Veteran's Name: Frank Bever

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

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Transcriber: Carol Slezak

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(World War II US Army Infantry
Final Rank: Tech Sgt.
Unit: Company F, 379th Infantry, 95th Infantry Division)

Interviewer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. Today is August 10, 2013. We’re sitting outside of the Capitol Ballroom in the Hilton Arlington in Arlington, Tex. And today I have the great privilege of talking with -- Mr. Bever, could you say your name?

Bever: My name is Frank Bever.

Interviewer: Could you spell your last name?

Bever: My last name is spelled B-E-V-E-R.

Interviewer: These are just preliminary questions that the Veterans History Project likes me to get. What is your birth date?

Bever: April 21, 1921.

Interviewer: And where were you born?

Bever: I guess I would say Lagro, Ind., which is a small community near Wabash, Ind. North central part of the state of Indiana.

Interviewer: And what branch of the service were you in?

Bever: Infantry.

Interviewer: Army Infantry.

Bever: Yes.

Interviewer: What were your service dates, roughly?

Bever: Roughly from June 1942 to (thinking out loud: oh, I was in there during the dropping of the big...) uh, July of 1945.

Interviewer: Were you there when the bomb dropped?
Bever: Yes.

Interviewer: That’s August.

Bever: Yes, let’s make that August then. At Camp Shelby [Camp Shelby, Miss.]. Preparing to get together – assemble – a whole division to invade Japan.

Interviewer: And what Company were you with?

Bever: I was with Co. F, 379th Infantry.

[2:11]

Interviewer: And what was your main job during the war?

Bever: I was pretty much just a common combat infantryman during the most part, but then after a great number of casualties, deaths, injuries, I was discharged as a technical sergeant in the infantry.

Interviewer: So you were promoted along the way.

Bever: Well, because any veteran at that time had priority over any other [person]. You were there, you had the experience, consequently they would say, “Hey, you need to lead this squad or platoon.”

Interviewer: What was your final rank?

Bever: Technical Sergeant.

Interviewer: What were your parents’ names?

Bever: My father was James W. My mother was Neille May Bever.

Interviewer: What did your father do for a living?

Bever: My father was a farmer.

Interviewer: What kind of farm?

Bever: It was a grain farm basically, close to Wabash, Ind. It was a 160-acre farm.

Interviewer: What did your mother do?

Bever: My mother I guess would be called a housewife. She had seven children, and that is a full-time job.

Interviewer: How many children?
Bever: Seven children. I had five brothers and one sister.

Interviewer: Where were you in the lineup?

Bever: In the middle: three older, three younger.

[A female voice says, “Your poor mom”:] I didn’t think about it then [what a tough job my mom had], I do now. How could I be so dumb [laughs]? ... I get emotional talking about it.

Interviewer: Did you have a nickname?

Bever: No. I was responsible for the nicknames of some of my army buddies. I had a Nicholson. He was Nick. I had a Corbin, he was Cobb, due to my pushing for that name. You don’t go by your own name. I don’t know what I might have been called....They were complimentary. It’s easier to say, “Hey, Cobb, get that guy on your left or right.” Instead of, “Mr. Corbin [etc.].”

Interviewer: What would people call you?

Bever: Beve, probably. They call all my kids that in school.

Interviewer: What was your family like?

Bever: I guess my chief recollection is earlier years before I graduated from high school. We were involved in farming. A hundred and sixty acres is a lot of work. To prepare, put out the corn, harvest the corn. A field of wheat, a field of oats, perhaps. And then three or four cows to milk—however that wasn’t my job, that was a younger brother’s job. I planted a lot of corn with my mules. Just common, ordinary, everyday farming activities, until I graduated and by then the military was getting closer and closer and pretty soon I got my summons in the mail. And away we go.

Interviewer: Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack?

Bever: December 7, 1941. [I was] probably about 19 or 20. I was working in a factory in Wabash, Ind. I was friends with high school graduates who graduated the same year as I did. Boys would come out and I had a hoop up on the corn crib. Basketball, big time. Oh yeah, I’m going to be a star. They’d come out and we’d play basketball, on the weekends.

But I did indeed leave the farm activity and worked in Wabash in the factory manufacturing radios for a year or so. Maybe I was there when I got my summons.

Interviewer: Is that where you were when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Bever: No, I was on the farm playing basketball. It was a Sunday. It was very cold in north central Indiana, but it was a bright day. I didn’t have a clue where Pearl Harbor was at the time. It didn’t mean anything, quite frankly. I didn’t think about, “Oh boy, that’s going to
affect your life in a year or two." I didn’t think about that. I was going to be making radios, and playing basketball. Easy going, no problem.

Interviewer: Did any of your other siblings join the military?

Bever: They didn’t join, but they were on the list. Older brother was in an industry that I think would qualify [as an exemption]. Oh, yeah, a younger brother was in the occupational forces in Germany. Ironically about the time I was coming back across the Atlantic he was going the other way, to occupy. Because you know when we left was pretty well squared away. And he talked about Heidelberg, Germany, where he was.

Interviewer: So do you remember getting the notice in the mail?

Bever: I’ve still got it. In my group of 95th stuff. A man I just lost in my hometown, Dwayne Snell. You probably have him in your records. His army serial number according to his daughter, who we sat tonight with, was 35362348. Mine’s the same, only 2350. Two away.

Interviewer: So you got the notice. How many days or weeks did you have to show up?

Bever: I think it was about a two-week interval. You will be at the Big Fort Elevator in Wabash, Indiana, at 4:30, Thursday morning, June – I can’t remember the exact date. I don’t think we were required to bring anything, as I recall.

Interviewer: Was it a long trip?

Bever: The train? Two or three miles.

Interviewer: And what did your parents say about you going?

Bever: I don’t know what they said about going but I know how mom acted coming home. There’s a big bus station in Wabash. I got off the bus. First time I ever saw my mother run. I crossed the .... [pauses, starts crying] ... It’s an emotional moment. She runs across that station lot where the car was parked to see her son. Whoo, that was, that was...memorable. [She was] sitting there worrying for a year while I was up there in France and Germany, never knowing when she might get that letter, “Sorry to inform you...”

Interviewer: So, you showed up and got on the train, what happened next? Where did they send you?

