he put you together with her as opposed to the other thousand soldiers there?

R: Because we were going together in high school. When I got to Mississippi College, I guess we must have maintained that. To make that long story short, I met Marion and all of that developed and stopped any connection with anybody else, including Martha Francis.

Some years later, there was a reunion of my class, and I went in and there acting as secretary and checking everyone in was Martha Francis Sheffield. I said, "Hello there, Martha Francis." She didn't even look up at me. She said, "You're Rufus Broadaway?" Next case.

She died within this past year. I was talking to my sister, Evelyn, about her and she sent me her obituary. It talked of her long term friend, another lady. Evelyn verified that, she said these were known to be pals and a pair for many years. So I guess it's just as well that it didn't develop further.

I dated a number of girls. Nothing got very serious at all, until I met Marion.

A: You shared with me the very first time you heard Marion.

R: I'll never forget it, Andy. I can hear her now. I just – that was a sound unlike anything I had ever heard before. And I was hooked. Now, she didn't – she thought I was a nice young man, and interesting. But the flame didn't get ignited. I had beautiful, golden and kinky hair, wore good clothes and was somewhat of a dude, I thought. But, she wasn't attracted until after I got into active duty, got my head closely cropped, if not shaved, put on a new uniform and she tell you, that's when it happened. She saw me as a real man and not as a pretty boy.

A: You were at Mississippi College when you met her?

R: Yes.

A: That means you were also in the National Guard at that time, but not federalized.

R: Back up a little bit. I didn't see how I'd ever get to college, we didn't have any money. I think my folks had some small insurance policy, a few hundred dollars, but nothing that would carry me through. But, I worked over there, seems to me several jobs. One was sweeping out the dean's office.

When I got to Mississippi College, I was an excellent musician and they were happy to see me in the band. This band was also the band for the Mississippi Guard, the 31st Division. You get paid for band practice and every three months, we put on a World War I uniform, and got 12 dollars. So, sure, I signed up for a three-year enlistment on my eighteenth birthday.

It was still before Pearl Harbor, but the war was raging and we were up here in Camp Blanding. I thought my three-year enlistment was over, but they weren't about to let me go. Then along came Pearl Harbor and that’s when I had a talk with myself, “Look, you can be Pfc Trombone, or you can do better.” That’s when I applied to OCS.

A: When did you first meet Marion?

R: We met while I was still in Mississippi College.

A: How long had you’d been there? You went to Mississippi College in September of 1938. You joined up with the National Guard in September of 1938, your birthday.

R: I met Marion in my second year, in 1939.

A: Do you remember if it was Spring, Summer, Winter?

R: It would have been in the Fall of 1939.

A: You got married in July of 1942? So, you were almost three years dating.

R: The National Guard was federalized in October 1940.

A: That’s when you put the uniform on and when Marion saw a different man. Do you remember proposing to her? I don’t think I’ve heard that story. Can you share it?

R: She had come down to Jackson. We went over to Vicksburg, Mississippi, on the river. It’s a historic town from the Civil War. Part of it was big, old plantation houses. There were still some trenches there from the Civil War. It was while we were sitting in one of those trenches that I made the proposal and she said yes. We were meant for each other.

A: You proposed in Vicksburg at the site of a Civil War trench. Was there anybody around?

R: No.

A: I know you must have been thinking about it for a while.

R: Both of us were. We were pretty sure at that time that we were meant for each other.

A: Did you go to Vicksburg knowing you were going to propose?

R: No. I think it just came to me, "Now. Now, fella. Do it now." And we were still virgins when we got married. That's not to say there wasn't a little third or fourth or fifth play, but you know …

A: I'm trying to figure the time line. You were in Jackson and not in Blanding. So that would have been in 1939, you still had another year before you went to Blanding. So you proposed in …

R: I proposed maybe – I don't know if I was still in uniform or not. I mean I was on active duty.

A: You said you went active duty in October 1940. You said you met her a year before that. As soon as you were federalized, you went to Blanding. That was October in 1940. So, you'd still have a uniform, but it was your National Guard uniform.

R: It was the same uniform.

A: Soon after, within a year, you proposed to Marion, is when the National Guard was federalized and you were formed into the 31st Division and you had to go to Camp Blanding. You had not graduated from college ..

R: No, I was part way into my second year.

A: You went over to Camp Blanding. Now, Marion was still at Blue Mountain College?

R: Yes. And she stayed there until she graduated in '42. We thought that she should graduate before we got married.

A: She graduated in May or June of ’42 and you were married in July of ’42. When did you go to Fort Benning?

R: I graduated in November 1942, so I guess I went to Fort Benning in August.

A: Marion graduated in May or June of 1942. You were married in July of ‘42. Then you entered OCS in August of ’42. That’s a lot in three months. We talked a lot last time about your process of training at OCS and at paratrooper school.

You said that when you were married at Fort Benning, you had a room you rented from the Superintendent of Schools and you also said that your training was during the day, so you would be able to go home at night.

R: Some nights.

A: I would imagine that you would have duty at different times.

R: Yes.

A: Do you remember much about OCS?

R: It was fairly rigorous and demanding. We had class homework, work out in the field, a lot of physical activity. Not a lot of running, interestingly. I started running with another guy, both of us wanted to apply for the paratrooper school. We heard they ran a lot, so we started running with each other. He didn’t make it into parachute school.

The Airborne school is still voluntary and I would have thought that they would have taken most anybody who was qualified for the airborne. But, there was about 20 of us that applied for the parachute school and they took only about half or two thirds of us – that was 20 out of the OCS school.

A: During your three months at OCS, when did you decide you wanted to be a paratrooper.

R: I think roughly half way.

A: Was there anything that spoke to you or did you see something?

R: Oh yea, looking at those guys, their boots polished, they obviously were very proud of who they were, what they were doing, and where they were. Besides, Airborne officers got a hundred dollars more a month and that was a lot of money back then. I wasn't set on the money, but the whole package was attractive. And it meant – it goes way back to Miss Eva, my mother – I found most of my life trying to strive for the very best. And this looked like better than a plain infantry officer.

A: Do you think this was because you grew up poor?

R: I think growing up poor had something to do with it.

A: It doesn't sound like you really ever disappointed your parents. I know that I felt this with my own mom and dad, I thought I let them down and so I had to try to reach that – that was my driving force. It sounds like your parents were always encouraging to you.

R: They were, except for enlisting in the Airborne. I think I told you that I called my mom and told her and she said, "You get out of there right now." I told her if I got out, they'd court martial me.

Did I tell you the story of the guy who got on the wrong truck? When I got accepted for OCS, I was in Camp Blanding. I had to get to the central Georgia railroad and down to Fort Benning and I got there at night. There were trucks all around, headlights on, and various signs. This to the infantry school, this to artillery, whatever.

I got my bag and got into the truck for the infantry school, got to the base and settled in, and started training the routine. This was a three month course, leading to 2nd lieutenant. I heard this story, and it's true. One of the officer candidates came up to the company headquarters and approached the sergeant and the sergeant said, "What can I do for you, soldier?" He said, "I want to see the Captain." "What do you want see him about?" "I can't tell you, I just want to see the Captain."

Well, he insisted and the sergeant told him to stand there and wait. The sergeant went in and told the captain that one of the candidates was here to see him. "What does he want?" The sergeant said, "He won't tell me, but insists on seeing you." "Send him in."

The Captain said, "What's bothering you, soldier?" He said, "Sir, I want to know when I can start cooking?" The Captain thought he was using the generic term, "start cooking," meaning to get going. The Captain said, "Things are cooking along and we're doing fine."

He said, "No, I mean cooking, like eating." The Captain said, "we have some courses in field mess management and that's going to come along son, you're going to be alright."

"But, sir. I want to know when we're going to start cooking."

It came out that he came down with orders to go to Cooks and Bakers School and that he had gotten on the wrong truck and was in the wrong place. The captain thought this was hilarious and he said, "Soldier, you don't realize how lucky you are. You're coming along, making good grades and passed everything. Stay another six weeks and you'll be a second lieutenant."

He said, "Sir, I don't want to be no dammed lieutenant, I want to be a cooks and bakers." So they shipped him off to Cooks and Bakers School.

R: I wanted to tell you one story about World War II that is very strongly in my mind. By the time we jumped into Holland on the Bridge Too Far mission, I had just been made junior aide-de-camp to General Gavin. In that jump, it was a sunny Sunday afternoon, forty miles behind the lines. There were very few Germans at that time, very few shots fired, and no artillery fire.

In one of the planes, maybe General Gavin's plane was a Dutch captain, a captain in the Dutch resistance and he had been a stellar figure. He had been in and out of Holland a number of times, going back to England. Now he wasn't riding first class trains you understand. He was smuggling in and smuggling out with the Dutch underground.

His mission was to get into Nijmegen early – we were just a few miles down south of there – and contact the Dutch resistance. General Gavin told him to take a jeep and a driver and do whatever he needed to do. Well, he did that but somehow on the way out, he got recognized and got one arm shot up pretty bad. When he came back, he refused to be evacuated.

After the war, I hadn't heard anything more about him. Many years later, sitting around in south Miami with our young Presbyterian minister and several others, there was this evening gathering at someone's home, I heard from behind me our young minister say something like, "Harry Bestebrute."

I said, "What did you say?" He repeated, "Harry Bestebrute." I said, what name is that. "He was a Dutch resistance man – a hero in World War II." After the war, he became a lawyer and came to this country and felt a call to the Christian ministry. He went to one of the Presbyterian seminaries. He now has a church in North Carolina." Unbelievable.

We sent messages back and forth. I never actually saw him again. I neglected to say that before the war, he had been an Olympic skater for the Dutch. In North Carolina, one winter while skating, he fell through the ice and drowned. Now you think that's a good story, that's not the end of it. I've always been fascinated with coincidences.

Some years later, Marion and I arranged to go with two other couples down the rapids of the middle fork of the Salmon River in Idaho. We got out there a couple of days early and they guy who was one of the bigwigs in the American Hospital Association, who was our host – we were sitting out there on the deck the first night having a drink looking at the mountains and his wife said, "I understand that you're going to Holland."

I said, "Yes, you know I jumped into Holland on D-Day." She said she'd heard that and "you might be interested in talking to our next door neighbor. She's Dutch and her father was a famous hero in World War II. Her name is Bestebrute." Can you believe that?

It turns out that she was actually back in Holland visiting family. But, we went out the next year and I went to visit her next door. She had reams of stuff that we went through and I was able to make a point here and there and fill in some holes for her. That was very special for me.

Dr. Rufus Broadway
September 9, 2010

A: We've covered a lot of the earlier years, the courtship with Marion, and the timelines leading up to the war. I've got a couple of questions I'd like to go back to in OCS and training and then I think in our first interview, we got up to the transport overseas, when you were through with training and were heading over to Europe.

For training, I believe you had three types of training (in my words): basic infantry training, OCS training, and paratrooper training. My question for each of those – do you think, now that you can look back, when you were in basic training, did that training prepare you for war.

R: The term "basic training" is not applicable. Remember, it was when I was in Mississippi College and signed up for the band, they said, "sign here" and I signed up for the National Guard band, not realizing not any of the implications that might have at the time in 1938. That was a little extra money. I had to go to summer camp with the Mississippi National Guard and that was an experience, let me tell you. Of course, we got some money for that, too.

But, as a band, we never had any basic training of any kind, except to play in the band. I didn't get any infantry training. I guess it was in OCS that I got my expert marksmanship in rifle and pistol. We were in the band – we played music and provided for all the marching units. But, we never anything to do with being a soldier.

So when you talk about basic training, I didn't have any basic training. In the fall of 1940, when the Guard was federalized everywhere, we got pulled out of school and up here to Camp Blanding.

A: I'm guessing that when at Camp Blanding, you got into a routine of physical training?

R: I don't recall any physical training for the band. We marched with the units. I don't recall any type of training while in the band.

A: So, you never received any boot camp training.

R: Basically, I never received any basic training for the infantry. Now, when we got to OCS, then it was pretty rigorous, according to whatever the order of training.

A: Did OCS training prepare you for war?

R: Absolutely. As I recall, it was a very good and fairly rigorous training period. They kept us busy all day long and sometimes far into the night. We went into night missions. It was really about how to be a second lieutenant in the infantry.

A: And, what about paratrooper school. Did that train you for war.

R: Specifically, yes.

A: I believe you mentioned last time that being an officer and a paratrooper, you received an extra $100 per month.

R: That's correct. Enlisted men received $50 per month.

A: What was the transport ship that took you from New York to Scotland?

R: The "Strathnaver". It was a beautiful ship. It was built for affluent people to cruise from Liverpool to Bombay. Lots of wood paneling, I remember. Now, as officers, I was a first lieutenant by that time, we had cabins – two officers to a cabin. We ate in the formal dining room. All of the servant type people in the ship were East Indians. They were dressed in their appropriate uniforms. They served us formally. We had kippers for breakfast. It was truly a luxury cruise.

That was all well and good. My men, however, were treated in an inferior way, like the British enlisted men. Officers had everything. The British enlisted men and our men were packed down in the hole. I went down every day to visit them. They were eating and going to the bathroom and sleeping all in the same quarters. You may have some familiarity with that, being in the Navy. They complained, but all soldiers complained, but they realized it was only for a certain length of time.

We were in convoy, of course, which meant we moved at the speed of the slowest ship. We had frequent alerts for submarines. Now, I don't know if any of our ships in this convoy were torpedoed, but they were there. We often got called for submarine alert. We got over there without being attacked.

A: Do you recall when you left the states? I believe it was in 1943.

R: I think we left in the fall of 1943, maybe December. We were supposed to go to Liverpool. We docked at Liverpool and England was full – really – there were American troops all over the place and they didn't have any room for us. This was the week before Christmas. So they sent us across the Irish Sea to North Island to Portrush. This was a beautiful little resort town right on the tip of North Island. Out there, you could see the jetties, the giant causeway. And they were wonderful, just wonderful people. We didn't realize at the time that the Portrush golf club was one of the very top level, and is today, golf courses in the world.

They were kind enough to give all of the officers special privileges. We could go over there and play golf. I played a round of golf and it was the only round of golf I've ever played in my life. But the course was just immaculate and challenging. Several families brought us into their homes and I have a couple or three pictures of five or six of us in the home of these people that would have us over for tea or a meal or whatever. They were very kind to us.

A: You mentioned that you made the crossing the week before Christmas. How long did the trip over take?

R: At least 3 weeks, I'm not sure about the dates, but it was a long trip.

A: I know you mentioned eating in the formal dining room and you went down to visit your men, but were there any other activities during the crossing?

R: To my memory, no. There was no talk about what you were supposed to do. I don't recall any formal meetings and we didn't have any training. One incident that sticks out in my mind, the whole ship including the crew and servers were East Indians. We would go out to the front part of the ship, the bow, and that's where these Indians would eat. Of course, several of them would gather around big pots and scoop out and eat with their hands. Then, they would unwind a couple of yards of their turban, clean themselves off, and wind it back up again. I don't know when they ever got washed.

A: How long did you spend at port in Liverpool before disembarking for Ireland?

R: It was more than one day – seems to me that we spent several days in Liverpool and then the decision was made to go over to Ireland. I believe we got there a little before Christmas. One amusing little story is that our regimental Chaplain of the 507th was a very nice man. He wanted to have a Christmas mass, which of course was very appropriate. The only place they found in Portrush that was large enough to accommodate a Christmas mass was so-called, "Orange Hall," which is Protestant. Immediately, the Irish people started taking sides and it made the papers down in Belfast.

One side said, "Aye, and you'd have to fumigate the place before you take them in." The other side said, "Nay, you'd have to fumigate it after." That was the big debate for a while. But the Chaplain did have a Christmas mass.

A: How long were you in Portrush?

R: Probably until March 1944, a good three or four months.

A: Was there an airfield nearby?

R: I don't believe that we did any jump training while over there. I don't recall seeing an airplane in Ireland.

A: I guess you did some physical training and training on a few missions during that time?

R: We should insert here, when I finished OCS as a second lieutenant, you know that Fort Benning is right next to the parachute school, and for a number of very good reasons, I applied to the parachute school. The Airborne is purely voluntary, and still is today. You are not assigned to the Airborne. I don't know if we were formerly asked or just knowing it was available, I applied for parachute school as did 20 some odd people. Not all of us were accepted. I thought that someone that graduated from OCS would have been automatically accepted. But for some reason, they accepted some of us and others wer turned down. One of my good friends that ran with me in preparation for paratrooper school, was not accepted into paratrooper school and we were both disappointed.

We went over to one month parachute school. The training was physically very, very trying. Everyone was worn to a frazzle to the extent of everyone's physical abilities. I remember we had one 43-year old major, a favorite of many of us, a wonderful guy, who was a candidate as we were in the parachute school. He barely made it. The rest of us were in a little better condition, I guess. But, it was very rigorous and very trying.

We had to make five parachute jumps to qualify. I had seen several airplanes before, but I had never been in an airplane until I went up for my first qualifying parachute jump. And I made five qualifying jumps from an airplane before I ever landed in an airplane. This is just a poor boy from Mississippi. It was with great pride when we got our wings pinned on. It was a proud moment.

A: Did you call your mother?

R: I don't believe you could make a call from there.

A: I know you mentioned earlier that your had talked with your mother when you first joined the Airborne…

R: Oh yes, she said, "Get out of that; get out of that right now." They'd court-martial me. Marion seemed to be ok with that and was proud of me for getting my wings. She backed all of that.

