

**INTERVIEW**

**Marvin Clark**

**YEAR**

**2006**

**GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**NAME:** Marvin Clark

**DATE:** June 20, 2006

**PLACE:** Kalvesta, Kansas

**INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Suellentrop

**PROJECT SERIES:** Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

Marvin Clark was married when he was drafted at age nineteen and was working on a farm near Kalvesta. After induction in Arkansas he was sent to Texas and then to California. He was made a part of a 90 millimeter gun crew that was trained first in the Mohave Desert and later in amphibious training in Southern United States. His wife was able to stay near him during training until his overseas assignment in 1945. He was sent to England, leaving his wife and a six-month old son behind. He was fortunate to never sustain any bodily injury even though he participated in five major battles in Europe and received five Bronze Stars. Many of his experiences were interesting, but always he yearned to be home with his family. After his discharge from the Army, he returned to Kansas and raised a family and lives near Kalvesta at this time.

**SUBJECTS DISCUSSED:** Entering the service and training and life as a part of war zone front line action in England and Germany. His experience as a fuse setter in a gun crew and his European experience were discussed; as well as his return to his family and his thoughts of his war experience's effect on his life.

**COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:**

**SOUND RECORDINGS:** 2- 60 minute tapes

**LENGTH OF INTERVIEW:** 2 hours

**RESTRICTIONS ON USE:** none

**TRANSCRIPT:** 30 pages

**ORAL HISTORY**

**Clark, Marvin**

**Interview Date: June 20, 2006**

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Marvin Clark (MC)**

**Tape 1 of 2**

**Side A**

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**JS** - The first thing that we usually talk about is, World War Two started in '39 and Pearl Harbor was in '41. Do you remember the start of the war or Pearl Harbor, where you were, how you heard about it and what you thought?

**MC** - I was working in the field over here on the county line here in Kansas, and somebody told me that day that we had declared war. I don't know what time it was, the date or anything, but that is where I was when I heard about it.

**JS** - How old would you have been then?

**MC** - I'd have been nineteen, I guess it would have been.

**JS** - Did you think that you might have to go to war?

**MC** - I never gave it much of a thought. I had never been through a war before. I guess in time we all heard about it and about everybody in the world went.

**JS** - Did you know young men around here that were going in?

**MC** - No, I knew of them from different places, but when I went to service, I didn't know any of the boys that went with me to service after I was called in. Not a soul went with me that I knew beforehand.

**JS** - So you were here and you were farming?

**MC** - I was farming for another fellow. I was working for wages.

**JS** - Did you enlist or were you drafted?

**MC** - I was drafted.

**JS** - When you were drafted, where were you inducted?

**MC** - I went to Camp Robinson, Arkansas. That's where I was inducted and I had a few days, then before I returned back.

**JS** - Then you went to basic training?

**MC** - From there we were sent to California. That is where our outfit was formed. It wasn't with a battalion. It was a separate company that was formed out there, an anti-aircraft outfit on 90 millimeter guns.

**JS** - Did you ask for that or not?

**MC** - No, they just put you where they wanted you to go. I don't know how come me to go there. There were two other boys that went there at the same time that

I did know, but both of them got discharged and went back home for some other reason, I don't know what.

**JS** - So, you had your basic training there?

**MC** - I had my basic training in the Mohave Desert in California. We took it at Camp Hahn. That's where we were stationed at that time.

**JS** - What was that like, that basic training?

**MC** - Well, it was different. We old country boys had never been anywhere at that point in time. Nobody had ever traveled. We were just coming out of the depression and nobody had anything. Yeah, it was quite different than I could even expect. After we finished our basic training, they shipped us by rail, then, to Camp Pickett, Virginia, in one trip. We took our amphibious training there.

**JS** - When you were in the Mohave Desert, you were training on the anti-aircraft?

**MC** - Yes, I was a fuse setter on the gun.

**JS** - What does that mean?

**MC** - The big shells that were fired through this antiaircraft gun had a fuse in the nose of the projectile. It was my job to set it at whatever interval we needed it to explode.

**JS** - You mean every so many seconds?

**MC** - Yeah, it would set up to thirty seconds. That was as high as it would go. If you fired at a plane, as it were, and it hit anything between there, it would go off, but if it didn't, it would explode at that thirty seconds or whatever we set it at.

**JS** - What determined what you would set it at?

**MC** - We had elevation equipment that gave us the data that the plane was flying, the speed, the altitude and stuff like that. It was sent back to the gun electronically. Then we would just match and point, basically, is what it did to set it at that time.