[13:00]

Bever: South about 80 or 90 miles to Indianapolis, the capital of our state of Indiana, to Camp Atterbury. It’s still in existence. There we received our uniforms, took off our civilian clothes and put them in a bag and somebody sent them home. I think the army did – I don’t recall. [laughs] That was a great deal for the army. They said, “We’ll help you, we’ll send your clothes home,” hahaha.
After we were there a day, getting our supplies, we jumped on that train and headed west. That's all they told us. No clue whatsoever. And one of the corporals on that train had that little cap that they wear, it's cloth, and he had it jerked down on the front and back, that was the style, I found out later on. I wondered what that kind of cap had to do with the military. I found out later he was ahead of the game. He'd been in for a little bit and he knew how to fashion that cotton cap. He had it on his head at a cocky angle and all that good stuff. Those are little instances I remember. That was kind of strange. It was insignificant, but I did remember.

**Interviewer:** That's what makes things come alive. So now you're heading west on a train. Where did you stop?

**Bever:** Eventually we stopped after two or three days on the train. It took us that long to get to get to Camp Swift, Texas. They didn't have any priorities as I recall. They would stop every once in a while for the guys to get off the train and relieve themselves. Just along a regular section of the track. There were several of us in the car. I don't think I got much sleep on the way out there. Never knowing indeed where we were headed. I can't quite figure how they could do that. Once we arrived at Camp Swift, I'm sure it was General Twaddle [Harry L. Twaddle] who greeted us: "You guys be careful because I don't want to hear of any one guy getting in trouble and that one guy messing up all the division. Toe the line, stay out of trouble."

That's about all I remember. Oh, and they were playing [the song] "Deep in the Heart of Texas" when we got off the train. This was in June [1942]. We were the first inhabitants of barracks at Camp Swift. They were brand new. We helped with some saw detail, because they were [still building], and finishing some of the roofing and so forth. But boy we got down to brass tacks pretty quick. They started taking us out under a few lone trees maybe a mile, two miles from the barracks. You sit there and the leaders - the corporals and the sergeants -- would have a lesson in taking a B.A.R. [Browning automatic rifle], an M1 apart and putting it together. And military courtesy. That took a long time to get that all accomplished. Those were the initial lessons.

**Interviewer:** And what was your drill instructor like?

**Bever:** I don't remember having any problem with him. He was a sergeant. Strong as heck. But he'd just as soon swear at you as give you a compliment. But I didn't have any difficulty with him. I was one of the first to receive a good conduct medal. At that time I was embarrassed, quite frankly. I don't need that stupid, red, thing. But as I look back I think that I earned that. It was honorable. I kept it, and I wore it later on. But at that time, I was like, Oh, what's he giving me that thing for.

**Interviewer:** So you're at Camp Swift. Are more men coming in every day?
Bever: Yes, yes. To get to 16,000 or 20,000 you know it's going to take a lot of trains. All over the U.S. I cannot fathom the numbers of various young men...

Interviewer: You wouldn't know my father now but you probably would have recognized him there, because he was one of the first people in Camp Swift. He came from Cincinnati. He might have even been on the train that stopped and picked you up.

Bever: Yes, that's a possibility. And we don't dictate these things.

Interviewer: So at Camp Swift you went through the whole training with him.

Bever: Initially the military courtesy training -- you better learn to salute and you better learn to salute properly or someone is going to be on your case. Walking down there it was two or three blocks from our barrack. And if you met a second lieutenant across the road going to the barrack, you’d better salute him or you might get stopped by him or somebody. That was unusual. I got together with my family later on, prior to going overseas, and they couldn't understand the salute. It's hard to explain them. But at the time that was vital. That was something at the time.

Interviewer: Did you ever forget to salute?

Bever: One salute and then it was stand and stamp. You had to learn to march. At Indiantown Gap [Pennsylvania] one time, we'd been out getting some lessons. We were within a block of our barrack. There's Captain Howard leaving and he starts counting cadence ("hup, ho, hey, four"), and he [yells], "Beardsley, get in step." My name wasn't Beardsley, but Beardsley was beside me. I don't know to this day whether I was out of step or whether it was Jim Beardsley, my California buddy. But he hollered it out.

Interviewer: Was Jim your best buddy in the army?

Bever: Just about. I can't understand yet how I got to be close friends with two from the ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]. You'd think it would be somebody who's been in from Camp Swift days. But they came in and they were so personable. I liked them. We got along good. We started going to reunions and that enforced the allegiance between us. Al Cur and Jim Beardsley. Al Cur from New Jersey. Jim Beardsley from the San Francisco area.

[22:25]

Interviewer: Coming from the Midwest, I know you went out to Fort Coxcomb [Cal.] in the desert. Did you just roll with everything or were some things harder to stomach than other things?

Bever: The tents in California. The first night, especially, I remember. It was hot, maybe 90 degrees, in the daytime. Then at nighttime there's a little sheet on your fold-out bunk, just a little covering for protection. But boy by midnight I bet it was 30-40 degrees. And you could
hear a rustling in the eight-man tent after it got real dark. We were suffering. It was cold out there.

Interviewer: What sort of things did you do during your desert maneuvers?

Bever: We’d go out for a week at a time and somebody suggested they would attack after we were out there, so to get in a defensive position. We learned to dig fox holes a lot out there. It was fairly easy digging but all we had was a little spade that was two feet long. And then we’d learn to be on guard. Two hours on guard, two hours off. By the time you got halfway asleep, somebody would be shaking you and waking you up—it was time to go guard again. I recall quite vividly those two things. That wasn’t easy. But in a week’s time our problems were over. We’d go back and recover in our tent. That was our so-called desert maneuvers. We wondered where we’d go because of that training. But we also wondered that after getting mountain maneuvers training in West Virginia.

Interviewer: Did you also go to Fort Polk [La.] for the Louisiana maneuvers? It was swampy.

Bever: Yes, it was. I saw guys drinking out of horse troughs. They didn’t take care of the water in the one canteen they had hanging on their belt. They drank it all up in an hour or two of our daily maneuvers. But that was simple in contrast to [other places]. It’s strange what you remember.

Interviewer: And what about Fort Sam Houston [Tex.]?