A: You were in Portrush during Christmas 1943. When did you find out that Marion was pregnant with Judy?

R: We came from Alliance, Nebraska, where the 507th was an isolated regiment. We went to New York to one of the bases there and had a couple of free days in New York City and Marion came down from Boston, right before we were to ship out. I believe that she became pregnant during that time in

New York. It wasn't long before she was able to let me know by letter that she was now pregnant and that things were going along alright. That was when we were in Portrush.

A: Do you still have that letter?

R: I don't believe we have any letters from Marion, though she has a lot of letters from me.

A: The reason I ask is that while I was in the Navy, I had asked my mom to keep all my letters, which she did. But because of the small space we had in our quarters on the ship, there wasn't enough room to keep the letters she and my dad wrote to me. I ended up throwing away all those letters. I would imagine you had the same type of problem.

After Portrush, where you had been for 3 months, where did you head to?

R: Some camp in England, but I can't tell you what it is. Some of my friends seem to have it imprinted on their brain. I can't remember, though. It was one of their holding camps and it was from there that we took off. We had additional training there, so we did several jumps. Now remember, I was in the Riggers Section and responsible for every chute. There were a number of training jumps during that time.

A: When you were in the Riggers Section, were you still jumping with the regiment?

R: Absolutely. We jumped our own chutes.

A: You did several jumps in England as part of training. I'm guessing that you were in Portrush until March 1944 and you were training in England until D-Day. What were the rumors, the talk at that time? You didn't know when D-Day was coming…

R: We knew that it was going to be some time. Nobody knew the exact time.

A: Did you know there was going to be an invasion of that size?

R: We knew that we were going to invade Europe somewhere. That was understood, that's why we were there. We knew that back in the states. I didn't know, nobody discussed it, as we were going across the ocean, whether we would dock somewhere, form up, or whether the boat we were on, the Strathnaver, would go onto the beach.

A: Even as an officer, you didn't know when the invasion was going to take place?

R: No, but the closer it came, the more meetings we had and finally just a few days or a week before D-Day, they closed the camps. No admission in or out. By that time, we knew that something was up.

A: Were you camped as an entire regiment at that time?

R: Yes.

A: Were you bivouacked or were your housed in barracks?

R: We were in tents.

A: You mentioned that you were having more and more meetings. Do you remember how often the meetings were or if they were morning or afternoon?

R: I don't remember that. I do remember that the closer it got, the more meetings there were. Somewhere along the line, they began to bring out maps for us to look over. I guess at some point, we learned that we were going to France and finally had to know that we were going to Normandy and about where we would drop.

A: What did you tell your men after these meetings?

R: The whole thing – they knew what I knew. Now, our particular mission was to have those chutes ready. If they didn't have those, they didn't go in.

A: You were packing both main chutes and reserve chutes at that time?

R: Yes.

A: I've seen, like you, the "Band of Brothers," and several other movies like that. One of the scenes prior the jump was the layout of all of this equipment, which I believe was 80 – 100 pounds of gear. During your training in England, were you training with that type of gear, that much weight?

R: Oh yea, we carried the same gear as any other soldier in the 507th carried. Interestingly, our men carried the M-1 rifle. Officers carried the carbine, .30 caliber. General Gavin carried an M-1 rifle. As soon as I got with him, I started carrying an M-1.

A: Did you carry a pistol?

R: Yes, I carried a .45 caliber automatic. I also carried a knife – the same stuff that any other infantry soldier would carry. It was about 100 pounds.

A: When you were in England during that three to four month time span, do you remember how often you'd write Marion?

R: Frequently.

A: You'd also right your parents?

R: Occasionally. My mother, from the day I left home, complained that I didn't write enough, as most mothers did.

A: Did they send you any packages?

R: Sure; I can't remember what, but mostly goodies, including candy and baked goods.

A: I think I remember my dad telling me one time he received a package from his mother and she had figured out how to vacuum seal fried chicken and he'd gotten a tin of it.

We're just at the point of where you took off for D-Day. Several days before you mentioned they closed the camp and there were more meetings and finally they closed the camp. When did you find out the actual day of the invasion? Did you know beforehand or find out that day?

R: You know that we were originally scheduled for the 5th and got into the planes – we were loaded into the planes. The weather was bad and got worse. After many hours, the decision was made "not today" and we deplaned and went back to our tents. And we did the same thing on the 6th. It seems to me that we were in the planes for many hours before we took off for Normandy on the 6th.

A: On the 5th when you loaded, were the planes engines running or did men just load up?

R: They were just sitting there.

A: On the 5th, you get the word, "It's a go." Everyone is going and loading in the planes, and all the adrenaline running and all of the camaraderie – we're ready to go to kick some butt. What was the feeling like when you were told to unload?

R: Oh, disappointment. Oh yea.

A: It wasn't a sense of relief?

R: Oh, I don't believe that at all. There may have been an occasional soldier, but everybody is all keyed up. This was what we trained for, this was why we were Airborne. This was our big moment. I can't remember anybody that was disappointed or terrorized. A lot of the guys went to sleep in the plane. I can't remember if they let anybody smoke in the planes, because of the gas.

It may not have been at that time, but I remember an earlier training jump, one of my guys said to his sergeant as we were in the air or sitting waiting, "Sergeant, I gotta take a crap." The sergeant said, "Go ahead." The soldier said, "Where's the head?" The sergeant replied, "We don't have any heads in here. Crap in your helmet." I can't remember what he did.

A: Was it always planned that it would be a night jump?

R: I have no knowledge of that.

A: But, the day of, you knew you would be making a night jump?

R: I guess so.

A: I think that's about it for now.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
September 15, 2010

A: As we've been conducting these interviews, we started with an overview, then back to your early childhood and working forward. The last interview, we got up to the training in the United Kingdom and got to the point of D-Day. First of all, is there anything up to that point that you may have thought of that you want to share anything related to some of the previous interviews.

R: First thought is that we'd been in Ireland for four months, because there wasn't room for us in England because it was loaded down with American soldiers. We were transferred then into England, the whole 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment and obviously we were going to do things. The closer we got to – and we still didn't know the date or where – finally, they clamped down all of the areas. Nobody in or out, and we couldn't talk to anybody anyway.

Then we started having some orientation sessions without naming the designation until the night before.

A: But, you knew you were going to invade?

R: We knew we were going to invade someplace in Europe.

A: You didn't even know it was going to be in France?

R: We didn't know. We assumed it was France, it was a logical place. Then we were briefed about the peninsula, the Cotentin peninsula and what our drop zones would be.

A: What exactly is a "drop zone?"

R: It's the designated area on the ground on which the paratroopers would land.

A: Is it broken out by regiment, by company, by stick or by aircraft?

R: Probably by regiment. Our designated drop zone was west of the Merderet River. However, a lot of our people did drop in the correct drop zone, and were either drowned or found themselves in a lot of water. Apparently the air photographs that had been made – there was a lot of grass growing up through the water and they did not interpret it as being flooded. A lot of our people drowned.

A: Do you have any idea how many? Dozens, hundreds?

R: No, those figures are out there. I have no way of really knowing, but I would say many dozens. You know there's a picture in my office of a paratrooper standing waist deep in water. A lot of people died. I think possibly General Gavin himself was wading in water because there's someplace where it's documented where his other aide-de-camp – I hadn't been with him at that time – waded through water, up to his waist, up to the railroad track to get a reading on whether they were on the west side or the east side of the railroad track.

A: When you went from Ireland to England, do you remember what month that was? You said you were about four months in Ireland and you mentioned that you spent Christmas in Ireland.

R: We got into Ireland just before Christmas, and we spent Christmas in Ireland in 1943. D-Day was June 6, 1944. We must have gotten to England in April 1944, maybe early May.

A: When you were England, you continued training?

R: And jumping. Since I had the Riggers Section, I packed an awful lot of chutes.

A: Did you remember how many practice jumps you did in England?

R: No, but I made a lot. Because I kept my riggers jumping, they were packing chutes.

A: In the movie, Band of Brothers, there's a scene in there where they are still doing practice jumps and they are flying in these conditions where they are blacked out, so the paratroopers don't know where they are going, but they are estimating where they are flying or where the jump/invasion is going to be. When you were doing the practice missions in England, did you fly specifically to places for jumping or was it always the same?

R:	No. There was no talk of where at that time.

A:	I'm guessing that most of those were daytime jumps, but did you have any nighttime jumps?

R:	They were daytime jumps. I don't recall any nighttime jumps over there. Maybe because it would have been an unnecessarily expenditure of men and planes and parachutes.

A:	You said in Ireland, you didn't do any jumps.

R:	I don't remember doing any jumps in Ireland, because we didn't have any troop carriers over there.

A:	So you went probably four to five months from the time you left the states to the time you arrived in England without any practice jumps?

R:	So far as I can remember. That's a qualification, but I'm pretty sure. I can't envision any jump fields or bases there.

A:	When you were doing your practice jumps in England, and I'm focusing on that because I want to understand the build-up. When you did those practice jumps, did you jump as a regiment or as a battalion? How many planes were typically involved and how many men would typically jump on a mission?

R:	I don't know and I wouldn't even attempt to guess. But my impression is that we used up an awful lot of chutes, we were busy.

A:	You would repack the same chutes, if it was packable?

R:	Yes, the chutes were brought back and inspected. We had sewing machines and we were prepared to patch small repairs. I have a mental picture – I was assigned to Riggers School, I think just picked blindly, having just graduated from jump school. I had no choice about it. But, part of that was learning to use sewing machines.

They had these big sewing machines with a big foot pedal. These were electric machines, but were guided by a pedal. I still have a picture of more than once, some big, hefty, muscular paratrooper sitting there with his big heavy boots trying to make this thing stop and go. All of a sudden he'd hit it and it would go and about eight yards of silk would fly through it and he'd turn the air blue, and start all over again. We were trying to teach these guys how to use sewing machines, but that was part of it. I kept reminding the men that for every chute you packed, somebody's life depended on it.

A:	Let's talk a little more about the Riggers Section and the duties you had there. Do you recall having spare parachutes?

R:	Yes, the main chute was, I believe 28 feet in diameter. The emergency chute was carried on the front in a much smaller package, and that was either 16 or 18 feet. No, the main chute was 26 feet and 18 feet for the reserve. While the main chute had a static line on it that pulled the parachute out when the paratrooper left the plane. The emergency chute had a rip cord where you'd very quickly pull it out.

Every now and then, somebody's chute wouldn't open for one reason or another and they'd come down on the reserve.

There was another lieutenant and we had a few drinks one night and started telling each other how brave we were. We dared each other that on the training jump the next day, that each of us at the last minute would unhook the static line and go out on our reserve. I'm not sure whether that really happened and we did jump our reserves, or whether at the last minute for one reason or another we didn't carry out our intentions.

A:	That probably taught you not to drink before a training jump.

R:	He was from a very prominent Philadelphia family, but I can't remember his name.

A: Now, back in my days of skydiving, we carried a main chute and a reserve chute and we were told if we had a line tangle or a Mae West, that you had emergency releases for your main chute. You were supposed to drop that first then deploy your reserve chute.

R: I don't recall anything like that.

A: You mentioned that you never had to use your reserve chute, but do you recall seeing others use theirs?

R: Occasionally, yes.

A: In my days of jumping, if you did have to use your reserve chute, you'd show up the next day with a bottle of fine scotch or whiskey for the rigger who packed your reserve chute.

R: I never heard that, but it's a good idea.

A: Getting back to the Riggers Section, I have seen pictures of these long, long narrow tables that were used to pack chutes and I would imagine there was a certain packing sequence. How many of those tables did you have in the Riggers Section?

R: Several to a lot.

A: Do you remember how long it would normally take to repack a chute?

R: No, I don't. Some men were more deft than others. But, it was their job and we were proud of our section. They did a fine job.

A: Do you remember how many men were in the Riggers Section? I'm thinking of the picture in the book, but somewhere about 50 or 60.

R: It might have been that big, but it seems to me to be a lot.

A: There were two officers?

R: There were two officers and a Warrant Officer. When I got there as a second lieutenant, there was a first lieutenant named Smith from Tennessee. Great big hunk of a guy – he was one of the first so-called body builders that I knew of. He had muscles on his muscles. A rather nice guy. For some reason, we never really hit it off. We functioned well together as officers.

As a matter of fact, when the regiment was in Alliance, Nebraska, the Smiths and us (Marion and I), shared an apartment. But for some strange reason, we never ate with them. I guess we didn't like the same kind of food or something, but Marion and I made some arrangement for a semi table so we ate in the bathroom. But, we were civil to each other and pleasant and there were no unpleasantries anywhere. But, he did not jump into Normandy. They had to have somebody back in England, still packing chutes for the next mission whatever it was.

A: When you were in England and doing the practice jumps, do you remember from what altitude you jumped?

R: There was a figure and I'm not sure what it was that determined the lowest practice jump you should make. Whether it was a couple of hundred feet or more.

A: For some reason, 300 feet sticks in my mind as being the lowest.

R: That sounds about right.

A: And, 800 to 1,000 feet would be the norm.

R: Yes. Now, in Normandy there were a lot lower number of jumps than that. My chute opened and immediately I landed in my tree. The practice jumps were never that low.

A: I would imagine the practice jumps were also done when the weather was decent.

R: Sure.

A: In the various planes – the Army never really does anything that is disorganized, at least not on purpose – I'm guessing there's some organization as to who was put into what plane and why. In other words, it was designated for some reason. I'm guessing there were people in the same unit put together, but a company would have more than a hundred people in it, so that would take up several planes. But, do you remember why for instance, your particular stick, was there any particular designation as to why they were in that plane with you?

R: There must have been because you'll notice that for every stick, there were not all Riggers, not all Service Company, there were medics, maybe some demolition people. I don't think there was any stick that was pure Service Company or Riggers, there was a mixture. Somebody determined that and it was above and beyond me.

A: Was it always the same people, the same group?

R: In the practice jumps in England, we always jumped as a unit, as the Service Company.

A: But, not on the actual invasion. That was organized seating.

R: Yes.

A: On a typical practice jump, even if there's no such thing, walk me through when you know that you're going to go on a practice mission, what do you do to get ready for that, both physically and mentally?

R: Physically, all paratroopers were in excellent shape. We ran typically every morning in some kind of loose formation – miles. We had calisthenics, so that we were in very good shape. That was part of the physical getting ready.

All paratroopers liked to jump – that's why we got into it. Nobody thought, "Gee, we gotta make another jump." They were eager to jump and were looking to add up their numbers. They were proud of the number of jumps that they made. So there was no question of anybody getting an assignment they didn't like – they loved to jump.

On practice jumps, we carried very little equipment, which I thought, if not at the time, then later, that we should have had more jumps with heavy equipment. As you know, we were edging towards a hundred pounds of equipment for the actual invasion, but never on a practice jump did we take much equipment with us.

A: Do you know why?

R: Maybe nobody thought of it.

A: I'm sitting here going through my mind that if they put that much equipment that would almost double the weight, that the aerodynamics of the jump – you'd certainly drop a lot quicker and you might injure a lot more people. So maybe they kind of knew that , but they didn't want to take that chance. I understand what you're saying is that you don't know what it's like until you did it.

R: You made a statement that "you'd drop a lot quicker." Is it true that the more the weight, the faster you'd drop?

A: I think so, yes, to a certain extent.

R: Will five pounds drop faster than ten pounds?

A: I would think the ten pounds would drop faster than the five pounds.

R: You might want to look into that.

A: I know there was an experiment on the moon about that same question, now that I think about it. I know that a heavier person is going to hit the ground harder than a lighter person.

R: Yes indeed, there’s no question about that. I don’t know how well it was documented, but a lot of paratroopers got injured on the drop because of a lot of heavy equipment that they couldn’t manage, couldn’t roll over easily as you would when you take a left front tumble ordinarily. But, loaded down with equipment, you just went splot.

A: So, we’re getting ready for this practice jump, putting the equipment on. I imagine that you have your standard uniform on, your reserve chute. What do you do then? Do you do that next to the airplane, or do you put all that stuff on in a gathering or assembly area?

R: You were assembled in sections or platoons or those assigned to each plane. All of the equipment you were going to jump with was next to you. As I said, I can’t imagine any practice jump having much equipment. I just don’t believe we did.

We inspected each other, making sure the chute was on right, everything looking good, everything buckled up and ready to go.

A: Was that before you got into the plane?

R: Yes, before we got into the plane. And then we sat in the planes – the seats were on each side of the plane facing to the center of the plane, not lined up like airplanes today.

A: There were 18 men in a stick?

R: Yes, 18 men to a stick.

A: Does that include you?

R: Yes, included everybody that was going to jump.

A: And then there’s the pilot and co-pilot? There’s 20 people in the plane.

R:	Yes. There also was a jumpmaster who was at the door and it was his job to see that everybody got out. If a trooper hesitated, he got a big boot behind him.

A:	The jumpmaster doesn’t jump?

R:	No, he doesn’t jump. But he’s also wearing a parachute, in case the boot sticks.

A:	The men are assembled and put the equipment on, and climb in. Do they have assigned seats?

R:	Yes, so they know where they’re going to be before they get in. They are lined up in order.

A:	Is there any logic as to who sits where? Size or experience of the person?

R:	I don’t think so.

A:	So, you being the platoon leader or stick leader would be sitting up front?

R:	No, sitting down near the door, because he leads the men out.