**JS** - Did you receive other training, for instance, with a rifle or things like that?

**MC** - Oh, we had a rifle, sure. We had to have our M1 rifles. Everybody carried a rifle. Whatever position you had, if you were a truck driver you had a submachine gun that you carried with you. It was built with the truck. Yes, we had infantry training all right, but we were never infantry. After we got overseas, we were broken down into units. We went in as tank destroyers or antipersonnel

or whatever was called for. We got it all down to how many planes we got credit for and how many tanks and stuff.

**JS** - How long were you in basic training?

**MC** - We were in the states just about a year when we were sent overseas. We went to England and we spent eight months in England before the invasion. We were training for the invasion there.

**JS** - So you probably went in, in '42 or '4three?

**MC** - '42.

**JS** - When you were in basic training, this was your first time traveling in the United States. You were with young men from all over the country. What was that like?

**MC** - It was just a matter of getting acquainted. Everybody had lived basically the same way up until that point. We were all nineteen, twenty or twenty-one year old boys. It was just a matter of getting acquainted with new faces.

**JS** - Was it hard taking orders?

**MC** - You didn't like it, but you did it anyway. I never did make much of a rating myself. Just a corporal was as high as I went. That was what my job called for so that's all I ever got.

**JS** - Is there a particular person that you remember, maybe a friend or an officer?

**MC** - Oh yes, I am still in touch with a bunch of the boys. I've got friends in Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Kansas and Arkansas, a lot of them. I still keep in touch with a bunch of them, but most of them are gone.

**JS** - Did they go through basic with you?

**MC** - A lot of them did, yes.

**JS** - The people you went through basic with, you just moved along with?

**MC** - Our battalion was formed and had five batteries in it. There were about 160 men to the battery so there was the equivalent of about 1000 to 1100 men in our outfit. We were separate, but we were attached to lots of units. Whatever needed us, why, that is where we went. At one time we were attached to General Patton's three<sup>rd</sup> Army, for a short time after he came in from Southern France.

**JS** - Anything else that you remember about basic training, did you have free time that you were able to see anything in California?

**MC** - Very little, it was such a busy time. I was married before I went to the service and my wife came to me in California, so basically, if I got any time off, I went to see her on the weekends, etc.

**JS** - Did she live off base?

**MC** - Off base, yes, we didn't have a place for them to live like they do nowadays. She came to Los Angeles and then later, I got her a place down at Riverside. That was about nine miles out of camp. She stayed there until I was shipped out. She followed me, then, from there to Virginia so she stayed with me all the time I was in service.

**JS** - Were there many people that were married?

**MC** - Oh yes, there were a lot of fellows.

**JS** - So when you went to Virginia and shipped out, she came back home?

**MC** - We left from Virginia to New Jersey. We were stationed there for a short time and then we shipped out from there. When we went to England, she came back home to her folks and stayed with her folks and mine while I was gone.

**JS** - When you got on that ship to go overseas, what were you thinking?

**MC** - I can't remember now. It was a long time ago. I guess I never gave it a thought. Leaving her was the worst part of it. While we were in California, my oldest boy was born there so he was six months old when I left to go overseas. That was the hardest part for me, I think, by going overseas. We didn't realize what a war was. I didn't anyhow; it wasn't publicized like it is nowadays. Everybody knows what it is like now.

**JS** - How did you hear about the war when you were in basic training? Did you read about it?

**MC** - They had a paper that was called the Stars and Stripes. It was sent back to the states and we'd get newspapers and such like that.

**JS** - When you got to England, what did you do?

**MC** - We trained. We trained everyday. We had the aerial training where we would fire guns at targets and we had practice runs. They would load us on an LST like we were going. We didn't know, but what we were going. We would go out so far in the water and we would turn around and come back and unload it all

and do the whole thing over again. We had practice runs like that so we didn't have much idle time.

**JS** - Were there certain things that they told you when you were unloading the LST?

**MC** - I can't remember that part of it now. I can't remember them briefing us on anything. They just gave us an order of what we were going to do.

**JS** - What were you carrying when you loaded up? Were you carrying a pack?

**MC** - We had a full field pack we carried when we were on the march or whatever. We had all of our necessities in this field pack. We kept that with us at all times when we were moving.

**JS** - What were the necessities?

**MC** - It was some ammunition, your toothbrush, D-Bars and shaving equipment and things like that; you had to have with you.

**JS** - How heavy would that pack have been?

**MC** - I have no idea.

**JS** - Heavy enough.

**MC** - When you make a thirty-mile hike and carry that and your rifle, it was pretty heavy. I would guess fifty pounds. I really don't know. That would be a wild guess.