Bever: Oh yes, that was the best camp I was ever in. It was close to San Antone [San Antonio], and once in a while we would get weekend passes. And I had a lot of crap that I bought there, and stuff I sent my mom and dad. Mom had a little lace thing [I bought for her there] and I still have it in my collection. And it was a beautiful camp, I thought. And we went out to Camp Bullis, nearby, about 25 miles out in the country. That’s the first 25 miles they hit us with. We hiked out to a tent camp near Camp Bullis. And that’s where they played, and it was so obvious out there in those god forsaken areas, they played the song “Retreat” at 9 p.m. every night. I hear the strains of that music right now.

Interviewer: Sing it right now.

Bever: [laughs] I can’t. But you know what the bugle sounds like in that song.

Interviewer: Do it.

Bever: [laughs] I can’t sing. The song is “Retreat” isn’t it?

Interviewer: [Singing] Day is done... [“Taps”]

Bever: I want my kids to play that when they put me in the ground. That’s “Taps.”

Interviewer: Did you hate “Reveille,” always hearing it every morning?
Bever: I didn’t hate any of it. But I wouldn’t want to do it again. It was rough. I had come from a farm background. I had some rough times on the farm. In contrast to some of those guys who come from Chicago, big cities. They didn’t have a clue as to what they might be confronted with. They didn’t know how to take care of their feet on that 25-mile hike. We’d stop every hour for 10 minutes. They had all kinds of blisters. I didn’t have any blisters.

Interviewer: And why is that?

Bever: I don’t know, unless my feet were attuned to walking more than those guys.

Interviewer: Because you grew up walking on bare feet.

Bever: Oh yes, that’s what we did in the summertime. I was barefoot basically all summer. And I’m not ashamed of that. But we were talking about Fort Sam Houston. It had a river down through San Antone, and that was a good place to spend a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Met a couple of nice girls there. That’s a beautiful city. I appreciate it. They also had one of the largest movie houses there. It had stars hanging down from the ceiling. That stuck in my mind as a plus.

[30:10]

Interviewer: We’re jumping around. But I think the chronology was Camp Swift, then Sam Houston, then I think Louisiana Maneuvers [Fort Polk], then Camp Coxcomb, to Indiantown Gap. Did you know where you were going at times? Or did you just hop on a plane, or train, and get there?

Bever: I can’t really with valid words explain that I did know. I don’t think so. I think they told us if we were headed towards, for example, Pennsylvania. Not knowing if that would end up being our port of embarkation, as it is fairly close to the East Coast. But [Indiantown Gap] was a great camp too. It involved the mountain maneuvers in West Virginia, and we were in the midst of those when D-Day took place [in Normandy, France]. And I looked to the heavens and thanked my God that I was there, instead of on D-Day. Because I had a hunch as to what those guys were going through. Three months later we did indeed go in on Omaha Beach, and the evidence was all there still. A lot of it was there. I saw disabled jeeps and all kinds of military equipment still strewn on the beach. It wasn’t pleasant.

Interviewer: Back to Indiantown Gap. So ASTP guys show up there. What did you think? Some people said it was “whiz kids” showing up.

Bever: Well that was O.K. I tried my best to accept them. I knew what they were putting up with after being already in for a year or two. And I wasn’t ever sorry that I did accept them. And that carried through pretty much into combat, where I met Jim and Al. I met them at Indiantown Gap. They were ASTP people, coming from these high-tech collegiate people. They were supposed to know it all, then coming and putting them in with us simple people [laughing]. Anybody can get in the infantry. I just heard it here a moment ago that the infantry was the very core of the army. You mention infantry and everyone say, “Oh yeah,
you walk everywhere you go.” And I believe that. I got to say that I look overhead in maybe April of ’45, and here comes wave after wave of huge aircraft, bombers I think. But they weren’t really on a mission to bomb. And I looked overhead on a clear, cool morning of April and thought, “Man, look at that. That’s where I ought to be instead of down here on the ground, trudging along.” But we had men from our church that I talked to after I discharged, and they were in the air corps and in that capacity of bombing. And it occurred to me that those guys are subjected to one heck of a lot of bombing themselves. All the aerial stuff that the Germans had pretty well perfected.

Interviewer: One of the bomber navigators I talked to said that there’s no trip away up there. You get in trouble you’re on your own.

Bever: That’s the thing. It’s a long way down. That was not the best place to be either. But there was no good place in the combat area.

Interviewer: How’d you do with the mountain maneuvers? Did you repel?

Bever: Yeah, that was the basic thing. I did alright. I didn’t break a leg or an arm or anything. You start way up there, you get to the top, you get that rope, and you got to know how to angle that rope and kick off from that surface that was pretty bare-bones as I recall. And then it rained every afternoon at 4:15. Believe me, you can bank on it. All we had was a little poncho. It rained just enough to soak you through. And that wasn’t pleasant because at nighttime when you’re supposed to take it easy and rest a little you’re soaked to the bone. I don’t know how I got through that without getting pneumonia or dying.

Interviewer: So now you’re there and you hear about D-Day, and it’s not that long before they take you into Massachusetts, and Fort Miles Standish, to take off overseas. Do you remember the name of the ship you were on?

Bever: Yes, USS West Point overseas, coming back under a different name.

Interviewer: How’d you do? You’re from the heart of the country.

Bever: They didn’t bring you there to be afraid. I did not get sick and have to throw my head over the rail. That’s a common story. I don’t know why I didn’t [get sea sick]. I can’t get on a plane to come to Fort Worth, Tex., but I stood there eight days on the high waters. I’d get out on the rail and look ahead and here’s those big wheels jumping up, and that old ship’s a rocking. I was supposed to get sick, but I didn’t. Maybe those four high bunks that they stacked in the bowels of that very ship had something to do with it.

Interviewer: Which bunk were you in?

Bever: I do not recall, but there were four.

Interviewer: How was the food on the ship?
Bever: Great. All men in compartment 4B formed for chow on the port side. We were ready. [laughs] To form. That’s all we had to do at the time was eat.