A:	You’re the first guy out?

R:	Yea.

A:	Oh, I thought you were the last guy out?

R:	Well I was on the D-Day jump. Captain Rosekratz was behind me on the invasion and he got seriously banged up; broke a leg or something.

A:	Everybody’s in the plane, facing each other. Do you remember if at that time the engines were turning or they waited until everybody got in?

R: No, they waited until everybody got in. You wouldn't want those big propellers turning on the C-47 with people all around on the ground.

A: On a typical practice jump, understanding there is no such thing, how long would you be in the plane before you started rolling?

R: That depended on several things: the readiness of the other planes, the weather, how efficiently things had been put together. Somebody determined when we would start rolling.

A: Do you remember if it was minutes, or hours, or you had to wait a long time?

R: Sometimes it was a short time, sometimes a long time. One time we flew from Alliance, Nebraska way down to Kansas and made a jump. It was a practice jump and I think it had been tied in with something, and our segment was captained by Captain Schwartzwalder, who turned out to be a famous football coach at, I believe, Ohio State later on. Nice guy.

Well, we weren't supposed to drop when the wind was blowing more than 20 miles an hour. It was a little more and Schwartzwalder said – he was a captain then and later became a major – "Look, we've got a lot of weather out there. But, we've come this far, we might as well jump." And let me tell you, they dropped paratroopers all over the place. I was typical I guess. My chute was open and it was dragging me across the prairie. To gather in the chute with any wind behind you, you gather the risers on the bottom and pull it in to you so that the chute gradually deflates. Well, I'd get mine going and along come a gust and I'd be on my knees and ankles and it would slap me right down in the dirt again and I went bouncing along. I thought I'd be doing that until I got to the Mississippi River.

Some people got hurt, sprained ankles and the like, but nothing serious. Schwartzwalder got a dressing down, but he got promoted later. He was a good guy – a great soldier.

A: When you are in a plane, I guess it's pretty loud with the door open and the engines running. Could the men in the plane talk and hear each other?

R: Yes, they could carry on a conversation with the guy next to them.

A: Were they allowed to smoke?

R: Not once the plane started. I heard the story, one guy said, “Sergeant, I gotta take a shit.” He said, ”You can’t do it now.” “But, I gotta go.” “Well, go in your helmet.” I don’t know if he did or not, but those were his instructions.

A: Typically, there are one or two runways and there’s got to be dozens of aircraft ready to take off and they take off in a certain sequence. Then they circle until all the planes get up and they get into formation and head off to the mission. Is that how it works?

R: That sounds logical. I was never involved in making those decisions. I guess we got into formation like that, but I’m not sure.

A: When you’re close to your destination, I’ve seen movies with the red light and green light at the jump door. I’m guessing when the red light comes on, then you’re close to your destination, so people start getting ready. If I remember right, at that time, there is this long line down the middle of the plane and they men hook up the static line at that point. I think I remember where you do another equipment check to the guy right in front of you?

R: That’s exactly right.

A: So then they’re all ready to go and you’re at the head of the line, so you are already hooked up, too. When the light turns green, I’m guessing the jumpmaster starts the sequence and you’ve got 18 men to get out the door.

R: Yes, they go out just as fast as they can.

A: You don’t even stand at the door, you just keep walking and jump out. Tell me what you think, if you can remember, when you’re going and you know you’ve got to go and you’ve done the practice jumps before. Is there any hesitation?

R: No, I never hesitated. I don't recall any feeling of fear or trepidation or hesitation. You'd think that throwing a body out to empty air was unnatural. It never bothered me.

A: What about the excitement?

R: Yes, I was excited, oh yea. I'd made 43 jumps. It got to be routine for me.

A: Do you ever recall anybody ever hesitating?

R: I'm sure people hesitated from time to time, but that's what the jumpmaster was there for. He'd put that big boot in their bottom and they had to go.

A: If I remember from my jump days, you've got about a 20-25 foot static line. You jump out and you really only have a fraction of a second after you jump before you really feel anything and you have that jerkiness. The static line opens up the pack which pulls out a drag chute that pulls out the main chute. Then, it's so quick and hopefully you're in the right position and when the chute opens, you swing into the point where it's a smooth transition as opposed to a total jerk. Do you remember any of that?

R: I don't remember a drag chute. It may have been there, but I don't remember it. There was a distinct jerk when that chute opened; it wasn't just a smooth deceleration. It jerked you pretty good.

A: You had straps around your shoulders and around your inner thighs?

R: Yes.

A: If I remember right, there was a thick padding that went around your butt, almost like a seat.

R: We didn't have that.

A: So, you had that jerkiness with those thick straps cutting into your shoulders and thighs and groin area? And hopefully, you put it on right, so when you hit that chute …

R: Yes, you've got those pieces of anatomy you've got to protect.

A: Do you remember any of the jumps when you got to the point where you knew everything was right, the chute was open and you were in the right position. You had, depending on how much time you had, several seconds or a minute or so of floating down?

R: Oh yes, that was wonderful. Here you were, hanging in the air, ideally the chute was swinging slowly – you couldn't control these chutes at that time, but later on you could drive them like a sports car.

A: You couldn't turn them?

R: No, and you couldn't slow the descent.

A: What did that feel like?

R: I enjoyed it, it was great floating around.

A: You're above the earth …

R: You're above the earth, maybe a gentle breeze. Yes, it was exhilarating.

A: I'm guessing that after several jumps, you learned to anticipate the landing, when you're floating down. The earth is coming up to meet you, you see what's below you and you can probably give a good estimate of about where you're going to land. Other than D-Day did you ever land in a tree?

R: No.

A: The Denver jump, which was on a runway. Other than that, pretty much everything was in a grassy area?

R:	Grassy, or dirt or sometimes dusty. You couldn't control those chutes. However, if you timed it just right, you could reach up and pull on those risers and at the exact millisecond you gave a tremendous jerk down, you could land gently on the balls of your feet and make a standing landing. That was the Cadillac landing.

A:	And you were able to do that?

R:	Sometimes.

A:	You're not really doing anything to the chute. You're just bringing yourself up?

R:	Yes, breaking the fall by bringing yourself up. If you did it just right, it worked. It was exhilarating. I enjoyed jumping and jumped every chance I had.

A:	I remember two of the jumps I did – my first one, which everything was fine, but I hit kind of hard. They didn't realize how much I weighed and they should've given me a much larger chute. There was another one, which I called a perfect jump. I actually started singing, such a great feeling. Being able to see everything on such a beautiful day. That was a long time ago.

Once you've landed what do you do then?

R:	Roll up your chute.

A:	What do you mean by that?

R:	You'd gather it up, if you could stretch it out and roll it up, you'd carry it under your arm. Those chutes were expensive and we tried to salvage what we could.

A:	I remember, and I don't know if it's something I did or if it was a movie I'd seen, but the gathering of the chute would be that you'd have the risers and chute out in front of you and you'd bring your arms back and forth in a figure eight movement, and gather your chute that way. But that's how you did it?

R: No, that must have been some refinement. Nothing like that.

A: You had the quick releases? Did you undo that before you started rolling up the chute?

R: I'm sure we did.

A: So, you just rolled it up in a ball. And being a rigger, I'm thinking that you probably tried to watch out and do it properly so it's easy to undo.

R: Yes.

A: You didn't have anything to put it in or stuff it in, so you just carried it?

R: That's right.

A: You jumped as well as everyone else. But in the Riggers Section, you and others had to pack everybody's chute again ready for the next jump.

R: Remember, every packed chute came with a money back guarantee. "If it didn't open, bring it back and we'd give you a new one." Some soldiers thought that was funny and some didn't think it was funny at all. It was an iron-clad guarantee.

I still remember when we were out in Alliance, Nebraska. A fighter plane came over and buzzed the field a couple of times and came screaming into a landing. He got out of his plane and had his parachute on him – they sat on it, as you know. He wanted to know where the Riggers Section was and they told him. He came over to me and said, "Lieutenant, this is my guarantee, this is my parachute and it needs repacking and I want you to repack it while I go do my business here."

I said, "OK." I opened the chute, it looked like it just came from the company and all the strings were tied and it had never been packed. I never told the poor son of a bitch about it. He could have pulled on with all his might and it wouldn't have opened.

A: Do you remember what company made the parachutes for the 82nd?

R: I don't recall.

A: Was it one company?

R: I think so.

A: Well, we've talked a lot, but we still haven't gotten to the D-Day jump. I hope you don't mind, but the details are important to me. Trying to understand the build up. As I mentioned before, it's one thing to go through all this training, which is good. But when you actually get into combat and battle and the invasion and in the war, all this training hopefully paid off. I'm trying to understand a lot of the details that built up to that.

Up until the D-Day jump, were there any jumps that stood out more than others? We talked about the Denver jump, we talked about the Alliance to Kansas jump. Anything while you were over in England?

R: Not that I recall. The fields were very nice to land on, very tidy and cultivated. There was no strange country over there. Did you know that Marion and I hiked across England and we saw everything? The western part was mountainous, but then it flattened out.

A: Did you visit any place where you had been stationed?

R: No.

A: But that wasn't the intent of the trip?

R: No, the intent was to walk across England. It seems to me that we were in a little town called Melton Mowbray. It was at or near that place.

A: When you were England, were you in barracks or were you bivouacked?

R: I believe we were in tents. They didn't have buildings to accommodate this vast army. When I came back afterwards and was in charge of the physical activities of the jump school, I had a room in a barracks with a private bathroom. It was a very nice setup, but not before the invasion.

A: When you were in England before the invasion, were you able to get out into the local towns?

R: Yes.

A: How did you find the English people.

R: Nice, they truly were.

A: Were they glad you were there?

R: They were very civil and as most English people are. They treated us well. And we'd get around to some of the local pubs, talk with them, and play darts, which is the game of course. Our contact with them was very cordial – they knew we were there for a purpose.

I'm sure there was some resentment. Here comes an army over there to take over their country. But, the relations were good. I liked the British people.

A: Anybody you met there before the invasion?

R: In Ireland, yes, but not in England.

A: When you were in England, when you weren't doing a practice jump, what would be your normal routine? I'm guessing you'd have physical training …

R: We'd do the physical training and run a few miles and it was back to work. We didn't have any days off.

A: You’re work would be packing the parachutes?

R: Repairing, inspecting, packing, yes. And, of course, all the practice jumps. And I could get into that as much as I wanted and I wanted a lot. Selecting your good days when the weather was good, it was great fun.

A: How was the food when you were in camp?

R: Not very good. They gave us a lot of mutton, which is old lamb. The old sheep were smelly.

A: You had your own kitchens, though?

R: Yes, the regiment had kitchens. But the food wasn’t good. Brussel sprouts, too. I have no good memories of food, then and there.

A: You had three squares a day?

R: Yes. The guys would crave for sweets and go down to the PX where they sold candies. They’d eat enormous quantities.

A: During this time in England, how often did you and Marion correspond.

R: Frequently, she has many of our letters.

A: You would write at least once a week?

R: More than that. And, shortly after I left the U.S., she learned she was pregnant. I think she got pregnant in New York, our last night before I left. A lot of the correspondence was about that. She was there with her family, safe, loved, and cared for in Waltham, Massachusetts.

A: Were you able to talk with her on the phone?

R: No, I don’t think I ever sent a telegram either. I don’t think it would have been possible to talk to her on the phone.

A: Things have certainly changed. When I was in Guam in my Navy days in the early 70s, I think I talked with my folks twice in a year and a half. You’d have to put a call into the overseas operator and wait a while.

R: It was by letter and that was pretty satisfactory.

A: When you were in England, did you have a best friend, somebody you’d spend more time with.

R: No, not outside our soldier buddies. But in the paratroopers, Sergeant Haley a big, beefy guy. He had been a member of the original test platoon. He and I talked a lot. He was old, regular army and always had good advice, a down to earth guy.

He was the one in Ireland – I was duty officer one night and he came in just before the last call, just in time to make it and was pretty drunk. He smelled of everything. He said with a slur, “Lieutenant, let me give you one piece of advice: after the third time standing up, it just ain’t worth it.”

There was this fable going around that if a girl did it standing up, she wouldn’t get pregnant. At least that’s what the soldiers told them.

A: I think we ought to end on that note.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
October 6, 2010

A: The last time we talked, we got all the way up to D-Day. I'm sure there will be other questions as I transcribe. I've been trying to read up a little more on the 82nd Division on D-Day. I'd like to start with the day before D-Day. I know that's when everybody thought they were going to do, but because of weather, it got delayed for a day.

You're in England and I believe you had told me at one time that you knew the invasion was coming because there was a lot more activity, a lot more officers in and out, they cut down on passes and totally stopped them. But, you still didn't know where you were going to jump, but knew there was going to be an invasion, most likely somewhere in France.

Tell me when was the first time you heard that this is it – we're going.

R: It was the day before, on the 4th, because we were originally going to jump in on the 5th of June, 1944 and we jumped on June 6. It was on June 4 that we were told we were going to jump in on Normandy.

A: How did you get word?

R: I believe it was by unit and I don't envision a big, mass auditorium. It was more smaller units. In other words, I think the officers from platoons and companies would meet and be briefed and then we would brief the men, first through the non-coms, then to the soldiers themselves. Eventually everybody knew that we were going to go to some designated place in Normandy, which meant very little to any of us. I knew where Normandy was when it was pointed out on the map, but I knew nothing beyond that.

A: There was no intelligence as to what to expect, where to land, or what the landscape was like?

R: The landscape was supposed to be grassy, sort of meadow-like, where we were to land. Somewhere between the west and east coast of the peninsula and that the people coming in by sea would come in principally from the east. We were to fly out until we reached the Channel Islands, off the northwestern tip of the peninsula, generally heading south from England and when we got over the Channel Islands, make a left hand turn and head due east.

I don't know much more than that. Naming this place and looking at maps, it didn't make a great impression on me.

A: You were in the Riggers Section, part of the Service Company?

R: Yes, but we were fully armed. We were essentially combat soldiers. We didn't go in there to do any Riggers stuff the first day. Although, I think there was some plan that if things went very well, we were to go in and scavenge the chutes and pick up what we could. But, that didn't get very far.

A: Were you the CO of the Riggers Section?

R: No, I believe it was Lt. Smith; he had been a lieutenant a little longer than I was. He was in charge of the Riggers Section. There was Smith, myself, a warrant officer, and Master Sergeant Haley. Sergeant Haley was part of the original test platoon. That is, the small group of soldiers that went out originally and tested chutes. He was regular army.

A: So, the day before when you first got the word, it would have been you and Lt. Smith?

R: I believe it was Captain Rae, who commanded the Service Company. The Riggers Section was part of the Service Company. It would have been Captain Rae.

A: So, Captain Rae would have been the first to get the word and bring it back to the rest of the company?

R: Yes.

A: Did you know the part that the 82nd and the 101st would play in the invasion, that you would be going in first and help clear the way for the invasion fleet?

R: Yes, we knew that at the time. They didn't come in from the ocean, they came in across the English channel. We came down from above north of London, over the Channel Islands, which incidentally remained in German hands through the end of the war, if I'm not mistaken.

A: Your unit gets word that you're going to load the planes and jump into Europe. I know the actual loading on June 5 was about 10:30 at night. Do you remember if it was the same time on June 4? You would be loading the planes late afternoon, early evening?

R: I think we would have been loading probably early evening.

A: The 82nd Airborne had something like 8,000 men? You put 18 men into a plane, so you have to have a lot of planes. I think I read somewhere there were several different airstrips used. When it came time to gather your equipment and get everything together, you were loaded onto trucks and taken out to the airplanes?

R: Yes, I believe that was true.

A: Do you remember if you gathered in the trucks in your sticks?

R: I don't know. You know we have the book that tells us which soldiers were in which airplanes.

A: When everybody finally got the word on the 4th, what was the mood like among the men.

R: Without being specific, I recall that we had spent so much time looking forward to this, that we knew that this was what we were destined to do and it was our job. It was with great relieve that we finally got loaded on these planes and got ready to go. I don't recall anybody getting scared or looking frightened. This was it; this was what we'd been looking for for weeks and months. And it finally was going to happen. I was excited.

A: On the 4th, when you were called, did you actually load into the airplanes?

R: I don't recall, but we must have. But, they called it off. It was great disappointment, everybody muttering and cursing. "We gotta do this all over again." It was pretty bad.

Somewhere along the line, I need to point out that the 504th Regiment was part of the 82nd, and they had been fighting in Italy and they had just recently been brought back to England. They were all torn up and they needed to refurbish, pull in some more men, so they were designated as the reserve regiment. I think I told you before that my dear friend Magellas and his buddy, Rivers, did their best to get in on the jump to Normandy, and they were really sore about it.

They couldn't get in a regular jump and they wouldn't transfer them. Then they got the idea that they'd join the Pathfinders group, which went in first. They thought they had it made. The brass told them to go back and sit down, so they didn't get to make the D-Day jump. As a matter of fact, the great Magellas, the most decorated officer in the 82nd, made only one combat jump, and that was into Holland.

A: You mentioned Pathfinders. I know a little bit about that, but were they part of the 82nd or from a different unit? Were they volunteers?

R: I doubt that they were volunteers, but they were selected and carried special equipment to jump out ahead of time and mark the drop zone spots. I think they had lights setup and those were the ones that the planes were to focus on. My impression is that that system didn't work terribly well. The Pathfinders were dropped in places they weren't supposed to be and the places they were supposed to be, they didn't drop on. It was sort of a non successful maneuver.