[A female voice asks if he was into playing cards:] No, I wasn’t much into that. On the farm we didn’t have time for anything extracurricular. I didn’t shoot craps—oh, yeah I did. But I never won any money. I didn’t even learn how to play euchre or four-card dud, or whatever it is they called it. I’d rather shoot those dice. [laughs] I never won anything. I have a friend from Chicago, oh, he was a gangster from the word go. And I’d see those guys have a handful of bills in their left hand, and shooting with their right hand. Then they’d roll them out and depending on what number was showing you’d see how much the other guys around that circle [owed]. But that took place in the desert areas and in the mountain areas. In the brief moment, you had to have something to do, but I never learned to do that. I never learned to smoke, or drink. I’ve never known what to attribute that to. From your mom and dad [people suggest], but my dad, he didn’t smoke, but he chewed. [laughs]

Interviewer: So you take the ship over and I think you probably got to Liverpool [England]. Do you have any memories of arriving in Liverpool?

Bever: Yes, [it took eight days]. The only thing I think about [laughs] is that little train car—the “Forty and Eight” they called it—that stuck us on to go down through Northern England. I have no clue how many people that would have held but obviously they had to make several trips. There were close to 10,000 on that ship, I think, they told us, on the West Point.

Interviewer: It was a converted ocean liner. Had they painted the West Point a camouflage color when you were on it?

Bever: To my knowledge, no. I can remember walking up that gang plank and wondering what lies ahead, and there was a whole new ballgame we were about to encounter.

Interviewer: So you get to England. I understand a lot of people went to Camp Barton Stacey near Manchester. Did you?

Bever: Yes, that was the name of the camp. My son and [his] wife just visited that about six-eight months ago. The camp is gone, but they vested that area. And that was good to hear about him having interest, and coming back with some stories about what was happening about 68 years ago.

Interviewer: Did you make it into London at all?

Bever: I don’t think London. What was the name of the other city there? I don’t think we went into London. I’ve got the address and the name of the place. It was the same place they brought me back to when I was injured nearby. I remember the Germans were shelling pretty violently at nighttime...

Interviewer: Was it buzz bombs?
Bever: Yeah, we heard them at that time and then after [later as well]. They were hitting them pretty regularly. England suffered tremendously.

Interviewer: Did you get to talk to any of the British people?

Bever: I tried to, but I couldn’t understand them very well [laughs]. They talk another language. I get a kick out of that when I hear it to this day … I think back indeed to those times. And every corner had a pub, you know? A lot of those guys spent an awful lot of time in those pubs. It didn’t bother me, I could walk right by. I don’t have any problems with my five sons to this day because I think it was in their very soul, make-up, that they had no desire [to drink alcohol]. And that can kill so many families. Kill.

Interviewer: So then you go from England and you get on Liberty ships and you go over to Normandy. Did you climb off the Liberty ships?

Bever: Yes. Huge ships. We would be up on top of there and they had ropes all along the sides, and you’d have a big pack on your back and a rifle slung across your shoulder and you gotta get off of that thing and come down there and get in a smaller landing craft. But at least we could get to shore without fire from the enemy. We could go in and get off it at the beaches where three months prior there were dead bodies floating every direction.

Interviewer: Was that your first experience from seeing something at war?

Bever: We spent about three weeks in the apple orchards, then started walking closer to the active combat. We replaced the 5th division that had been in combat. Getting up there we experienced a heck of a lot. St. Lo, France – Northern France – I’ll never forget that place. Every building that I saw was leveled. House, business, anything. They took American tanks with a big blade on the front and made us a path through it in order for the infantry or any mechanized piece of equipment for the U.S. Army to get through. And it was so completely destroyed. And I thought, “Oh it’s the stupidity of war.” But that’s the way it was.

Interviewer: Did you see any French people?

Bever: Not in that area, but I can remember going into French towns and there would be a column of infantry on each side and the little children who lived in those areas were running up alongside [in a French accent], “Chocolat.” [The children would say], “I need something to eat. I need something to drink.” That was terrifying, too, I think. They were suffering.

[46:30]

Interviewer: So you got on the Forty and Eights, and you got on the trains in France, I understand. Were you part of the Red Ball [truck convoy system]?

Bever: No, it was available though. Some of my army buddies got on it after we went to France. They came back with some pretty strong stories about the things that happened. That was after Patton got his [strategy organized]. Our company was familiar with that.
Interviewer: Did you go through the hedgerows?

Bever: We went through them but it wasn’t all that defended where we were. We were towards the outskirts of France before Co. F and the 95th in general was.... Moscow Farm was an area bordering Metz. My close army buddy at the time, strictly 100 percent GI, was one of the first men from Co. F taken. I’ve regretted Arthur Merckley’s passing because he was such a strong GI. He was an assistant squad leader and one of the first taken. The irony of war.

Interviewer: When do they assign you to companies?

Bever: To begin with. You have to have somebody to fall out with to make sure everybody is there. At Camp Swift. I don’t know how that happened. I supposed they went down the line. From the word go you knew.

[50:20]
Interviewer: So you’re going across and you get close to where the 90th Infantry is?

Bever: I think it was the 5th that we relieved, to get into the big show.

Interviewer: Where do you start hearing the Germans shelling?

Bever: All I can tell you is that the closer we got to the front it was pretty obvious what was going on. What they were using for killing purposes. And basically that was the small arms fire of the rifle men. And [I’m not sure exactly where we were at the time but] Metz was where we really got into the fracas.

Interviewer: So tell me a story about one time you felt a little nervous or afraid.

Bever: Our first attack really was in a big, open field. There weren’t any trees. I look over to the side and in a big shell hole here’s Ron Bleecker, my buddy I trained with for a long time. He’s in a hole, he’s injured, severely. What do I do? The rest of the guys are all rushing ahead and trying to get ground gain. I jumped in the shell hole with him and got my first aid kit off of my belt and wrapped it. Arm or leg? I don’t have knowledge to this day where he was injured. And then after that happened, about 10-15 minutes had elapsed and the rest of my company had pushed on through. What am I going to do? I can’t go out and fight the war myself.

So I had a decision to make. Do I run ahead and try to find the rest of my squad, or do I go back where I just had come from, where the kitchen was located and so forth. I think that was break number one. I went back. Call it yellow, or whatever you want to. I wasn’t going to go into that flaming that I knew lay ahead. And I had administered to a friend that might have helped save his life. So I went back. I lost contact with my company until probably a week or two later. It was a long time and I don’t recall exactly how long. But I was in the area of our company kitchen and I stayed there, I guess. And I don’t know where I slept or what I ate. I supposed I went through the company kitchen—I got my food there I reckon. I am speculating, because some things escape from your mind.
Interviewer: You mentioned yesterday that a couple days ago you left a man named Ron Bleecker and you felt bad about it. And you found him years later.

Bever: That’s true. Did I save him? He has a different story. He talks about another man jumping in! That’s another thing. Some of these stories I’ve read since then about combat, I question: is that correct? But yes, I had a little autograph book prior to going overseas. I bet I had 50-75 names of our company men inside that book. Ron has signed it from a city in New Jersey. I went for probably 20-30 years trying to find him, by writing him at his address in that book, unsuccessfully. And then I finally talk to the head of our reunion, and asked him [to put the word out that I was looking for Ron]. And he did that. And one night I got a call from Michigan, and it was his wife. She had seen a notice that I was looking for him. She was elated because she saw my name in it. And I asked her what she was doing in Michigan; she was supposed to be in New Jersey. Found out later on he went to the University of Michigan, got an education there, raised a family there, had a big dairy farm.

Then indeed, we got to visit each other, when he went to a reunion. That was a great meeting. That was a meeting-and-a-half. And I got his side of the story. And he wrote a little book. And he wrote about me and someone else ministering to him in that hole out in the middle of a godforsaken area. There was a little variation in our stories. That made me wonder too about the details of that thing.

Interviewer: Was that on the outskirts of Metz?

Bever: It was the first attempt to capture anything in Metz. It was a big, open area.

Interviewer: You went back to where the kitchen was, and it took a week or so for you to find your company. Did you find them or did they find you?

Bever: I found them.

Interview: And what did they say?

Bever: It was Sergeant Browning, and I don’t remember him questioning the loyalty if you want to call it that. He didn’t say boo. He welcomed me back, “Frank, it’s good to see you.” And I thought, “How good can it be for me?” But I was back with them and we re-formed in front of a huge castle-like building in the center of Metz. And we got other replacements in Metz, too. And I was one of them. I don’t remember anyone every questioning me. I hope they didn’t question my loyalty. I don’t know.

Interviewer: Were you part of the attack on Metz?

Bever: That was part of it, when we first jumped off. And then, I can’t quite put the pieces together, because I was sitting on a hillside, overlooking the river Moselle, which indeed runs through it, and I told my father in heaven you get me home, I’m going to attend church regularly [laughing]. He got me home and I’m still attending. I wish I could remember. Bleecker did indeed take notes. He wrote a little booklet, a paperback. And it was amazing to me the details he had in that little book. Dates to relate to. But I lost track of the continuity. But I remember being out in the open area and the Germans shot a big flair at
nighttime. Over here lay a cow dead. Over here was a horse dead. I don't know I happened to be out in those areas but it was plain I'd better hit the dirt, or look for a low spot. And I did. I survived that alright.

Interviewer: Did you go into the city of Metz, finally?

Bever: Boy, I ought to be able to remember that too, but I don't have much of a recollection of that. I think I did later on when I was injured. That's where they took me to get the shrapnel out of my body. But at the time of the initial attack, I don't remember being in there. That's a void.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you saw a German, or German soldier?

Bever: Realistically it was at the close of the war, when those big planes I was telling you about [appeared] overhead. And look up in front on those big autobahns. Hitler had built the best streets I ever saw. Give that guy credit. He was preparing for the future. He was preparing to rule the world and "I'm going to have the best country in the world." It didn't work. It didn't work. To my knowledge, and thankfully, I didn't take a life.

[1: 01:30]

Interviewer: You may not have shot a German, but you were injured by German stuff. And this was Dec. 3, 1944. And you're on the outskirts of Saarlautern, now Saarlouis, Germany, advancing toward the Saar River. What happened?

Bever: Very simple. We were going into the city of Saarlautern. Column of infantry on this side, column on that side. In the middle a huge, huge, U.S. tank. The Germans, the way I got it figured, were up ahead -- maybe a half mile, maybe a mile. I figured they aimed with deadly accuracy. I don't know if they were aiming at the infantry or aiming at the tank, or both. All of a sudden we're walking along there, and boom. An explosion out pretty much in the middle of the street. I don't know if they disabled that tank. I didn't give a damn. All I know I looked down, and the blood's streaming down my leg, all over my eye, I couldn't see. Small bits of shrapnel, thankfully small because I should have lost my eyesight.

Fifty or 60 years later, I went to my dentist at home. They took [x-rays] because I had to have a partial replaced. [The dentist] looks at the X-rays and says, "What's all these black things around your mouth?" You guessed it. Small pieces of shrapnel, working their way out, 50 years later. But I never had a problem seeing. They took the biggest chunk, which was right above my knee, out. I wish I'd had them save that, it would have been a great souvenir.

Interviewer: So the shell that got you was presumably a German 88 that killed a GI on the opposite side of the street, and wounded a couple others. So you have such a good sense of the big picture. Because [you have since written], "So from the enemy standpoint, that particular round was very profitable."

Bever: Because anybody they could injure or kill to get off of the line was to their advantage.
Interviewer: That’s in December. You’re wounded. Where did you go?

Bever: Well, someone start’s hollering, “Medic, medic.” We always had a medic close by, he was a platoon member. And they did a marvelous job [taking me out] on a stretcher. I don’t know how we got to the company command post. [I assume that’s where we went first.] Then one thing led to another and I was back in Metz, again. And I saw the first white sheet for bedding I had seen in probably a year’s time. Because they were going to operate on me. And they doctored my leg up, stitched my facial wounds. I slept, and I slept and I slept. I was on the floor, but it was nice, white pillowcases [etc.]. And they took good care of me. Then they stuck me on a plane.

Interviewer: You’ve said, “I still have a vivid recollection of Christmas 1944” and you have a menu from the hospital in which you were recuperating. Is that in England?

Bever: Yes, that’s in Cheltenham.

[Female voice: What kind of plane did you fly on?]

Bever: A C-47 cargo plane. With two dozen injured on it. They had to make their trip profitable.

Interviewer: So you’re in England on Christmas and you still have a menu from the hospital. I’m going to read this. In the meantime, so you’re back in England are there nurses there? So are the first women you’ve been able to talk to for [a long time]?