A: I think they basically had the same problem that you did. The enemy was shooting at them and the weather didn't cooperate and they were scattered about.

So you loaded on the planes, the invasion got called off, and everyone went back to their units. Do you remember if you were able to sleep that night?

R: I suspect that I slept alright. The vast majority of soldiers, me included, had the same mindset. This is what we're here for, this is what we're supposed to do. It didn't work the first time, but we've got another go at it.

A: So you loaded up the second day, pretty much following the same protocol. Do you remember loading up in the day or night?

R: It seems to me we loaded up in the daylight. We had enough light to see to get in.

A: But, you may have had to wait in the plane for a while?

R: Yes, hours and hours.

A: Not only on the ground, but when you took off, I would imagine that in order to get into formation with so many airplanes, they would have to circle until everybody took off.

R: Yes, I believe that's true.

A: When you were in the plane on the actual invasion, you were seated at the front or the rear? Were you in charge of your stick?

R: Actually, I wasn't. I thought I was and at the door, which would have been toward the tail of the C-47. But as shown in the book, I was near the end of the stick, at the front of the aircraft.

A: From the list in the book, it looks like Captain Rae was number one and there were 19 in your stick. You were number 18, the one behind you would be Captain Rosenbloom.

R: Rosenbloom, he didn't command the Company. Bob Rae commanded the Service Company, but I don't know what Rosenbloom did in the company. It might be in the yearbook.

We got over the Channel Islands and we were getting a lot of anti-aircraft fire from the Channel Islands. That was the first time we were fired upon. I don't recall that we had been warned about that. There was plenty of stuff coming up and my plane got hit. It was obvious that we were losing formation. Since I was up near the pilot, I clearly recall communicating with him. Where Rosenbloom was, I don't know. Actually, when Rosenbloom jumped, I believe he broke both legs and had to be evacuated immediately.

But, the pilot said, "Lieutenant, the plane has been hit, it's not responding well, I've lost formation, and I don't know where I am. We're going to be over the Channel in a few minutes. If you're going to get out, you'd better get out now." That's when I gave the message, "Let's go." So, we went.

Everybody that I've ever talked with that was there said it was the lowest drop we'd ever made. Some people think as low as 300 feet, some of us a little lower. I didn't get hit or anything, but my parachute opened immediately and almost immediately I was in an apple tree.

A: Do you remember how high off the ground you were when you landed? An apple tree is not a big tall tree.

R: It wasn't very high. Just a few feet. It was very easy to scramble down.

A: It was at night, about one in the morning, pitch black?

R: It was about 1:30 in the morning and actually, it was not pitch black. The moon had come out and there were shadows with the moonlight. I could hear some small arms fire off in the distance. There was a continual barrage of Naval artillery and you could hear them whistling overhead. Later on as we moved out, we came across enormous craters that you could put a house in that I guess the Navy had created. There had also been some bombing in that area behind the lines. But I landed and didn't hear anything right where I was. I got my equipment all sorted out and got rid of my chute.

A: The equipment that you jumped with: you've got the main chute, the reserve chute, and your field pack and all of your weapons. Did you have the leg bag that they show in the Band of Brothers. The bag that was strapped to your leg?

R: There was something strapped someplace. We had a big knife strapped to our leg and equipment all over. It was estimated about a hundred pounds.

A: When you landed, you had all of that? You didn't lose any of it?

R: No, didn't lose any of it. That apple tree was an ideal place to land in. It softened my landing.

A: When you jumped, you said the time the chute opened and the time you landed in the apple tree was a few seconds. So I guess you didn't see or notice anybody else around you.

R: Not at that time.

A: Do you remember being able to see anything on the ground?

R: No.

A: So you had no clue when you jumped when you would land and no anticipation?

R: No. That chute opened and as I recall, almost immediately I was in that apple tree.

A: Were you given instructions as to where your unit would muster after you landed?

R: I'm sure we did.

A: You knew what the objective was, but just for the immediate, once you landed how do you find other people in your unit?

R: I got myself assembled. By the way, officers carried a carbine. Later on, when I got with General Gavin, he carried an M-1 rifle, so I carried an M-1 rifle. I was much more comfortable with that. But for the jump I had a carbine and a pistol. All officers carried a pistol.

I have a pretty distinct memory of the moonlight and I was in the shadows and I came around a clump of trees and was challenged by my platoon sergeant, Sergeant Hobeck. We had a challenge and a countersign. It startled me so, I didn't expect to see anyone there. I couldn't say anything. He challenged me again and said, “You son of a bitch, if you don’t answer I’m going to shoot you.” Then I managed to get the words out, “Hobeck, don’t shoot me, it’s Lieutenant Broadaway.”

I still to this day, don’t remember the challenge or the countersign. And, he had a clicker and I lost my clicker. I was lucky to be alive. It’s a good thing he recognized my voice.

We ran up on several other soldiers, I don’t remember specifically, but I’m sure some from all over. We were scattered all over. Had we landed in the area where we were supposed to be, that is west of the Merderet River, we probably would have drowned; a lot of soldiers did. That area was a grassy area, but the Germans shortly before D-Day had flooded that area. The people who read the photographs didn’t interpret it as water – they interpreted it as grass. General Gavin landed in water. I would have landed in water. A lot of people went in over their heads and had too much equipment. So, I didn’t land where I was supposed to and that might have saved my life.

As I recall, we kept running into fellow soldiers, some I knew and some I didn’t. As we got closer to daylight, we were with some members of the 101st. We were with them for a couple of days. I don’t recall that we did much fighting, because we landed just inland from Utah Beach, not the bloody Omaha Beach.

I would think that we were in the area around Ravensville, France. I will never know for sure. Shortly after daylight, I don’t know who I was with. Here was a person coming up from the beach along the road in uniform, an American uniform. I asked him where he was coming from, he replied from the beach. That was my first encounter on June 6, just after daylight.

A: The mission of the 82nd on D-Day was to capture and hold bridges, so that the incoming invasion would have places they could cross the rivers. I know St. Mere Eglise was in that area. When you first landed, do you remember your specific mission?

R: The only thing I recall was our mission was to take St. Mere Eglise.

A: So that’s where everybody would head to?

R: Yes.

I don't have a lot of memories about what we did. I don't recall any serious fighting. I took a couple of pot shots at some Germans. I ran on a German soldier and I don't recall having anybody else with me. It was a farmhouse and as I approached, he stepped out from being the barn. Obviously German, but he didn't have his helmet on; he had golden hair. He had a rifle with him. We brought up our rifles at the same time and I got in the first shot and killed him. That was my first kill in World War II.

A: Do you remember aiming or just bringing the rifle up and pulling the trigger?

R: I don't remember aiming, just brought my rifle up and shot him in the head.

A: Do you remember how far away he was?

R: A few feet.

A: After you shot him, you walked over to him to make sure he was dead?

R: I don't remember what else I did. He was dead, there was no question about that. I didn't take any equipment off him and I didn't search him for anything.

A: Do you remember how you felt?

R: I didn't feel bad, I felt I had done my duty. Otherwise, we would have lost a soldier. It was him or me. When you're in a war, you're expected to kill the enemy. And that had been drilled into us again and again.

A: It wasn't like you saw him and walked toward him; you just saw that he was there?

R: I walked up and he was there. As he brought his gun up, I brought mine up, and that was my carbine.

A: Good thing it worked and didn't jam. You fired one shot?

R: One shot. There are a couple of other things.

I remember there was a group, mostly from the 101st that had acquired quite a few prisoners. Seems to me I was with them for a few hours because there was a sergeant who was the ranking non-com. He had the prisoners sitting on the ground with their hands over their head, disarmed. There was one prisoner who had obviously lived in the states. He was cursing at the sergeant in good English. There were other American soldiers with us, of course.

This prisoner was cursing and telling us how the Germans were going to kill everyone one of us and this mission was not going to be successful. He started walking away. The sergeant in charge fired three shots in his back. That got the attention of every other prisoner there; these guys mean business.

A: Do you remember how many prisoners there were? 10, 50?

R: I would say 18 or 20.

Another impression I have is that it was clearly daylight and we heard a plane approaching and this DC-3 slipped through some trees and crash landed, but it didn't just chop the plane to pieces. I don't recall seeing anybody else on the plane but the pilot, who was a captain. If he was injured, he was only very lightly injured. He was absolutely furious that his plane had been shot down. He was cursing and shouting and he had a name which was famous in the Air Corps, not like Rickenbacker, but that kind of name. He was named for somebody, but I can't remember.

A: He was the only person on board?

R: He must have had somebody flying with him, but he's the one I remember.

A: Would this have been around D-Day?

R: It was on D-Day.

A: So maybe he was one of the planes that jumped a stick of paratroopers?

R: He might have, but he could be evacuated easily and taken back to the ships. But he was really unhappy about losing that plane.

I guess about the second day, it was agreed that I was the ranking officer and we would take what we had of the 82nd soldiers and head to St. Mere Eglise. By that time, we were pretty well oriented. We were going along a road and got to St. Mere Eglise. By that time, that battle had been done.

A: That was 82nd Airborne, for St. Mere Eglise?

R: Yes.

A: So, when you got there, somebody else had already taken it.

R: I do remember there were two Lt. Colonels who were in the 82nd headquarters – and I got to know them pretty well later on – they were sitting in a ditch. They said, “Where are we, Lieutenant?” I thought if you don’t know, division headquarters sitting in a ditch, how the hell should I know? As I got close to St. Mere Eglise, there was still some fighting going on.

I was trying to fine Colonel Maloney, because I knew him and he’d be in charge of something. I ran into General Gavin – that was the first time I’d seen him. He said, “What are you doing, soldier?” I said I’m trying to find Colonel Maloney. He said, “I don’t know where Maloney is, but there’s quite a lot of fighting going on down the road, you need to get into it.”

Then, very shortly, and this is a vivid picture, I came on a dirt road. There was a lot of small arms fire. In a ditch on the right side of the road were 10 to 12 of our American Airborne soldiers, all scrunched down in the ditch with a lieutenant who had his helmet over his face.

For some reason, I was so incensed, I ran along the road with bullets coming in from the left saying, "Get up, start firing, start firing, start firing." Well, a couple of them started firing, then a few more, then a few more and finally the lieutenant. Soon thereafter, the firing on the other side stopped.

This lieutenant said to me later on, "That was pretty good. I'm going to write you up for something." Well, he got killed the next day. I never got wrote up.

But those are isolated memories that I seem to remember. There was somewhere, I think it was the first night, I had a small group of about three or four guys. We heard some Germans talking out there and we stopped and listened. They were yakking at each other and it sounded like they were clanging mess kits or something. I didn't know any Germans and we talked about surprising them and shooting them up, but we didn't know how many there were or what they had or what they were doing or what the result would be. I chose to back off that one.

I recall also several of us sitting on the side of the waterway down below and a German fighter airplane came in very low without firing or strafing. I don't know where he came from or where he thought he was going.

A: Did you ever shoot at an airplane?

R: I never shot at an airplane. I know a Chaplain that shot at an airplane. This was later in Holland – the 504th. The Chaplain there was marvelous. He's still alive today and preaching all over the world. He was the guy on the river crossing at Nijmegen who insisted on going across. The Battalion commander told him to get his ass back; "You're a Chaplain and you need to be with your men." He said, "Sir, I'm going to be with my men and I'm going across."

He and the Chaplain were in the same boat going across. The Lt Colonel was paddling on one side and he was Catholic: "Hail Mary, full of Grace. Hail Mary, full of Grace." And on the other side was the Chaplain saying, "Thy will be done, Thy will be done." True story that's been verified a number of times.

I guess the next thing I remember is that I had a number of men with me and we came across a number of backpacks in rows indicating that the soldiers that owned them were doing something else.

A:	Now this was after St. Mere Eglise?

R:	Yes, St. Mere Eglise was in pretty good shape when we got there. There wasn't any fighting going on. We ran into the Manor House at LaFiere Causeway from the back end. I didn't know what it was at the time. There was some fire and shooting going on there. Very shortly, I ran into Captain Rae. We were very good friends anyway. He asked how many men I had and I told him eight or ten. He said we may need you. He had been told, I think by General Gavin – that was about the time when the glider soldiers tried to cross the LaFiere Causeway and got struck down.

That's the time when Captain Rae gave the order, "Let's go."

A:	This is the first time you've seen Bob Rae since the jump?

R:	Yes.

A:	So, you were on the ground for two days before getting there?

R:	Yes. He led our stick of men out of the plane.

A:	Between Hollywood and the movies, in St. Mere Eglise, there was a paratrooper stuck on the chapel steeple, I think his name was John Steele. Was he still stuck on the steeple?

R:	I don't believe so, because by that time, all of the fighting had passed by. Somebody went up and pulled him in.

A:	Did you spend any time in St. Mere Eglise?

R:	Not that I remember.

A:	So, you just passed through?

R: Yes.

A: Now that you had St. Mere Eglise? Did you just keep marching?

R: Somehow, we were pointed toward LaFiere and told to get over there. I can't recall by whom, but that was the appropriate place to be.

A: You mentioned that you ran into General Gavin? Was he the commander of the 82nd at that time?

R: He was the assistant division commander; he had one star, a Brigadier General.

In October 1944 in Holland, I was standing beside General Gavin when General Ridgeway pinned his second star on.

A: I want to go back and ask you a couple of things. Right before you left on D-Day, do you remember writing Marion?

R: Marion has most of the letters I sent and she'll have to answer that.

A: But, you knew at that time you were expecting a baby. When was Judy born?

R: Judy was born on July 2, 1944. And Marion hadn't heard anything from me since the war started.

A: She would not have known of the invasion until it would have come out in the papers or the radio. But she knew that you would be jumping in on the invasion.

R: She assumed that I was Airborne and the papers were full of the invasion and airborne troops and she made the correct assumption that I was there and it was three or four weeks before she finally got the letter and came running up the street from the mailbox yelling, "He's safe; he's alive!"

A: I've seen this in movies and read books, but there were a lot of soldiers who had written a letter that they would want to be mailed home in case they got killed in action.

R: I didn't do that.

A: Did you know anybody that did?

R: No. I can conceive that that might be done, but I didn't do it personally.

A: You mentioned that you and Bob Rae were pretty good friends. Did you have any other good buddies around that time in your unit?

R: I don't remember any buddies. Lt. Smith, the other Rigger officer, was a great big guy from Tennessee. He was the first body builder that I had known. He was all muscle and a nice guy. I think maybe from the hills of Tennessee. I never felt close to him. I liked him, he was a good soldier. He and I and our wives had shared an apartment when we were in Alliance, Nebraska. For some reason, we didn't eat together, the four of us. I was in contact with him most of the day. We had a big piece of wood that we put over the bathtub – Marion and I would eat our meals there. I guess it worked out for both of us, but I guess it was a peculiar thing to do.

He did not make the jump in Normandy. They needed him back there to pack chutes for the next mission. And at one time, it was thought that as riggers we would gather up chutes and send them back for packing. That never happened.

A: When you did jump and landed, you just left your chute there? You didn't carry it around?

R: Oh yes, we didn't roll it up or anything. You'd see chutes lying all over the place.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
October 19, 2010

A: The last time we talked, we had covered D-Day, made the jump, ended up in an apple tree and after a few days, you had gone through St. Mere Eglise because it had already been captured. We were just about to get to the Merderet River. I had a couple of questions that I'd like to ask before we continue.

The D-Day jump was called "Operation Neptune". Did you know that at the time?

R: I think we knew it was the name of the mission, but it really didn't mean much to us.

A: We also talked a little about gliders. Did you ever fly in one or jump out of one?

R: No. I specifically was never asked or told to fly one in combat. I had a chance to fly in one while I was running the jump school in England, but I declined that invitation. Those things were death traps.

I guess they started coming in at daylight and sometime early on, on D-Day, I saw them come in. Of course, the Germans had put iron stakes and barriers in a lot of the fields. When the gliders landed, they would hit these barriers and flip over.

A: So the Germans knew there would be gliders?

R: Yes, somehow they knew that and were prepared for it. The terrible thing was that they would come in on their skids where the front part of the skid would dig in, the glider would come to an abrupt halt, and the back end would come over, the glider would break in half. A lot of men got killed on the landing because the gliders were so unsafe.

A: Were gliders meant for paratroopers to jump out of or just come down in?

R: Just to come down in.

A: Do you know how many men would fit into a glider?

R: I have no idea. You can probably find out easily.

A: Were the gliders meant to bring in equipment, supplies, jeeps, etc.?

R: Yes. Now as far as the glider soldiers, they performed admirably. It was getting them in there and that was probably not the best way to do that.

A: I know there was a glider battalion as part of the 82nd Airborne. Were the men part of the battalion?

R: It was a glider regiment. The regiment was part of the 82nd.

A: When we spoke last time, you mentioned that the first few days after the jump, everything was disorganized, men were scattered all about, and you had rounded up a few men and since you were the ranking officer, you let them toward St. Mere Eglise, looking for Captain Rae.

How did you get from St. Mere Eglise to the La Fiere Causeway and what were the events that led you there?

R: We were on foot, of course. By that time, I had acquired several of my own men, Geoffrion included. These were my own riggers and some of them in my own plane. We had come across country and we came on a field that was covered with back packs. They were properly spaced and obviously the men who were wearing these back packs had put them down all in order, so they could face combat. I think I looked at a couple and identified them as part of our division and I was satisfied that this was the case.

And then we came on the back part of the mansion at La Fiere, from behind it. It was daylight.

A: You were not originally going to La Fiere, you just happened upon it?

R: I was trying to find my unit that Captain Rae commanded. As we got close to the mansion house, I contacted Bob Rae – he was a good friend of mine in addition to being my captain. If memory serves me, by this time there were some pretty hot fireworks going on the causeway. It was under siege. As you know, it had changed hands several times between the Germans and us.

A: So there was fighting going on when you got there?

R: Yes there was fighting going on, but I can't remember how intense. I believe the setup was that some of the glider regiment were going to mount an assault on the causeway. We had come up from the southeast. They bogged down and weren't able to get across. I guess that General Gavin told Captain Rae to get his company and get on out there and take the causeway, at all costs.

A: This was Captain Rae, commander of the Service Company?

R: Yes, my immediate superior.

A: One thing that comes to mind is that you were a trained rifleman, but your main mission was not as a rifleman. Yet, here you come across this and now your orders are to get in there and fight the battle.

R: We were riggers, yes, but we were trained paratroopers and soldiers and able to do it, because we did it.

A: Do you recall how many 507th were in that area?

R: I do not know.

A: How long did that battle last after you got there?

R: The battle had been going on for several days and had changed hands several times. There were broken vehicles along the way and it was obvious that it had been thoroughly worked over.

A: Now, when I was there a few years ago, if I remember correctly, the causeway was only a two-lane road. It was only about 20 feet across, and the river was only about 20-30 feet wide. Was that part of the river flooded?

R: No, the flooded plain was up to the North and West of us. The river at this point was only about 20 feet wide.

A: We're also getting to the point where I may ask some difficult questions; if you don't want to answer, don't feel like you need to.

R: You ask, I'll try.

A: Now, the fighting had been going on for several days when you got there and you got orders to help there. Do you remember what the orders were?

R: I believe that Captain Rae had told us that if the previous attack with the glider troopers didn't make it, we were to take it and don't stop anywhere. There was a hole in the fence wall at La Fiere. That's where we were to get out, run out onto the causeway and attack. I guess for some time, a German heavy machine gunner had been zeroed in on that and every time he saw a figure in that hole in the wall, he let go with some rounds. There were some dead and dying soldiers right there. That's why I told my men that we were not to stop for anything – we've got to get onto that causeway and take it.

A: Do you remember how long it took?

R: A few minutes. Once we moved, we didn’t stop moving.

A: Can you describe what weapons you had on you?

R: I was still carrying my carbine, my pistol, a couple of grenades, and plenty of ammunition.

A: Did you have any bandoliers?

R: I don’t recall, but I may have.

A: You were on the causeway running at that time. Do you remember being shot at?

R: Andy, the air was full of lead; it truly was. It was almost indescribable. Everything was coming down: mortar fire, heavy machine guns, light machine guns, and rifle fire. There were German soldiers in foxholes along the side who were grenading. There were dead and dying soldiers all over the place, both ours and theirs. It seems to me more of ours. And there were our soldiers that simply couldn’t go any more, it was too much for them. And part of our job was to reach down, pick them up, get them up and get them a weapon, and start firing, start firing, and pulling them along.

Bob Rae, I, Geoffrion and another guy I recommended for an award – we were working together and it worked. It was quite a scene.

Interestingly, Andy, I was caught up in the battle. I didn’t think about getting hit. If I got hit, I got hit. None of the four of us I just mentioned were wounded. But, plenty of our men were wounded. But as we kept moving, the fire began to dampen. I guess the Germans finally figured that we were going to take the causeway and they faded back and we got to the end.

A: During that charge, do you remember killing any Germans.

R: I shot at an awful a lot of them, especially along the sides of the road.

A: During the heat of the battle, I guess you had quite an adrenaline rush. Have you ever had a similar adrenaline rush like that since then? I know you’ve run marathons and have done some phenomenal things, but have you ever been pumped up like that? Do you remember anything in your lifetime to match that?

R: I don't believe so. One distinct characteristic was, the way I was raised in this family in Jackson, Mississippi, everybody was peaceful people. We didn't fight. Anger was not looked upon well and I was taught not to be angry. After the war, I found that I angered a lot more freely than I had before and could feel myself getting hot all over and flushed.

There was this one incident when I was at the surgeon's lounge in Miami hospital before dressing up. I was reading the bulletin board. This was where the coffee and donuts were, and there were other non surgeons there. I was standing there early in the morning, after I'd run my five miles. Morning wasn't my best time – I wasn't cheery old Rufus until I got going. I was standing there and this internist came up behind me – he wasn't as big as I was – but he bumped his knees behind mine. Reflexly, I whirled around, got him by his coat, picked him up and threw him into a corner into a chair. He didn't know what happened. He said he was just kidding. It was pure reflex and I didn't stop to think.

A: Bet he didn't do that again.

R: No he didn't, nor did anyone else. Word got around not to mess with Rufus.

A: Once you took the causeway, did the Germans counterattack?

R: No, they had counterattacked several times before. They fell on back behind the next town.

There's one incident, and I think it was one of the turning points in my life, certainly in the war. We got to the end of the causeway and the road forked. Right before we got there, there was a small farm road on the left, sunken with hedgerows. Apparently there was a mortar emplacement that was continuing to fire. My mission was to get down there and take it out. When we got there the Germans started throwing potato mashers at us.

A: How many men did you have with you?

R: About a half dozen. They threw some grenades and we threw some of our grenades back at them. They started yelling, obviously being hit. Another lieutenant and I (he was brand new and had joined the company right before we left for our mission in England) stood on our toes peeking over the hedgerows to see what the yelling was about. He fell back, shot right through his lieutenant bar on his helmet. It was at that moment that the war got real serious to me.

It sounds funny to say it, but my crossing of the causeway, fighting along the way, was something like cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians. All of a sudden, when that lieutenant fell back next to me, the war got very serious. It was a defining moment.

Even in combat later on, I didn't get scared. There was, however, in Holland one night, a very serious bombardment. The Germans were trying to destroy the 82nd Airborne headquarters. The artillery shelling was intense and went on and on and on. I was in a foxhole as deep as I could dig it. To my memory, that was the only other time when I sensed fear that I wasn't going to make it. All the other times, you did what you needed to do.

My buddy, Magellas, says if that bullet doesn't have your name on it, it's not going to hit you. If it does, there's no escape.

A: When you were in the hedgerow with the lieutenant and he was next to you, I know you had said you had seen a lot of dead men, but this one was right next to you?

R: Yes, right next to me. Remember, this was my first day of real combat.

A: Were you able to see who shot him or where the shot came from?

R: I didn't bother after that. I guess the other people with me knocked him out.

A: What happened after that?

R: After we got to where the roads divided, there is a morning report that stated "Lt. Broadaway said, 'Let's take the town.'" So, we took the town. I have no memory of that myself, but there it is in black and white.

A: It was right down at the end of the causeway?

R: Yes.

A: So, the mission changed along the way. From the La Fiere causeway, you then took the town. I guess what I'm getting to is when did it occur to you that you could take a break after the La Fiere causeway.

R: I have no memory of that.

A: Do you remember how long you were in that area?

R: I do not. Now, eventually within the next day or two, I was told to gather all my riggers together. There was some mention of trying to gather parachutes, I don't know if they thought we were supposed to repair them or for another jump or what. But, we were singled out and pulled back and there were only a handful of us. We occupied a French house; I believe it belonged to one of the railroad people and it was next to a railroad crossing. Madam French woman was horrified that we had taken that house, even though it was cleared with her husband. Here we were in our boots – she was very concerned about her wooden floors and she was going bananas about those floors.

We were there for only a few days, and then were sent up to the town at the end of the peninsula (Cherbourg) and sent back to England. This was ahead of the others. Plans were that they would use the Airborne and once they made south and made the turn to the east, they would be able to move. General Patton, of course, was all over the place at that time. The idea was to use the Airborne to get in and take crossroads with minimum number of men and equipment and Patton could come barreling through. The only trouble was that the every time they made a plan to do that, Patton had already barreled through. It screwed up all the Airborne plans – nothing to jump into.

A: Now, when you went to this house you stayed in several days, were you the one who knocked on the door and told them you were going to move in and take it over for a while?

R: I must have, I was the ranking officer. While I spoke a little French, the Frenchman spoke some English.

A: Do you remember what you did while you were in the house?

R: I don't think we did much. We were awaiting orders. We were not engaged in any kind of fighting at that time.

A: Up until that time, do you remember spending nights outdoors?

R: I must have, because we came in from jumps.

A: Do you remember digging foxholes at that time?

R: There was no immediate fire. We were close to the beaches and they were beginning to come in from the beaches and we started to head inland.

A: Did you have regular chow at that time, or were you on K- or C-rations?

R: We depended only on our rations. There was no mess tent around at that time.

A: You were scrounging when you could? Chickens, eggs?

R: I don't remember much about that. I suspect that if those were available, it happened.

By the way, not to be in our report of course, but there's one guy who is still alive today. He was a Sergeant, I believe. Right after daylight, he and another soldier happened upon this French farmhouse and they were welcomed by a couple of French ladies there who had not seen a live Frenchman for quite some time. He swears shortly after daylight that they "made it" and claims to be the first US soldier to get a piece of French ass.

A: Yeah, we'll put that in the book.

All this time, you were doing a lot of walking, but was there any other type of transportation available?

R: Isn't this strange. I don't remember walking up to the end of the peninsula. It might have been that the trains were still running, because they were still running when we made the invasion. So, we must have taken the train to get up to Cherbourg.

A: You dropped in on D-Day, June 6. It was about 10 days before you headed back to England. Were you on ships back to England?

R: Yes, but that was a short crossing back to Southampton. We were met by Red-Cross girls. I particular remember that – hot coffee and donuts and hugs and kisses.

A: When you headed across, you mentioned you were ahead of the 82d – the Service Company was in this early group?

R: I don't remember how many Service Company were headed back. I think they were anxious to get us riggers back for further duty. Now, only a portion of our company went – we left some in reserve.

A: You had mentioned that at one point they had talked about picking up discarded parachutes.

R: It was talked about, but we never did it. I understand that French women in the area wore silk dresses for many years.

A: I forgot to ask, where the parachutes white or military olive green?

R: They were olive green, and were not camouflaged.

A: You get back to England, somewhere, some time, you get a message to see the General.

R: You'd think we'd get back to England and I rejoined the unit. I draw a total blank, and I've tried and tried to remember, but can't. My next conscious memory is that I was assigned to a parachute training outfit in England. I was assigned as the chief physical instructor for this new Airborne school. It was my duty, along with several good sergeants with me, to get these brand new recruits out there in the daylight every morning and I led the whole thing.

A: Now were these recruits already paratroopers?

R: No, they were recruits and this was a parachute school. They had taken the concept of the Fort Benning and brought it over to England. Though they didn't have any jump towers.

A: Did this include both the 82nd Airborne and the 101st Airborne?

R: No, I think it was just the 82nd Airborne.

A: You were the chief physical instructor. You don't remember how you got assigned to that?

R: No, I didn't interview for it – I was assigned.

A: Where was this in England?

R: It was close to Nottingham, Leicester, and Okum. I think we were quartered in the little town of Okum. It was a nice setting. Apparently, it had been an ACK-ACK camp before we got there. They had wooden one-story barracks. I had a private room and I was a first lieutenant.

A: Did you ever make captain?

R: Yes, I was mustered out with the rank of captain.

We had fine housing, a good dining room, and great people to work with.

When I was a young man in Jackson, Mississippi, there was always the urge, created mostly by my mother, to do something better. One summer, I got busy at becoming a lifeguard and I got my top rank in that, an instructor. That was on my service record and that may account for my being assigned at the beach at Camp Blanding on Kingsley Lake. That's why when the rest of the regiment went to Louisiana for summer maneuvers with the mosquitoes and sand and whatever else, Rufus Keene was busy saving the officer's wives daily at Kingsley Lake. It was tough duty.

I believe that with that designation, here I was – "this guy's athletic, he knows how to instruct others" – I suspect that that accounts for it.

Things were going well; we were turning out physically able paratroopers. We were also doing some jump training, which is how I ran up a large number of jumps. Then that day came, with no preparation at all by me, to go up and see the general. I had no idea of what this was all about. I was ushered in to see him and I stood there.

He made me at ease. He told me that they were forming the 18th Airborne Corps and that General Ridgway, who commanded the 82nd that time, was going to get the Corps and that he, General Gavin, would become the commanding officer of the 82nd Airborne division and would be entitled to two aide-de-camps and that I was to be his junior aide-de-camp. That's it, out of the clear blue.

A: This was while you were still the chief physical instructor at the airborne school?

R: Yes.

A: Do you remember about when that happened?

R: It was about four days before the Holland mission, Market Garden. We had been in England for a while and training.

A: A couple of more questions to ask. During those ten days you were in Normandy, were you able to write Marion?

R: No. I was able to write when I got back to England.

A: Do you remember anything about what you wrote?

R: No, but she's got a big pile of letters and you are welcome to read them.

A: Do you remember when you first got a letter from Marion? Was it waiting for you?

R: It might have been waiting for me. D-Day was June 6 and Judy was born on July 2. Of course, she didn't hear from me for another couple of weeks.

A: You would have been back in England before Judy was born.

R: That's right, but I don't know how long it took mail to get back. There wasn't much airmail back then; mail was by ship. I didn't know what my child was like. I knew Marion was pregnant; Marion didn't know if I was alive or dead.

A: I've got one more question to ask, if you don't mind. There's a phrase, I believe it was popular during the war, "there are no atheists in foxholes." We didn't spend a lot of time talking about your growing up years and your religious upbringing. When you were in war and in combat, did you pray a lot?

R: No. One exception was that night in Holland with that bombardment. Boy, I prayed myself silly. Otherwise, I don't think so. Now, my religious training was pretty rigid. It was all Southern Baptist at that time. Southern Baptists believed that if you weren't Southern Baptist you were going straight to hell and there was no help for you. That was it – the only way.

I attended church twice on Sunday and whatever it was on Wednesday night. I was raised religious and am glad I was. I never felt otherwise.

A: I believe the military issued a pocket bible – my father carried one, I believe it was the New Testament. Did you carry one of those?

R: I can't recall being issued one, but there must have been various religious organizations that provided them. I think I carried a bible, maybe not into combat, but it was among my possessions.

A: I think that's a good bit for today.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
November 10, 2010

A: When we left off last time, you had gone back to England and was assigned as the Chief Physical Trainer for the Airborne School. I believe that was right after you got back in July 1944?

R: It may have been the last part of June. I was still part of the Riggers Section and we were among the first troops to come back from Normandy. They were planning further missions. They needed us to help get the division equipment in shape. Part of our division was still back there; they had been kept back and were not in on the D-Day parachute drop in Normandy.

I remember getting off the ship at Southampton, England and remember being met by a three-person Red-Cross crew that we had seen before we left for Normandy. After that, I can't really remember how we got to the camp, who sent me, or when I got there. But, I was Chief Physical Instructor for the Parachute Training School. This was soon after I got back.

A: Did that take you out of the 507th?

R: I was still part of the 82nd. They pulled the 507th out of the 82nd shortly after that and was assigned to the 17th Airborne Division.

A: Can you give me an idea of what you did on a regular day?

R: We had x-number of trainees. As you know, it's all volunteer and all of these were United States infantry troops that had volunteered for the Airborne. It was our job to get them into good physical shape as rapidly as possible. We might have as many as 40 trainees at one time. I had a good cadre of non-coms who worked with me. I took the lead up on the platform and we went through the various exercises, like pull-ups, pushups, and other muscle building exercises.

Our non-coms were very good; they'd get around to help the guys and encourage them as needed. Then after a certain time, everyone would go for the daily run, several miles. That was pretty hard on some of those guys, but for the most part they responded.

I had one professional boxer, sort of a squared guy, trying to impress me. Well, he got so he couldn't do pushups while everyone else was doing pushups. He was crying and making excuses. I told the non-coms I'd take him on a run when we finished. I took him on a run and asked him if he wanted to be in the Airborne. He said he did, so I took him on a run. After a half mile or so, he started crying; I left him in a ditch and left him behind. I sent a jeep out after him and he was then out of the unit and back to a regular unit before nightfall.

But, that was fairly indicative of the physical training and hard work.

A: You mentioned there were about 40 men in the training unit. You mentioned that training at Fort Benning was one month. Was it the same at the Airborne School?

R: I think so, but I'm not quite sure. It might have been three weeks. Now, we didn't have any jump towers there or the same equipment as in Fort Benning. But, we did a lot of jumping and when it came time for them to do their five qualifying jumps, I was along on a good many of those, and got to jump a lot myself, building up my jump record.

Every paratrooper you've ever seen can tell you instantly how many jumps he made. I made 43 jumps, beginning to end.

A: The troops coming into the Airborne School – did you run one class for three weeks, did you start a new class every week, or did you have to wait until you had enough men for a complete class before you started?

R: I don't remember.

A: So, you would be with them every day and do all the physical training. I imagine that would be mostly in the mornings?

R: Yes.

A: Did you participate in any type of paratrooper training?

R: Just the jump training. They jumped off short platforms and tumbled to get the feel for hitting the ground. But we just didn't have anything near the equipment they had at Benning. But, we turned out a good product.

A: You said you would also lead them on the runs. I know you've been a runner all of your life. Is this where you started your running?