Bever: Probably, I didn’t think of it. But probably. They had to be there. There were a great number of wounded in the hospital that needed to be cared for. And they fed you regularly. Then therapy starts. You had to learn to walk. I limped for probably 3-4 weeks. I tried to put on a good show, keeping limping, so I wouldn’t have to get back to my outfit too quick. [laughs] I saw men rubbing dirt in their wounds when I was there so they didn’t have to go back. I didn’t go to that extreme.

Interviewer: After weeks of rehab, you had more and more hikes, and you returned to your outfit in April 1945. Was everyone happy to see you?

Bever: The turnover in the third platoon by that time – I didn’t recognize probably 2/3 of the guys. Because they were either killed or injured, and replaced with others. A few older guys were still there. Sgt. Browning, again, Emporia Kans., greeted me. He was one of the best men and one of the only men I ever knew that received a field [commendation]. He knew what he was doing.

Interviewer: It says here [reading] that when you joined your company they were in Dusseldorf, on the Rhine River. After days of cleaning out a number of small cities my buddy and myself found ourselves on the way back. What do you mean “cleaning out?”

Bever: There’s always German GI’s that hang around just trying to delay the progress of any unit trying to get through there. You have to go house by house by house. You go in there and you try to take command of the house. Any – we used a slang term for a GI of a German
army – they would sit back there. Maybe a church, for instance, would have some snipers. They would sit back there, up in the top of the church, looking down at any Americans they could shoot, disable or kill.

**Interviewer:** The general today said that the first time someone shoots at you and you realize they want to kill you, it's a game changer.

**Bever:** I don't recall that ever happening to me, as an individual. But the houses, for instance, you'd go in and I had a sidearm, just a little revolver that we'd taken from some house along the way prior to that. You'd confiscate stuff. You didn't ask. If it's a weapon, take it. I still have it, and I have another smaller one, as well as the holster that it goes into. And I did fire it. I found ammunition when I got back home to Indiana that would fit that. One is French, and the other I think is Czechoslovakian.

**Interviewer:** Are they both pistols?

**Bever:** Yes, one's real small and the other is 7.65 or something like that. And [pistols] were easier to carry when you went into those houses. Your M1 is too bulky to mess with in the houses.

**Interviewer:** It says here [reading] that you leave, you go back to your beloved homeland after 11 months of foreign service, and you said there's a great void in your heart coming home across the Atlantic.

**Bever:** Yeah, yeah. [Begins to cry] My buddies weren't with me.

**Interviewer:** I'm so sorry.

**Bever:** How do you make up for that?

**Interviewer:** Well remember your buddies now. Name some of their names.

**Bever:** Kentuck. Obviously you know where he's from. And Markley, my Hoosier friend. First Sergeant Al Shaw, from California. Rotnam. We went to Branson, Mo., about 10 years ago. They have a huge military display. They had them segregated by divisions. On the display I ran across a great number of my buddies' names on that list. And I have a picture of them at home. Those that lost their lives. And I can't explain how they were there and I wasn't [tears]. I was fortunate to get home. I don't know how to approach all these wars that we've had since then, either. I can't explain them and I would pray that they indeed cease in my lifetime. Pardon me, but I have a feel for those and I know what they've missed, having been granted the privilege of coming back here, and raising a family and so forth.

**Bever:** That general tonight who mentioned seeing the Statue of Liberty. Remember that? That's the way I felt.

**Interviewer:** How was it coming back?
Bever: I'm home. Coming into that city I look out of the side of the train that I was coming home on. Order, neatness, no contention. What a contrast to what I've been accustomed to for close to a year. It was good to be home. I think I landed in New York, saw the Statue of Liberty. Then I left from Boston. I came home on the ship USS General Blatchford. Did you ever hear of Blatchford? I never even looked it up. It wasn't as fancy or as big, I don't think, as the West Point going over.

Interviewer: On the way back, was everyone having a good time? Were you having a party? What was it like?

Bever: I don't remember too much about that. But I think one of the reasons we weren't celebrating too much is we were scheduled still on the list to go to Japan. But they took us back and we ended up down at Camp Shelby.

Interviewer: What did you do for relaxation when you were overseas?

Bever: We played volleyball in the apple orchards of France before we got engaged in combat. They had a supply sergeant that had a net. I liked that. I'd get [a few friends] and say, "OK, let's play some more." We played a heck of a lot of volleyball, just passing time. Because there wasn't a lot of training to do then. Just wait and wait and get towards the Front. ... A lot of them were shooting craps and playing cards. I did not.

Interviewer: When you were overseas, did you get mail from your parents?

Bever: Yes, but it was always late. I always had a dislike for the Red Cross. I was trying to get a package or something from home, and it would never get there. And I would blame the Red Cross. That probably wasn't their problem but it was important to me, and I've had a negative feeling for them ever since then.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were when you heard that Roosevelt died?

Bever: April 12, 1945? I do not remember the exact day, but we were going through and cleaning up spots of resistance in Germany. But I don't remember April 12. I remember chasing a bunch of Germans out of foxholes. It was a frosty morning. Frost on everything. You'd get up to those big holes were the Germans were the preceding night. And of course they weren't there. But no frost. No Germans, but no frost in them. That told me, "Boy, it wasn't very long ago that those guys exited." That is so clear and vivid in my mind. That it was cold the preceding night and there in those holes were the Germans.

[1:20:00 to 1:21:13: brief side discussion of ships]

Interviewer: So you went back to Camp Shelby. You had a 30-day leave. Where'd you go?

Bever: From there I went home, and I think that's where I saw my mom. I think that's where she greeted me at that bus stop.

Interviewer: Were you in Camp Shelby when you heard the bomb dropped?
Bever: Yes. And I walked into the streets – it’s a real hot day and I mean it was super hot – and they came on the news with that and I couldn’t have an inkling of what they were talking about. The size of it, wiping out a complete city. Men, women, children. But I thought, “Well, Hallelujah.” I can go home before too long and I won’t have my life taken in a foreign country that I disliked tremendously. Some people today will not look at [the Japanese] without a hatred factor to any Japanese from that standpoint. I’m convinced they carry a grudge factor and I cannot do that.

Interviewer: So is it easy to readjust to civilian life after your 11 months?