R: I was not a runner until I was in the Infantry School, three months training, which led to my commission as an officer. Along toward the end of that, perhaps the last month, one of my fellow officer candidates and I were talking about the Airborne. Word was they did a lot of running. That was probably the first real running that he and I together would get out every day. Of course, our muscles were sore at first, but by the time I got to the parachute school, I was in pretty good shape.

But these guys, we just had to shape them up as quickly as we possibly could.

A: Other than the morning routines, can you remember what you did the rest of the day? Was it like a regular work day?

R: I don't remember. I guess the jumps were done sometime during the day, perhaps in the afternoon.

We had excellent quarters. There was a one-story series of rooms. This was a real nice bedroom, the best that I had, as instructors. That made it easy. It had been an ack-ack camp somewhere in its history and we moved in on that.

That was the routine, as I remember it. Marion may have some of the letters I had written while I was in that camp.

A: During that time, did you have any weapons training or go out to the range?

R: Not that I recall. I don't believe so.

A: On regular days, you would have three meals a day. Did they have a kitchen there?

R: Of course. All military units had kitchens. We were not in combat conditions. The mess halls were inside and since this had been a camp before, it had some nice facilities.

A: We're getting to the point where you changed assignments. I think you told me before that while you were Chief Physical Instructor, you got the call from General Gavin.

R: That is still very vivid for me. There was a major that was in charge of the camp, located in Leicester, and we were pretty good friends. He sent for me one day. He real words were, "Broadaway, what have you fucked up now?" I said, "Sir?" He repeated himself and I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I received instructions for you to go up to meet with General Gavin, who commands the division. I said, "Why?" He said, "I haven't the faintest idea, but those are my orders. Go spruce yourself up, get one of the jeeps and jeep drivers and get up there."

I was ushered in at the appointed time. I walked in, saluted, and General Gavin told me to be at ease, but I was standing all the time. He said that they were forming the 18th Airborne Corps and the 82nd Airborne Division would be a unit. General Ridgway, who commanded the 82nd Airborne in Normandy with General Gavin as his assistant general, would get the Corps and General Gavin would become commander of the 82nd Airborne. He said that this would entitle him to an additional aide-de-camp.

Captain Hugo ?? was his senior aide, a very nice guy and was very good to me. Incidentally, after the war, he retreated into the bottle and died an alcoholic death within a very few years afterwards for reasons that just didn't click.

So, I was the junior aide, still a first lieutenant and Hugo was a Captain. That stayed the same through the rest of the war. Although, when I was mustered out, I was mustered out as a Captain. I went back on active duty one summer after the war, but that's another story.

Well, what was I to say? I thanked him very much and told him I'd try to do my best. He said go back and get my stuff and the sergeant would help me move in. I didn't see that little ack-ack camp again.

We were not many days from the Holland mission, the "Bridge Too Far" mission.

A: You mentioned that this was about four days before the mission.

R: I think that was about right. We jumped into Holland.

A: Let's talk about the move. You left the Airborne School and moved to Leicester. You became part of the 82nd Division Headquarters unit, not the Headquarters Company?

R: Yes, that's correct.

A: You were learning what an aide-de-camp does?

R: No one ever told me what to do. I imitated Hugo and tried to do what I thought the General wanted me to do.

A: Can you give me some examples of your duties?

R: Mostly to accompany General Gavin. Frequently, Hugo would be back at division headquarters and I spent a lot of time in the jeep with General Gavin going around. I did not jump in the same plane with him, I think Hugo did, on the Holland mission. The Holland mission was distinctly different from the Normandy mission.

A: As far as the aide-de-camp, you were with General Gavin most of the day?

R: Yes. When we were not otherwise engaged, he was a good runner – slim, long legs. And he would say, "Son, put on your running shoes, let's go for a run." We'd knock off a few miles; he kept me huffing and puffing. He was generally pretty business-like. He laughed and had a pretty good sense of humor, but not the small talk you generally hear among soldiers. He was a pretty serious man.

A: Do you remember how old he was at the time?

R: Thirty-seven. He was a pretty young Major General at that time. I was standing beside him when General Ridgway pinned his second star on him. It was out in the open somewhere and they sort of joked about it and pinned on his stars, then he was a Major General. It was the 16th of October, after the Holland jump.

A: When you became his aide-de-camp, did you know about the Holland jump?

R: I must have because it was only four days away.

A: Do you remember anything different for preparing for this jump as opposed to the Normandy jump?

R: Well for one thing, officers normally carried a carbine. General Gavin carried an M-1 Garand rifle. I carried an M-1 rifle. Jumping with an M-1 rifle is different than jumping with a carbine; it was larger. But, we had the usual equipment. But as you know, it was a piece of cake. It was a sunny, Sunday afternoon.

As an aside, this story involves a priest in Highlands, North Carolina. We got to know him because he established a very good museum south and east of Eindhoven. The story is, as he tells it, he was a boy of 11 or 12 and his father had a farm in Holland. This was Sunday afternoon and he heard a noise and he didn't know what it was – it was a low hum that got louder and louder. He got on top of his father's barn and watched an army fall out of the sky. He said he'd seen only one or two airplanes before that.

A few German soldiers were walking their girls in the woods on that Sunday afternoon and there was a little small arms fire around the periphery. But, the Germans were not organized and were totally unprepared for this.

A: So, there was no flack shooting up at the aircraft.

R: An interesting story. We came across the channel and there was a good bit of anti-aircraft fire. These American pilots would zoom down and knock the anti-aircraft out of their saddles. A planeload of soldiers of the 504th were in a plane – I guess they were demolition people – they had a big cake of explosive materials. Somehow, and it was one of the few planes that got hit by anti-aircraft fire, something came through. That substance would burn hot and they used to use it to warm up their coffee. It took a detonator to make it explode.

It caught on fire and burned a hole in the bottom of the plane and all of the soldiers got out but the two pilots held that plane steady until all the soldiers got out. By that time, they had lost their altitude and crashed – both were killed. Then the soldiers that had gotten out were almost immediate captured by some German soldiers who were in the vicinity.

An amazing story, one guy was carried back to Eastern Germany and put into a prison camp. He escaped three times. The third time, they didn't get him and he slowly worked his way back. He would find farmers that were sympathetic to him. They would put him a wagon under some hay or something. Every now and then, he would stop at a farmhouse to get something to eat. He worked he way back to his unit. Later on in the year, he showed up in his old unit. I knew him and have heard him tell the story –really something.

A: When you jumped in the Holland mission, do you remember about what altitude you were?

R: I would say probably 1200 – 1500 feet, the normal altitude for jumping. Not like Normandy where people were shooting at us and the planes were flying very low. Everybody I ever heard from the Normandy jump said that the instant their chute opened, they were on the ground.

It was daylight in Holland. I still have a picture in my mind of a big Horsa glider and it sort of semi crash landed. I was with General Gavin and this glider crashed almost in front of our eyes. Dust went up and out stepped this cocky little British general – his nickname was "boy." He was married to Daphne Demaris, the writer.

Here was all this dust and he stepped out of that plane amongst the ruins with his red beret (red berry, they called it) and a swagger stick and dust all around. General Gavin said to me, "Look at that S.O.B. He thinks he's marching down White Hall." He was a good soldier. I had frequent contact with him as things went on because we were fighting with the British Second Army at that time.

A: The Holland jump was only the 82nd Division?

R: No, the 101st was south of us. There were three divisions total. The 101st, us, and another division I can't remember – maybe British. There were three bridgeheads to take. Up the way was the 101st and we were at Nijmegen.

A: When you were getting ready for this jump, this was daylight and you knew you were jumping in daylight. Were there any episodes during the flight over or the jump?

R: None. None at all.

A: Do you remember that jump?

R: I remember it very well.

A: When the chute came open on that jump, what do you remember?

R: We came down and made a normal landing in non-flooded fields with wooded areas on the periphery.

A: What do you do when you land? Walk me through the steps.

R: The epitome of a good landing is to land on your two feet. If you can reach way up on the risers of the chute, just before you land you give a mighty pull down, bend your knees a bit and if you time it just right, you land lightly on the balls of your feet. If you didn't get it right, you'd fall flat on your face.

As I recall, there wasn't much of a breeze, we didn't get blown around. I got up and assembled my stuff and found General Gavin right away with no problem. So, it was a good easy jump.

A: There was probably very little disorganization because everybody was in the same location.

R: That's exactly right.

A: At that time, what was the mission of the 82nd Airborne?

R: The principal mission was to secure the bridges at Nijmegen across the lower Rhine. The 101st had gotten their bridges – there was one highway that came up – the 101st that were to the south of us, and we were to get them at Nijmegen, and the British First Airborne landed up north of us. It was Arnhem were the British were getting cut to pieces.

A: The primary mission was Nijmegen for the 82nd Airborne. Do you know if the Germans were entrenched in Nijmegen?

R: There was enough to guard the bridge so that our guys were unable to take the bridge; there was a motor bridge and a rail bridge, side by side, as I recall. There were several attempts to take that bridge which were not successful. And that's what led to the daytime river crossing.

A: Do you remember how far away from Nijmegen that you landed?

R: A very few miles, not too far. Walking distance. Our division headquarters were eventually in the town of Nijmegen.

A: When you landed, you found General Gavin real quick. I'm guessing you stuck with him until you got into Nijmegen. Do you remember how long it took you to get to Nijmegen?

R: Not right away, because there were some Germans in the town and our troops hadn't taken all of the town.

Somewhere I need to get in the story of the Dutch captain. He had been with the Dutch underground, in and out of Holland several times. His mission was to get into Nijmegen as quickly as possible and contact the underground. He had a jeep and a driver. I knew about this mission.

He accomplished his mission, but he got shot up pretty bad in one arm. He refused to be evacuated. I saw him frequently and we talked a lot. Arie Bestebreurtje was his name.

Many years later when we were living in Coral Gables, we were at a social at somebody's house. Over my shoulder I heard our young minister from the church say something about Arie Bestebreurtje. I looked over and asked him what he said. He said, Arie Bestebreurtje. I asked him about Arie Bestebreurtje and the minister told me he was a Dutch hero during the war. He became a lawyer and came to this country and later on felt a call to the Christian ministry. He's a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina.

He and I sent messages back and forth, but I never saw him again. He was an Olympic speed skater and one day in North Carolina while skating, he fell through the ice and drowned.

There's more to the story. Do you remember when we went out west and went down the middle fork of the Salmon River? It was seven or eight years ago. We stayed with a very close friend of ours – he was with the medical hospital association. We stayed at their house in Washington. We were sitting out on the porch that evening we arrived, having a drink and looking out over the mountains. His wife somehow knew that I had recently been in Holland a couple of times and she asked how I enjoyed Holland.

She said, "You'd be interested in visiting with our next door neighbor. Her father was a Dutch hero in World War II. Her name is Bestebreurtje. It was his daughter. She was actually over in Holland right now for a visit." Well, we went out again next summer and I went over to visit and filled in a good many blanks and was able to say some things about her father that she treasured. It's a small world.

We were under British Second Army and we had all sorts of British brass come around. All the famous generals, but General Montgomery never got down there. They sent a wheeled vehicle, known as a caravan, which could be sent up as an office or sleeping quarters. General Gavin turned it into an office, but we were still sleeping on the ground.

We could easily talk to each other, so one evening I said, "General, what do you think if I sleep in the caravan at night?" He gave me one of those sour lemon looks and said, "Son, that's not a very good idea." Actually, we had a shelling one night. The German's artillery crunched, then it advanced. Another barrage and closer and closer. I was in about a six-foot deep foxhole but we were in a wooded area and there were airbursts. I think, Andy, that I was one of the few times during the war that I really felt fear. I did the La Fiere causeway and it was tough, but this time I thought I was just about to get it. It was in Holland and at night. As the barrages continued, it got closer and closer, but for some reason, it stopped short of us.

Then of course, there's the wonderful story about the daylight crossing of the lower Rhine River. There had been numerous attempts to seize the Nijmegen bridges without success. The British Airborne were up at Arnhem and we needed to get up there and support them. They were being cut to pieces and it was only about eighteen miles up there. So they finally decided about the third day that the best place to get through the bridges was to cross the river.

The British said they had some boats, but it seemed forever to get those boats. When they got there, they were canvas boats with a wooden bottom with staves sticking up and the canvas covered around it. There were only a few rudimentary paddles. Many of the men were paddling with the butts of their guns. This was the middle of an afternoon.

You remember Maggie, my friend, Magellas? Maggie was in there, in the 3rd Battalion in the 504th. I ended my war with the 504th.

Let me tell you the story of the Chaplain. Chappy Keil was a little guy, very slight, and really quite a guy. Lt Col ??, was in charge of the 3rd Battalion. He looked around and saw the Chaplain. He said, "Chaplain, what the hell are you doing here?" "I'm going to cross with my men." "The hell you are, you get your ass back down where you belong." The Chaplain said, "Sir, I belong with my men and I'm going to cross."

I didn't see him, but the story goes that the Lt Col was on one side of the boat, who was a Catholic – "Hail Mary, full of Grace, Hail Mary, full of Grace." On the other side was the Chaplain, a Protestant priest, "Thy Will Be Done." Neither one of them got hit on the crossing.

I asked General Gavin if I could go across and he said, "Absolutely not. I'm going up in this building so I can observe them from here. Hugo's going with me and you go back to Division headquarters and hold hands with the Chief of Staff, who was nervous on good days." So, I didn't get to see the crossing.

That was a tough one, and they lost a good number of men. But, they got across and immediately started firing – everything was firing. The Germans had ack-ack guns turned down shooting straight at the men.

A: Do you remember how wide the river was at the crossing?

R: No, maybe a quarter of a mile. But, our guys got there and started firing back at the Germans and they began to run. They sort of melted away. I guess they figured if those guys were going to cross the river and get at us, we'd better get out of the way.

A: This would have been in October? Because Market Garden was the end of September, I'm guessing a few days of fighting to get the bridges in Nijmegen.

R: I don't know how many days, but we could find that out. They got across and worked their way on down to the auto bridge. By this time, our troops had taken the south end of the bridge. A British tank had come through and was sitting there. One of Maggie's good friends, Rivers, went up to the tank.

Here sat this British officer and Rivers said, “Come on, let’s get going.” The British officer said, “No; I have orders to stay.” Rivers pulled out his .45 pistol, stuck it to his head and said, “You’ve got to get going to get up and rescue your men.” Maggie had to pull him off.

A: Did he move after that?

R: No, the British wouldn’t go because there was only one highway. The Germans had control of it. It would have been tough going, but let me tell you, the 504th would have gotten there. And of course, the British First Airborne got cut to pieces and lost most of their guys. General Montgomery just wouldn’t go. General Gavin was just frothing at the mouth. We had a regiment of Polish Airborne and that Polish officer was just fighting to get in there. I don’t know if they dropped in or not.

The whole thing just fell apart. The lack of leadership on Montgomery’s part or lack of his being willing to let us and even his British soldiers to get in to fight – sad, sad.

A: Did you get into any fighting around Nijmegen yourself?

R: Nijmegen was just a couple of miles from Germany. There was a railroad that came down. We got word one day that the Germans were threatening to break through down on the south end where our glider regiment was located. We went barreling down there. It was a railway embankment and the Germans were right on the other side. Here was Gavin with his M1 rifle on his belly firing away. I got along beside him, shooting Germans along with him. That was the only real contact I had with the enemy.

A: Do you remember shooting or killing any Germans?

R: Of course, that was our mission.

A: Do you remember how long you were in Nijmegen?

R: I don’t.

A: Your duties as aide-de-camp was to be with General Gavin?

R: Whatever he wanted me to do.

A: Would you take written orders to other units? Would that be a part of your job?

R: One night, it was just about dusk, he called me in and said, "We've lost contact with the 504th regiment. Go down and find them." The commander of the 504th Colonel Tucker was really a tough guy, foul-mouthed and wasn't scarred of anything or anybody, but really a tough soldier.

I got General Gavin's jeep driver, who was scared on good days. While driving along, we spotted a column of tanks coming our way. He said, "Lieutenant, are they theirs or ours?" I said, "I don't know, keep driving." We didn't have any tanks down there. These tanks had running lights and it was dusk and I couldn't tell what they were. The Germans had captured a lot of our jeeps, so I guess they assumed that I was a German driving a captured jeep.

I got down there and located the 504 and Col Tucker, he turned the air blue. "You tell that #*@&#* that I'm not lost and my regiment is not lost and he can just go and F*#$ himself." I went back and found General Gavin. General Gavin asked what Colonel Tucker said and I repeated verbatim and he laughed and said it sounded just like Tucker.

A: Do you remember moving headquarters from Nijmegen to somewhere else?

R: No, not specifically. It was our headquarters for a while. We left there heading south and were in reserve. I think we did a couple of practice jumps, either in northern France or Belgium. Nice quarters, too. The division headquarters was in a big house. We had our meals there. We had dinner one night and the phone rang. I, being the lowest ranking member, answered the phone.

Somebody at the other end of the phone was hysterical. "They're breaking through." I asked who was breaking through. "The damn Germans have broken through our lines and they are all over the place. Let me talk to the chief of staff." I was happy to hand the phone over. This was the first word to the 82nd Airborne Division that the Germans had broken through – the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge. This was the middle of December, just before Christmas.

Well, before midnight, our first troops were on the road. They passed through Bastogne. I also passed through Bastogne. It was later on that the 101st Airborne troops in Bastogne became isolated.

A: Before the Battle of the Bulge, did you ever go back to England or were you in Holland the whole time?

R: No, never went back. We were between Holland and France. General Gavin’s star got pinned on in October in Holland, so we were in Holland and France for about two months. As the winter wore on, we were advancing north, but nothing very exciting going on.

A: Do you remember Thanksgiving in France around that time?

R: I don’t remember Thanksgiving, but it would have been when we were in reserve. I do remember Christmas, though, sitting on a snow bank, eating my Christmas dinner. But, that’s another story another day.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
November 17, 2010

A: Last time we talked, you had jumped in Market Garden and your main mission was to take Nijmegen. After you got through that, you did not go back to England; you were still in the Nijmegen area. Between that and December 16, the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, the day-to-day activities were training, equipping, etc.

R: When we finished with Holland, we left there and went to a reserve area, I believe in northern France. It might have been in Belgium, but I believe it was northern France. As I recall, for a few weeks, we were pretty relaxed.

A: Can you remember a typical day when you were in reserve?

R: Yes, we went around visiting the troops. Some training and we made some practice jumps in France. I remember a feisty little lieutenant from Philadelphia with a distinguished name – nice guy, heavy drinker. I didn't drink a lot in the service, but I'd have a drink or two every now and then.

He and I got to telling each other how great we were. And we ended up daring each other to make the practice jump on the next day; we would unhook our main chute and simply jump our reserve. I don't believe we actually did it, something happened …

A: You sobered up?

R: Not only sobered up, but I think his major got onto it. General Gavin would have killed me.

A: You were still the aide-de-camp to General Gavin? And you were going around making these bets?

R: You know how soldiers are. We weren't fighting so we might as well have some fun. But it was very good watching that division reform itself. We got in a lot of new recruits that had gone missing on our other jumps. Things were pretty calm, not much action. The Germans had been very quiet. Of course, plans were still to break out across Germany and take that over.

There are several incidents during the Battle of the Bulge. One is at Christmas, I distinctly remember sitting in a snow bank, eating my Christmas meal off my mess kit. The food was actually pretty good.

A: Was it a K-ration or a C-ration?

R: Oh no, it was a kitchen prepared Christmas meal with turkey and trimmings.

A: Did I tell you about going to look for Colonel Tucker and the lost regiment? He called General Gavin every name in the book and said, "you tell that General that I'm not lost, we're not lost and we don't need his #*@& help." I went back to General Gavin and repeated every word verbatim. General Gavin said, "Sounds just like Tucker."

Colonel Tucker was a terrific soldier, but he had no polish. I think he was a West Pointer, but he didn't have any polish like some of the upper brass had. He was rough hearing, but boy, what a soldier. He was commander of the 504 regiment, Maggie's regiment, and the one that I ended the war with.

A: When you went to go look for Colonel Tucker, was that during the Battle of the Bulge?

R: Yes, we were on the northern rim and we headed south to look for Colonel Tucker and the 504th. And that's when just at dusk in the jeep with our low lights on and a string of tanks were coming our way. My jeep driver asked, "Are those tanks ours or theirs?" I said, "I don't know, keep driving." When I got back and related this, I found out we didn't have any tanks down there.

A: How close were they?

R: They were on the same road, coming at us. The Germans had captured a lot of our jeeps and were using them. There was a pretty good chance that I passed a string of German tanks and they didn't recognize me and I didn't recognize them.

A: You say you passed them on the same road?

R: We were going south and they were coming north on the same road.

A: So this was not a forest road and not an autobahn?

R: It was a two-lane road, not an autobahn or anything like that. It was gravel or dirt, it was so close I could have stuck my hand out and shook hands with them.

At that time, there was a driver in each tank and everybody else was probably catching some sleep. They weren't going to battle, they were just moving their tanks up and it was just after dusk. I think we were moving fast enough that they didn't recognize us.

We had some pretty heavy fighting in the Ardennes, on the north side of the Bulge. We headed up from the south, passed through Bastogne before the 101st got surrounded. The 101st was following us; we got through Bastogne. I remember spotting a German tank on the far edge of a ridge, but nobody was fighting with him at that time and he might have been running scared at that time because there were so many of our troops coming through.

The 101st was behind us and got caught in Bastogne. It was a wonderful, heroic stand there. And that's when the General told the Germans, "Nuts!"

A: Let me go back to when you receive the phone call that the Germans had broken through. You mentioned that was probably the afternoon?

R: That was at dinner that night.

A: You said the 82nd Airborne were on their way by midnight?

R: The first elements of the 82nd were on their way by midnight.

A: Nobody had prepare for that, had they?

R: No, it was unbelievable.

A: Do you remember how everything came together to get a whole division on the move in that quick of a time?

R: These were all trained troops. The officers were all combat hardened and they knew to expect change, quick change, and react to it. All of the units were well organized and when the word came to go, they knew how to pack up and go.

A: I remember reading about organizations of how men moved out in my father's division, the 80th Division. They would typically bring up a particular battalion, and certain companies within that battalion and would stagger men and equipment in between. Were you part of any of the planning of the 82nd Airborne moving out?

R: They had to move division headquarters; I don't think any of us slept that night. Everybody was deciding who would go and in what order. As I recall, it was pretty orderly, no mad scramble. I think there was considerable discussion – the situation was fluid, we didn't know that there was going to be a bulge as such. Nobody knew how it would end up. But my impression at the time and now that our orders were to get onto the north side of it and contain it on that side. At this point, it was more than a bulge, it more of a frontal attack along this wide front as the Germans came swarming through the Ardennes.

A: Being with General Gavin, were you part of the lead element heading out? Where would your place be?

R: I'm sure we were not the lead element, but somewhere near the front. You don't put your division headquarters right on the front. I think we were part of the first third or fourth of the movement.

A: At that time, you were billeted in buildings, your headquarters?

R: Headquarters was located in a house. Most of the soldiers were in tents.

A: So, they would just strike their tents, but the headquarters, you'd have to gather a lot of things?

R: This was in a military area, where we were – some kind of camp that had been used before. It had certain facilities.

A: Along the way on the move, did you encounter any Germans?

R: No, except that single German tank on the outskirts of Bastogne.

A: So you were able to get to your designated area and honker down there.

R: Yes. One of the first things, on the first day or so they decided to do a "reconnaissance in force." That apparently is a standard designation. You get a pretty big and hard thrust, break through whatever, find out what was there, what resistance there may be and what units the Germans were using as they caught prisoners. Then, they pulled back.

Our top leaders – many of them were West Pointers – they were very well trained. They knew what they were doing, not that other officers didn't, but they had been brought up with it. And they were pretty proud of their reconnaissance in force and got a good idea of what we were dealing with.

A: When you arrived at the northern part of the Ardennes, do you remember how long the 82nd was there before you encountered fighting?

R: It wasn't long.

A: The phone call came in on December 16, so you'd be at the northern part of the Ardennes on the 17th?

R: Yes, that's correct. I wasn't aware that any Germans had broken through with us. There was some pretty tough fighting there. I remember one incident where some units, including the 504th or a battalion, were to move south ten miles to a piece of higher ground. They got there, started to unpack, and the orders were reversed. "Come on back, now." That's not a morale builder, through the snow and cold to your destination, then being told to turn around and return. And that drew some very tough criticism.

I'm sure General Gavin was in on the plan to move some troops, but I know he felt pretty bad about that. Maggie was one of those – they griped for months.

A: When you were in the upper area in the first location, do you remember how long you were there?

R: I don't know – I can't get a mental picture of that.

A: The Battle of the Bulge went from December 16 until January 25th. Do you recall being in that area for a long period of time.

R: Seems to me that the main thrust was stopped fairly early on. But it came down to some pretty tough fighting, because you not only have to stop them, but you have to push them back, too.

Apparently, there was trouble with communication when the breakthrough came. And, as related to some units, near panic – getting up and getting out. Three Red Cross girls who had been assigned to the 82nd – the word was that they didn't know anything about the breakthrough. They arrived either at headquarters and someone asked what the hell they were doing there. "The Germans have broken through and we were running west as fast as we can and you'd better get on the road."

Apparently, they barely missed being captured by the Germans, whom I'm sure would have loved to have captured three Red Cross girls … and their donuts.

A: During the Battle of the Bulge, which was the coldest period in Europe in fifty years and everyone was miserable, were you billeted in a tent or a foxhole?

R: I was in a foxhole during that time.

A: How did you keep warm?

R: I don't have much memory of headquarters and how it was organized. They probably had tents, but I can't remember. I told you that I was with General Gavin in the jeep most of the time. Hugo, the other aide, would spend a lot of time at division headquarters. General Gavin was always concerned with the troops, the fighting man. They had a terrible time keeping warm.

I remember Sims, who was in the 504th, telling me that he had persuaded some farm woman to make him a warm suit, which she packed a lot of stuffing in.

We came onto one GI soldier – he was sitting there trying to get his boots on his swollen feet. General Gavin said, "Where are your socks?" He said he didn't have any, they had worn out. When we got back to headquarters, General Gavin pulled out a pair of his socks from his pack and asked me if I could find that soldier. I took those socks to the soldier. That was a tender moment for me and I know General Gavin appreciated it, too. I sure did.

A: Now most of the troops who were out there did not have any winter clothing?

R: No, they were still in their summer garb. That's really something that they were able to do; it was cold and snowy and icy. They just threw on whatever they had and of course, if they were moving, it was easier to keep warm. I don't know if we had any soldiers that froze to death, but it was a very miserable thing.

A: There were a lot of people in my dad's division got trench foot. Did men in the 82nd have that problem?

R: I don't recall. I'm sure they did.

A: You mentioned you were in a foxhole – there's something I wanted to ask. Did officers dig their own foxholes?

R: Well, I sure did. I think General Gavin had an orderly that kept his clothes in order and kept his boots shined – nice, nice kid and he worshipped his general.

There’s one little thing I wanted to mention and this didn’t apply to combat action. Whenever we were in camp, in the morning, General Gavin would come out and three out of five times, there would be a speck of toothpaste on the corner of his mouth. I didn’t want my general to go out that way and he wasn’t conscious of it, so I’d scratch my corner of my mouth, pointing it out and he got the message. He wasn’t happy about it, but he wiped his mouth. I wanted to ask him, “Would you rather I didn’t and let you wear that toothpaste all morning?” But, I didn’t. I didn’t say it.

A: Speaking of hygiene, were you able to brush your teeth every day?

R: I don’t think so.

A: What about shaving?

R: Same thing – whenever I could, though.

A: My dad describes going 36 days without taking a bath, other than a sponge out of a helmet.

R: Oh, seven weeks, I didn’t have a bath and General Gavin didn’t have a bath and we finally got one. This was in Holland because we went to a Dutch hospital and got a hot bath. General Taylor, commander of the 101st, had a rifle bullet in his thigh. He was in the hospital. General Gavin never got wounded in combat. He did everything he could to get wounded. He looked down at Taylor and said, “Max, you S.O.B., how did you get that?”

Taylor was a great soldier, really just a fine man. All of those West Pointers were, except for Colonel Millet in the 507th. We talked about that, haven’t we? He got captured and spent the war in a prison camp in Germany.

A: I want to go back and ask a few questions. You jumped on D-Day and you jumped in Holland. Were you ever wounded?

R: Yes. It was during the last month of the war, in early May. I took a night patrol across the Rhine River and we rowed across. It was a whale of a fight. A bullet either fragmented or hit a piece of stone next to my head and cut the inner campus of my left eye. It bled like a son of a gun. It finally clotted closed. We lost three men on that mission.

We finally got back just about daylight. I reported to my major, and he said, "Thanks for what you did. Sorry about your eye. You better get on down to the medics. We've enjoyed having you with us."

A very kind medical doctor started sponging it out and I finally I saw the light of day. It had not damaged my globe but the soft tissue next to my nose. He said, "Lieutenant, you've got yourself a Purple Heart; now go back to duty." So, that was good for me. That's the story and that's the only wound I got.

A: Were you wearing glasses at the time?

R: No.

A: So it was either a fragmentation or ricochet or something like that? Was there metal in there?

R: There was a piece of something in there, whether it was metal or stone, but he took something out.

A: And after cleaning it out, you were able to see and get back to work?

R: Yep, and got my Purple Heart.

A: Did you receive any other awards?

R: I got a Bronze Star. We'd already been over the LaFiere Causeway. I was shoulder to shoulder with Captain Bob Rae. I recommended a DSC for one of my men who was right with us – it was a little gaggle of us - a Silver Star for the other one. The little one never got anything. The other guy got the DSC, which as you know is next to the Medal of Honor. He got his and got back to being a gold miner in

Colorado. General Gavin gave Captain Rae a DSC. I didn't get nothing, even though I was right there with them. Nobody thought about it and I wasn't going to ask anybody for it.

Going back, there was one incident… after we jumped into Normandy, for some reason, I had left some of my men somewhere and I was trying to find Colonel Maloney and the 507th. I actually came across General Gavin and he asked, "Soldier where are you going?" I told him I was trying to find Colonel Maloney. He said he was on down the road.

I came on a small dirt road and there was a lot of small arms fire going on. I was by myself. In the ditch on the right – the firing was coming from the left, a lot of small arms stuff – was one of our lieutenants from the 507th and about seven or eight men. All of them, including the lieutenant, had his helmet down over his face and was down as far as he could get. Nobody was firing.

Somebody had to do something. I ran alongside the road yelling at them, "Start firing, start firing!" They looked up, grabbed their guns and started firing. Almost immediately the incoming fire stopped. The lieutenant later said, "That was really something you did; I'll have to write you up." Well, he was killed the next day. So, I survived and I did my job and a decoration here or there.

A: As you know, I've been digitizing reports for a long time. My recent trip to D.C., I was at the National Archives and finished scanning all of the General Orders for the 80th Division. What I'm doing now is creating a database of those men who received awards so that I can search and find them easier. When I read about what these men did to receive those awards, it's incredible. I can just envision some of the things that you've done.

I want to ask you about prisoners, both ours and theirs. Let me focus on the 82nd Airborne. Did you know anyone personally that was captured by the Germans and then came back to the unit?

R: I know several who were captured, including Colonel Millet of the 507th. There was another one. In the Holland mission, one plane from the 504th crashed – that's the one where the explosive caught on fire and burned through the fuselage. The men dropped through, but the crew didn't make it. Those men were captured. One little, slight guy – he escaped from a Germany prison camp in Germany three times. He made it the third time. He worked his way back to our lines, found his unit in the 504th, and reported to duty. I knew him personally.

A: Did you talk with him about his experience? Did he say how he was treated?

R: I don't think I heard him say. He found that a lot of German people were sympathetic to him and he worked his way back, stopping here and there at farms.

So far as I know, none of my men were captured. There's a picture of me somewhere with two German prisoners that I had turned up somewhere.

A: You captured some German soldiers. Can you tell me about that?

R: I don't remember the incident, but I may have that picture around somewhere. There I am with these two soldiers. They look pretty disappointed. They should have known that they were going to get better care than in the German army. In the latter part of the war, our troops captured companies and battalions of Germans.

A: I heard, but I don't know how to describe the difference, but capturing a German soldier versus a unit that gives itself up, like waving the white flag.

R: The German soldiers were tough. They just didn't jump and wave the flag. They were really fine soldiers. But the last part of the war, there were old men and kids and some of those were really not properly trained as soldiers. But the average German soldier was one tough son of a gun.

A: And those were regular army?

R: Whatever they were. Although the top soldiers, the SS, all of those guys were just phenomenal, beautifully trained – they knew everything.

I got a long-barreled Luger pistol off of one lieutenant, a beautiful thing. I'm not sure they had ever been fired much. I had that and a couple of other guns and kept them for a while. We were in Cooperstown, New York and Dana was getting along in age. Marion said I needed to get those guns out of the house. So, I gave them to a pathologist in Cooperstown. He almost wet his pants.

A: When you capture a German soldier, can you tell me what happens to him?

R: We'd get him back, usually to headquarters, and they would take him on back to a prison somewhere. Someone would first interrogate him. I never interrogated a prisoner – other people were trained to do that.

A: Would that be part of the CIC unit?

R: I don't know. Did I tell you about the captured Germans on D-Day or just after? I was fighting that first day and a half with units of the 101st. At one point, there were a collection of us from different units, and there were several prisoners. They were all huddled together. One prisoner, who had lived in New York and with the usual New York swagger, he got up and said, "You guys. You'd better be careful, you're not going to survive this, they're going to kill you and cut you to pieces." He started walking away from us; the sergeant who was in charge of him took aim and shot him three times in the back – he didn't talk anymore.

Now, that was justified and it shocked a couple of the German soldiers as well as a couple of ours. You can't let a prisoner escape.

A: Did you ever witness or hear about any atrocities that the Allies enforced on the Germans?

R: No.

A: We've scattered about a little and we were talking about the Battle of the Bulge. You mentioned you were in a foxhole many times. You mentioned on Christmas day you ate a cooked meal. But on many other days, you ate K-rations?

R: Oh yea. Most of the time. C-rations and K-rations.

A: What's the difference between C-rations and K-rations?

R: I don't know. One is better than the other. I think the K-rations were better than the C-rations.

A: They came in a kit? A kit for breakfast, one for lunch, and one for dinner?

R: I don't think it was that much. I think the kit was all the same. You'd just manage to cook it up over a little gas stove if you could.

A: Was that part of the equipment you had?

R: It came from somewhere.

A: Did you share a foxhole with anyone?