Bever: I don’t recall any difficulty. I took advantage of the GI bill right after I got home. Went to a school and learned to operate a huge machine to do printing by. It was only a three-month course. After that I was in the printing trade for 30 years in the little community of North Manchester (Ind). Seven thousand inhabitants. There was enough work coming in. There were two other fellows and myself in the shop. It was good work.

Interviewer: Does the Service or the war ever appear in your dreams?

Bever: Yeah. I don’t know how long. Probably six months, a year maybe [afterward]. That’s one of the side [effects of war]. I was fighting just as strong or stronger during my nighttime hours. As I woke up and my wife would say, “Calm down, what’s going on?” And I never tell her. But it’s [inside me]. That’s a strong negative. And I relate to these guys who are going through these same things now. Afghanistan. Pakistan. Israel. That’s a good question and I do understand the dilemmas of re-fighting and it was frightening. I woke up in a sweat and don’t want any more. But there’s a way for the body to comprehend those negatives and do away with that. And I’m grateful for that. I haven’t had those for many years.

Interviewer: Tell me about the food in the army.

Bever: [laughs] At Indiantown Gap everybody said get ready for more goat. We’re gonna have goat food in maneuvers out in no-man’s land, where you’re miles from anywhere. Everyone was complaining about the meat. It was more goat, or horse and goat. That’s what they said, horse. In general, I didn’t lose any weight I don’t think. The mere formality of getting us out in some of those god forsaken areas amazed me. You got nighttime hours, and there was a kitchen somewhere. I had stuff thrown in my mess kit that I didn’t have a clue because of the darkness what I was about to eat [laughs]. I’d start eating and guess what it was. But in general I was not a complainer. That’s why I got my good conduct medal. I’m speculating here, too. I was glad to get something to eat is what I’m saying. Whatever it was. But I’m confident a lot of it was goat meat that they were getting rid of.

[Female voice: What about once you got to France and Germany?]

Bever: I don’t remember not having a meal. And that’s more of the case of how they could get that up, but you’ve heard the saying, “the army travels on its stomach,” and I was not going to complain about food. Because it was vital to keeping the health up.

Interviewer: Do you remember your first shower after [being on the front]?
Bever: I didn’t think of that. We couldn’t have any showers when you’re out in no-man’s land and living in a fox hole. I can’t remember my first shower after that. Not really. I do remember one guy in the States here, Vasser, he’d get in the shower and he’d stay there all day if somebody didn’t get that kid out. [laughs] Sleepy Vasser, we called him. He was going around half asleep all the time but he loved that water coming over his body. ... But that’s the contract, we had to shower there, at Fort Sam and at Swift. Any place a building was involved. And they emphasized that, health. I need to also emphasize that in my three-and-a-quarter years I never went on sick call one time. I was fortunate. I did have occasion to get up and I’m confident some of the guys did indeed put on a show to get out of something.

[Female voice: I have a question about your rations. Since you did not smoke but you got two cigarettes in each ration, did you trade those?]

Bever: I don’t recall that exact detail, but I am assuming I did trade them for something else. Maybe that “Big K” bar, a solid chocolate bar in the K-ration. It was five inches long. That entails another story. I saved those, maybe had three or four in my pack, because that was a delicious piece of energy. We’re going along in Germany, we come to a German forced labor big building. They had people in there working, producing equipment for the German army. We overrun it. We free the people in there, the former slave laborers. The brought the man of German origin to me, I’m leading a squad at the time. I take the rifle off my shoulder and shoot this man.

Interviewer: How does that happen?

Bever: They suggest that this man needs to be dead. And they wanted me to shoot him because he deserved it. They’d been subjected to all kinds of [atrocities], I don’t know for how long. Conceivably three or four years.

Interviewer: And so did anyone shoot him?

Bever: That’s another question I think about off and on. I said, “No, I can’t shoot him.” I pointed at a couple of fellows and said take him back to the company commander. I don’t know what happened to that guy. He should have been shot, that’s what all these people were saying.

Interviewer: My father who was in Co. H in 379 told me the same thing. That people come out, they recognize the man, and in his version I think the man is trying to hide. And they point him out, wanting someone to shoot him. And they end up beating him up and the Americans have to take them off of him because they were beating him to death.

Bever: That reminds me. I had the candy bars. One of those slave laborers was a nice looking young lady and that was the best present I ever gave anybody. I felt gratified that I could [give] that person a little food. And she gratefully accepted it. I wish I could have an address or something for her. The things they had been subjected to and had to endure...I don’t know.

Interviewer: How cold did it get in December [in Germany]?
Bever: I didn’t suffer any. Up to Dec. 3, the date of my injury, it wasn’t exceptionally cold. We had our field jackets, and overcoat to carry with us in our backpacks but I don’t ever recall putting the overcoat on. That would disable your ability to move very fast, for one thing. Then I went back to where there was heat [after I was injured] and was back in England during the worst part of that horrible winter, before Hitler got his group together to bulge. Snow was two, three feet deep, and I was lying back in a nice, warm [bed] recovering from an injury.

Interviewer: Did you hear about the trouble with the bulge when you were in the hospital in England?

Bever: Yes, and I was thankful indeed that I was back there, in the hospital in England. The time frame couldn’t be better. And by the time I got back to our unit, the major portion of the conflict was concluded. And I was exceedingly grateful.

Interviewer: [Talks to another person, a male, asking if there are any stories he wants to share, or encourage Mr. Bever to share]

Bever: The Bleeckers still visit. She does, he’s deceased. They still live in Michigan. She called two months ago. Friends are made for lasting, and we’re appreciative of their ability [to visit] and our ability to accept them.

Interviewer: When you look back, how did the war change you?

Bever: I don’t have anything to compare that with, but it was one of the most… I don’t know the word I want really… but it was such an important part of my life. I tell people today that I have real struggles, our church is a Peace Church and I don’t know what I would do if I had an opportunity to go to the War again or to declare as a conscientious objector. And I have people in my church now my age who did indeed declare C.O., and they are halfway apologetic. One at Sunday school months ago said, “My friends still call me yellow belly.” And that was common, you know. We heard that

But [my service] was a great learning experience, and great possibilities of friendships. I try to count the positives instead of any negatives. But I do have a struggle. In church there’s a Peace Making Team, and one man has spent his entire life basically going to various countries in the name of peace, with two or three other people. They go and preach peace. You cannot survive indefinitely by making war constantly. I still labor to try and think of what the solution is. And I don’t have an answer.

Interviewer: Did you feel any presence of God or were you religious while you were in the arm?

Bever: Basically when I was looking down at that Moselle River and knowing we were supposed to cross it. That’s when I made the covenant: you get my home God and I’ll try to go by your rules. I know I’ve erred a lot of times, but I’m proud of our five sons and I’m proud of our church, [laughs as prompted not to forget his grandson].

Frank Bever Co. F/379thInf/95th ID WWII

Interview date: 08/10/2013
I've been to [his grandson's] school off and on over the years and they invite me because of my military [experience]. But I try to kick in the "peace" message. We'll never be without conflict I don't think, until the second coming. And I look forward to it from that standpoint.

[Female voice: You said you wonder what you'd do if faced with the same situation again. What do you think you would do?]

Bever: Well they wouldn't be interested in me now because of age. But if I were 21, I don't know. I'd have to talk to my pastor first, I think. I would struggle, but I'd probably end up going. I have a belief in my government, but I'm disappointed in so many public officials and I just get dismayed and I read war after war after war. That's all it's been. Give it a little break, then they're at it again. And I don't have an answer. I hate to think of the expenditures, and the deaths.

Interviewer: They say war is planned by old men, witnessed by young me.

Bever: I agree. I just went on that trip to where Kennedy was shot. And I stood there and looked at it and I thought, "The turmoil that that one man's killing involved across the whole U.S., and the impact he had." And I thought about all my army buddies from that standpoint. I think they're as important as President Kennedy was, as far as I'm concerned. And they weren't honored at all. But I was honored [during the reunion ceremony] in there tonight.

Interviewer: You were honored in there.

Bever: Didn't deserve it [crying].

Interviewer: I'm glad that you go to schools and you talk to children. Because it's not being talked about. And when they see you there, someone who has lived through it, and who takes the time to tell them the story, that's important. And your struggle with peace and war, that's a very human struggle. Speaking of which, if you had something to say to your great, great, great granddaughter, 100 years into the future, or grandson, about what's important in life, what would you tell them? Because with luck, 100 years from now they'll be listening to your voice here. What would you like to say to them?

Bever: All I can tell you is to have hope, and work for peace. I don't know for sure, I have a lot of lessons to learn yet, how you work for peace. And I don't regret the fact that I almost gave my life fighting for peace. I hope that sometime we can come to a peaceful solution to our problems.

Interviewer: A couple of years ago the filmmaker Ken Burns was in town, and I went to see him. And I was just about to go to the Oklahoma reunion. And I said to his producer, "What's your favorite question?" She said her favorite question is, "Tell me a story you've never told anyone before." I said it would be easy for the famous Ken Burns to elicit such stories, but not necessarily so easy for me. So she suggested asking the interviewee to close his eyes, take a deep breath, take another deep breath, and open his eyes ... So, close your eyes, take a deep breath, let it out, take one more deep breath. Now Mr. Bever, tell us a story you've never told anyone before. Open your eyes.
**Bever:** Probably at our Toledo reunion, I had the privilege of pushing Ron Bleecker through a beautiful area in a huge park in Toledo. It was filled with flowers, overgrown trees, and a rippling, small stream down the middle of it. He was in a wheelchair, reminiscing somewhat to the happenings 65-70 years prior on the battlefield. I was pushing him through there and we were asking each other all kinds of questions, basically war-related. And how gratified he was that he got home from his [Prisoner of War] capture. That was an important part of my life. I was glad to be back with my friend of years past. And he appreciated the opportunity to lay it on the line, the things we had been through. And it was a simple place, a simple gesture. But it was important to me. And we tried to uplift one another. But here he was in a wheelchair, suffering from his POW injuries, and I think that I gleaned from it, and I think he did.

**Interviewer:** Well, this David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. And tonight I've had the great privilege of talking with ... Mr. Bever, could you say your name one more time?

**Bever:** Frank

**Interviewer:** And what was your final rank?

**Bever:** Tech Sergeant. Three up, two down. [laughs]

**Interviewer:** And with what Company?

**Bever:** Company F, 379th Infantry. All the way through, which was a little unusual because a lot of my friends would be in there a month, two or three months, and that's all you saw them. Even here in the states, they'd transfer out, feign some injury or whatever, and they'd send them home. But I wasn't built that way. I tried to take the good with the bad. And endured, with God's help. —endit—
Biographical Data Form

To ensure inclusion in our National Registry of Service, this form must accompany each submission. Please use a separate form or additional sheet for service in more than one war.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Veteran ☐ Civilian ☐ First Name: FRANK Middle Name: BEVER Last Name: (if maiden name)

Address __________________________

City ___________________________ State ZIP ____________

Telephone ( ) __________ Email __________________________

Place of Birth LAGRO, INDIANA Birth Date 04/21/1921

Race/Ethnicity (optional) CAUCASIAN Male ☐ Female ☐

Branch of Service or Wartime Activity US ARMY - Combat Infantryman

Battalion, Regiment, Division, Unit, Ship, etc. Company F, 379th Infantry, 95th ID

Highest Rank Technical Sergeant

Enlisted ☐ Drafted ☐ Service dates June '42 to August, 1945

War(s) in which individual served WW II

Locations of military or civilian service ASTP, Ft. Indiantown Gap, England, France, Lorraine Campaign, Battle of Metz, Saarlautern, Ruhr Pocket

Was the veteran a prisoner-of-war? Yes ☐ No ☐

Did the veteran or civilian sustain combat or service-related injuries? Yes ☐ No ☐

Medals or special service awards. If so, please list (be as specific as possible):

Purple Heart

Are photographs included? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If yes, please complete the Photograph Log in this kit.)

Are manuscripts included? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If yes, please complete the Manuscript Data Sheet in this kit.)

Does the veteran or civilian have field maps Yes ☐ No ☐ or wartime-related home movies Yes ☐ No ☐ that he or she would like to share with the Library of Congress? (If yes, we will contact you shortly.)

Interviewer (if applicable) David Meyer (O'Shea) son of Earl Meyer H/379th/95th ID

Partner organization affiliation (if any, i.e. AARP, etc.) VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT;
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