R: Probably on some occasion. I think of myself in my own foxhole most of the time, when a foxhole was necessary.

A: You've mentioned several events during the Battle of the Bulge. Is there anything else that stands out in your mind, other than it was cold as all get out.

R: No, I don't think so. I don't think we ever got back to the rest area that we had before the Bulge started. But, the war settled down, except when I spent the afternoon in Marlene Dietrich's room; we'd better save that for later.

A: You mentioned that General Gavin was very caring of his men and he'd go out every day and check on them?

R: Absolutely, and I'd be with him.

A: What did that usually involve? A jeep ride to whatever unit he was going to visit?

R: We were constantly in his jeep; he was out every day, looking at the troops.

A: Were reports given, or was it more of morale?

R: He would talk with the officers, of course. One memory I have, he was with Colonel Norton and another Colonel from headquarters – there were three or four of them – standing in a crossroads. I think it was during the Bulge. A lot of shelling coming in, and some small arms fire around. I was trying to get down in the ditch on the road and these guys sounded like they were having a conversation on Sunday afternoon. I wanted to say, “Get the hell out of there.”

Of course, there was that time in Holland when we were being shelled by the Germans, when I said, “Come on General, let’s get the hell out of here.” General Gavin said, “It’s our own stuff, son. It won’t hurt you.” He was a brave guy and took a lot of chances.

A: I guess that’s why he was so well liked by his men.

R: Oh yes. I think part of that reflected on his childhood, when he didn’t have an easy life.

A: We’re in the Battle of the Bulge. I don’t think anyone knew that the Battle of the Bulge ended on January 25. That’s just a historical date. What’s the next major relocation or change or battle that you remember in the January, February 1945 timeframe?

R: Not a lot. We were not in Germany, I think we were in Belgium.

A: Were you in Luxembourg during this time?

R: I don’t think so. It was at Cologne that I crossed the Rhine River, and that would have been in March or April 1945. I don’t have much memory for that, except that it got to be pretty routine – no notable battles.

A: During this time, do you remember how often you were able to write Marion?

R: As often as possible, at least every few days and sometimes every day.

A: Did you ever use V-Mail?

R: Not that I recall.

A: So you were able to send regular letters?

R: Yes.

A: I'm sure she took pictures of her and Judy when Judy was first born. Do you remember getting that first picture?

R: I don't distinctly remember that first picture.

A: That would have been when you were back in England after the D-Day jump, when you were back at the Airborne School.

R: Yes.

A: At the Battle of the Bulge, she would have been six months?

R: Yes, Judy was born July 2, 1944. She would have been six months old. Beautiful child.

A: Did you have a camera?

R: No, a lot our guys captured cameras. The Leicas and the Kodaks. I didn't, I guess I didn't find the right German.

A: That carries us to the point right before you crossed into Germany on the Rhine River, which is probably a good place to stop right now.

Dr. Rufus K. Broadaway
December 9, 2010

R: As we were talking, after the Battle of the Bulge, that settled down for us with not much action. The war slowed for us. Did we get to Marlene Dietrich? As General Gavin's junior aide, I was much more likely to be out in the field with him while Hugo, his senior aide, would be back at division headquarters.

A: This would have been toward the end of January, beginning of February?

R: That's correct. We weren't going any further north in Holland. We were making some advance in Belgium. One day, Marlene Dietrich, the famous movie actress, was in the area. General Gavin said, "Find her and bring her back." So, I got the jeep and driver. We heard from various sources that she was in a small hotel somewhere in Belgium. I got there and inquired about Ms. Dietrich, and let them know I was sent by General Gavin. Her assistant came down, was very nice, and invited me up to Ms. Dietrich's suite. I spent half the afternoon with her, and her aide was there. She was just charming, a lovely woman. And believe me, those legs were just as beautiful as had been advertised.

She said yes that she would love to come to visit the division and General Gavin. She could not come right then, even though I had orders to bring her back. She said no, she had a schedule, but that she would get back and to the division. I came back and gave the General this information. Sure enough, within a few days, she showed up. And of course, everybody she saw her fell in love with her. She really was a beautiful girl.

Now, somewhere along the way, before, during, or after the war, she was a close companion of Jack Kennedy's father. That was a well known fact, even though he was still married. It's no secret. And, somewhere written down, among her lovers was also General Gavin. So, I guess he finally hit the jackpot. And that's all I remember about Marlene Dietrich.

A: Did you know she was an actress before you met her?

R: Oh yes, she was famous before that time and I'm sure I'd seen her movies.

A: Were you star-struck when you met her?

R: Somewhat, but she made me feel very much at ease.

A: So you just spent a couple of hours in her room chatting?

R:	Yes, and her aide was there the whole time. But, I didn't share any of this time with my jeep driver. I don't know where he was, just sitting in the jeep, I guess.

So the war bogged down and nothing unusual happened along the way. I can't remember that we did any training jumps while we were there. I don't think we were equipped to carry that out. Then along April or late March, General Gavin and I had a few good conversations. Although I was so delighted to be his junior aide, I was sort of bored. I think he was sort of bored, and I wanted to get this thing over with. I said something like, "Before the end of the war, I'd like to get back into a rifle company." His ears perked up and he said, "That's interesting. You really mean that, don't you?"

I said "Yes," and he replied, "That can be arranged if you're serious. Where would you like to go?" before then, I had met Jim Magellas, the famous "Maggie" and Rivers, his buddy. Rivers real name was Richard LaRiviere. So I told General Gavin that "3d Battalion, 504 would be wonderful if they had a place."

Well, sure enough they needed another platoon leader there. I was still a first lieutenant. None of us got promoted, interestingly. Even Maggie and Rivers didn't get promoted. They would bring in an occasional captain because the other captain was gone. At any rate, we arranged that and I went there and felt right at home with my old buddies.

Shortly, there came an assignment to take a platoon across the Rhine River, just north of Cologne where we were stationed. This was the Ruhr Pocket just on the other side of the river. The Germans were surrounded. For some reason, Headquarters wanted to know what Germans were in that pocket. As if it made a dime's worth of difference. They were surrounded and we were getting near the end of the war. Still, "Go across and check out the Bayer factory, just north of Cologne and report back." We were to get there, see what was in the factory, and get a prisoner or two if we could.

Well, we got started late. We were in either two or three boats, rowing. These were pretty good boats, even though we had to row across. We got there across the river, everything was quiet. We left a couple of people with the boats and walked along the river on top of the dike. This was in the early morning.

The factory had no action around it, no guards, no Germans. It seems to me that someone ran into some Germans and there was a little small arms fire, but not much. By that time, it was beginning to be daylight. My platoon Sergeant and I talked it over and we thought it was best to get back to the boats, below the dike rather than being silhouetted against the sky on top of the dike, just in case.

I don't know who started firing first, maybe the Germans did. There was a small group of Germans, perhaps a half a platoon or so. I and my BAR man went up, he was ahead of me. I had Maggie's Thompson machine gun. My BAR man's rifle jammed and alerted the Germans. They began firing like mad. They were at the advantage, because we were down by the river, below them. Everybody was on the ground by this time.

I got hit by either a shattered bullet or a piece of stone or shrapnel. Something cut the inner captus of my left eye. That area is well supplied with blood and it bled a lot. I tried to put something over it, but it clotted closed.

We lost three men, but couldn't find them to bring them back. We got back to the boats and by that time it was early light. There were a few Germans around and we were firing at them while we got into the boats. We finally got loose and got back across the river. I went to the battalion commander and reported in. He saw my eye and said something like, "we've enjoyed having you with us; get down to the medics."

The kindest medical doctor started swabbing out my eye, getting clots out of it. Eventually, I could see some daylight. And finally, it appeared that my globe, the eyeball, had not been damaged. The doctor stopped the bleeding and said, "Lieutenant, you're lucky – your eye's ok. You've got a purple heart, go back to duty." Which suited me just fine.

That was the last action that I was involved in. Along that last month, we inched a little closer to Holland. By that time, a lot of prisoners were coming in and it was really beginning to finish up.

A: This would have been in April?

R: Yes, it was late April.

One incident, we had taken an abandoned house for our platoon CP. A rather drunk Russian major and his aide came to the door and we invited him in. He was already drunk and was getting a little drunker. The radio came on with Stalin making a speech. The major jumped up at attention and demanded that we all stand at attention.

We sat around, laughing, saying "you must be out of your mind." The major got very angry about it and was reaching for his gun – he was going to shoot somebody. Well, I was inspired. My sergeant opened the door and I picked up this major one hand on the back of his collar, one hand on his pants, and threw him out the door. His aide didn't know what to do, but followed him out.

During the night, early morning, I woke up to a lot of small arms fire. I thought, oh my God, I've started a hornet's nest and we're going to shoot it out. It turned out that an ammunition dump caught fire.

And that's about the last clear memory that I have of the war.

Of course, after the war was over, it was rather quickly decided who could go home. Now, we had been prepared to go to Japan. The only question was, are we going around this way (over the Pacific) or around this way (through the US). Of course, later on that question didn't need to be answered.

It was decided who could go home first on a system of points. How much time you had, how much active duty you'd had, etc. I was in the top drawer in the group to come home first. While we were waiting, they flew some of us down to the Mediterranean coast, some very well known resort – a very fancy place, though I can't remember the name of it. I was there for several days, it was very refreshing.

A: You were still a first lieutenant?

R: Yes, none of us got promoted.

A: You were still with the 504th?

R: No, in order to go home, I got transferred to the 17th Airborne Division. At one time, they had taken over a resort hotel in Switzerland. They needed somebody to run the hotel, so they talked with me about it. But, it turned out that some major came along and decided that he would be the best one there. Soon thereafter, we came home with the 17th Airborne.

All during this time, I had gotten letters from Marion. Judy was born on July 2, 1942. We had a fairly uneventful ride home. There were no torpedoes to think about at that point. It was a nice ship, though rough seas. Many of the guys were hanging over the side.

A: Was it as crowded on the way back as the way over?

R: It was not crowded for me on the way over. I was in a stateroom with another lieutenant and ate in the first class mess. But on the way back, it was packed. There were a number of us lieutenants on the same state room, stacked up.

A: Do you remember when you made the trip back home?

R: Marion would know, she has all the letters.

A: You weren't part of the Army of Occupation? You would have gone home soon after the war?

R: General Gavin said to me, "You're going to stay in, aren't you son?" I said, "Well sir, I really enjoyed the service and working with you, but I've always wanted to be a doctor. I'm going to go home and give it a try and if it doesn't work out, I'll be back to see you."

A: That may have been an incentive to do well in school.

R: I thought so, too.

Many years later when I wrote to him letting him know I graduated from Harvard Medical School, his letter back to me started with, "Incredible."

I was separated from the service at a Camp in Massachusetts. It was there, very soon after I got back, that Marion came down to meet me with Judy, who at that time was a little more than a year old. She was standing on the seats between us, eyeing me. I was the intruder, of course, she didn't know who I was. Although Marion said she had pointed out daddy on the pictures, but it didn't mean anything to her. It took her days, if not weeks, to accept me as the guy who was going to stay.

A: When you got back to the states, how long did it take for you to muster out?

R: Rather quickly.

A: You said you mustered out as a Captain.

R: I was still a first lieutenant but because of my active duty time, I was still collecting pay until past the first of the year (January 1946) without any duty really. At the time I was discharged, it was with the rank of Captain – a Caption upon discharge.

A: You really didn't serve any time as a Captain?

R: Not then. One summer in medical school, I found out I could get three months active duty at Fort Dix in New Jersey, teaching things like map reading and so on. I got paid for it, which was pretty good pay for a Captain.

Map reading is not a very exciting thing to study and the hour for teaching that was right after the noon meal. These guys had been doing hard physical stuff all morning, chowed down with a big lunch and my classroom was outdoors. They would sit down and promptly going to sleep. I was still carrying a .45 revolver. When about 95% of them were asleep, I pulled it out and shot a few times into the air. That woke them up. They didn't dare sleep anymore in the Map Reading class.

A: When you were with General Gavin, did you and he ever get into any arguments or disagreements?

R: No sir. It was not my place to disagree with my general. When we were in Holland, things had settled down a little bit and they sent a trailer that they had converted into an office, like a mobile command post for our headquarters. It had a bed in it. General Gavin didn't sleep in the trailer, he slept in a foxhole. His aides slept in a foxhole, too.

One time, I don't know who made me do it, I said, "Sir, how about if I sleep in the caravan tonight?" He looked at me like he'd just bitten into a sour lemon and said, "I don't think that's a good idea." That was my answer.

When we were not in combat, around the barracks, he'd frequently come around in the afternoon and said, "let's go for a run, son." Well, he was known as a "slim jim" and had a great stride. I never let him lose me, but I had to pull it out to keep up with him.

He often philosophized and one thing he said I'll never forget, "Son, it's the friends you make along the way that make all the difference." He was a fine, fine person, always looking out for the enlisted men. Because, as you know, he had been one at one time and worked his way up.

A: Did you ever question his orders, to yourself or the other aide.

R: Not that I ever recall, I disagreed with some of the things he did. He and several other brass were standing at a crossroads one day, in Holland. There was a lot of artillery coming in and these guys were standing there, sort of daring. Nobody got hit, but it was really close stuff. I was eyeing this ditch nearby and I would have loved to have been in that ditch, but that wasn't the thing to do.

There was an incident in Holland when we went up on a ridge as an observation post and some of our own tanks behind us started firing at us and it was coming in close. There were some tracks in the road, maybe three or four inches deep and I think I was down all the way in one of those tracks. General Gavin was there, lying on his belly. I said, “General, I think we should get the hell out of here.” He said, “No, son, it’s alright. It’s our stuff – it can’t hurt us.” What was in my mind was having to come back to headquarters and report to General Wingate and that the general had been hit.

Yes, there were a few times when I disagreed with him. Nevertheless, he was always a little formal, he would laugh at things. I never heard him swear; I never heard him tell a dirty joke. Always for the enlisted man. One of the finest people I have ever known.

A: He stayed in – he was career.

R: Yes, he stayed in and was in the Vietnam War. He thought we ought to get out of fighting in their own territory, establish enclaves around the perimeter near the sea. He was a Lt. General at that time and word was he was headed to be the top man, the Chief of the Joint Chief of Staff. But, he resigned as a three-star.

Shortly thereafter, he became president and CEO of the Arthur D. Little Corporation, a big name in Boston. While he was there, Jack Kennedy selected him as ambassador of France, because he was one of the few people that would get along with General Charles de Gaulle, which probably was correct. But a picture of my general, with his stovepipe hat on and cloak, I just know he hated that. I never saw him with that gear on, but I can tell you, he didn’t like it.

I saw him after the war in Miami. There was a reunion of the 82nd Airborne in Miami. They said General Gavin was coming to be our keynote speaker and asked that I pick him up at the airport. I was driving a fairly new little Austin Healey sports car convertible at the time. I met him and we greeted each other warmly. I got his gear and tucked it in, got him seated and buckled in. We got up to the highway, and I gunned it. He grabbed my knee and said, “Son, take it easy. I’m not comfortable in these sports cars.” The great General who had jumped out of airplanes in combat in many different conditions, was not comfortable in sports cars.

We stayed in touch over the years; we usually got a personal Christmas card from him. He died a rather bad death. He was sick and I understand some vertebrae in his back collapsed and he was all bent over. He was in a nursing home somewhere in central Florida. Maggie and I talked about paying him a visit, but I never did. I regret not doing that.

When we got back to the states, we had a parade down 5th Avenue in New York. Maggie was selected to lead the division, out front carrying the flag.

A: That brings us through the end of the war, getting home, and your eventual discharge. When you got home, I believe it was the summer of 1945. But, you were discharged in early 1946. Were you still on active duty?

R: Yes, active duty, but no assignments. I was in Waltham, outside of Boston.

A: So, you didn't have to report to work or anyone? You got time to spend with Marion and Judy?

R: No, didn't have to report to anyone and I got paid for it. The Dempsey's (Marion's family) were wonderful people, and had raised six kids of their own. Of course, I never lived with her at her house until after the war. It was a 21-room house in Waltham. Marion and Judy were living there during my time in the war.

In anticipation of my return, Marion's father built a five-room addition, which was our part of the house. A bedroom or two, full kitchen, and bath. And we had the run of their house. We frequently invited them to our part of the house, but they respected this as our house. That's where we stayed for a long time.

A: Did you have a hard time adjusting to civilian life, after what you'd been through in the war.

R: I don't think so. I was highly anticipatory. I knew what I wanted to do. I didn't know how I'd achieve it. I looked around to find something – the YMCA had an opening and I looked at it for a minute or so, but that wasn't for me. I really wanted to go back to school and get into medical school.

A: You were 26 years old at this time?

R: Yes, that's correct.

A: Do you remember having any dreams about the war or nightmares?

R: No. A solid no. I never have dreamed of being under fire or anything else.

A: I want to go back to one thing. You had told me a story before, and I believe it would have been in April, because that's when the Allies were starting to discover concentration camps. You were near one and you did not go in. Do you remember where that was?

R: It was one of the more well-known ones. A lot of the guys went down there. I just thought, Rufus, that's not one of the things you want to see. Finding these people in skin and bones and starving and dying. Our guys that went there and they were just horrified, horrified. No, I didn't go. It was a conscious decision; I didn't want to see that stuff.

A: Do you know if the 82nd ever participated in the liberation of any of the concentration camps?

R: I do not.

A: I think that about covers it through the war.