**JS** - You just knew you were being trained, but you didn't know specifically what for?

**MC** - They never told us until we got to California what we were going to be doing. They gave us that training out there on the desert and we assumed we were going to the Pacific. We assumed that because we had all the training for desert training. Then they shipped us to Virginia and gave us amphibious training.

**JS** - What would that be?

**MC** - For instance, they would take us out a half mile on a boat with a full field pack, clothes and everything and dump us out in the water and we had to get back to shore. That was part of the training and it was just for the other side of the world that it was training for.

**JS** - So when you were kicked out of the boat, you had your pack and you had to swim back?

**MC** - Oh yeah, you had better swim.

**JS** - You had to learn to swim. I assume some people did?

**MC** - At that point they had a pick up boat if anybody got into trouble and couldn't make it, they would pick them up. They also had a life belt that if you got in trouble, you could inflate this belt to make you float until you get help. So they tried to not lose any men by it, but it was basically pretty tough training at that.

**JS** - Was all your training tough?

**MC** - Oh yes, there was nothing easy. We had such a short time to be trained.

**JS** - When you got to England you were trained more. Were there any rumors about what you were going to be doing?

**MC** - You could always hear something and you never knew whether they were right or not. We had all kind of rumors.

**JS** - When were you aware that you were going to be going to the Normandy Beaches?

**MC** - When we went to England, we knew where we would be fighting the war would be out of England because it was being bombed at that time.

**JS** - Where were you in England?

**MC** - Western-Super-Mare, it is on the British Channel. It was right down there in a resort town. We were the first American boys in this town.

**JS** - The bombing was not where you were?

**MC** - Not basically, it was mostly around the capitol, but there was a lot of damage that had been done there before. We would have an air raid whistle every little bit, but we didn't have much going on there.

**JS** - How many months were you there?

**MC** - We were eight months in England before the invasion.

**JS** - Just training?

**MC** - Just training for everything they could think of. If you had nothing to do, you would go on twenty or thirty mile hikes just to keep you in shape.

**JS** - Anything else you remember about that training? During that time were you able to write home to your wife?

**MC** - Oh yes.

**JS** - And could she write to you?

**MC** - Oh sure, she wrote every day.

**JS** - Did you get the mail on a regular basis?

**MC** - We did in England, but after the invasion, it was weeks at a time before we would get any mail. It was just whenever it would catch up with us. After we got to moving, we would move pretty fast at times. It would just have to catch up with us wherever we were.

**JS** - Then D-Day of the Normandy Invasion came. Can you talk a little bit about what happened for the immediate preparation and then the landing?

**MC** - The preparation was the same as we had been doing. As I said, we had done practice runs so we loaded again, not knowing until after we got loaded where we were really going. We were the first outfit to ever make an amphibious landing with 90 millimeter guns. Our old colonel told us that day after we got on the way, he said we would be the first, if we make it.

**JS** - Were you thinking anything at that time?

**MC** - Oh of course, your mind runs pretty wild whenever you don't know. You think of things that are not very important at times. Oh yes, it is nerve wracking, but everybody is in the same boat so you kind of kept your feelings to yourself.

**JS** - How many were on that LST boat?

**MC** - I can't tell you now. There was one battery of the 101<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery that was on the LST with us so I don't know how many it would be with them. I don't even know.

**JS** - Did it seem like it took a long time to get over?

**MC** - Well, I can't recall that it was that long. It is only twenty-eight miles across there. The water was full of ships.

**JS** - Then what happened?

**MC** - When we got to the shore, we tried to get to the beaches and infantry was already ahead of us. Small artillery and everything was ahead of us. We got orders to go in and the shelling ran us out so we made about three runs at the beach before we could get unloaded. It made us later getting on shore. We lost some of our equipment getting on the shore. That sank and we had to be reequipped later. Each battery was on a different LST so they had different things to happen to them. They used our ship for a hospital ship. While we were waiting to get unloaded, they would bring in the wounded infantry that were back from the shore and used our ship for a hospital ship until we could get unloaded. Then they brought them back to England. We weren't in the toughest part of it like the infantry boys were.

**JS** - You were next because you had to get there because you were anti-aircraft?

**MC** - As soon as we could get on shore, yes, we had to set up our guns, immediately, when we got on there. Just right on the hillside or beside it and we stayed there until we got infantry moved back and the other artillery got a foothold and as they moved, we moved. We had to keep the planes off of them the best we could, yes.

**JS** - Were you on the beach two, three or four days?

**MC** - As far as I can remember, it was about four days. It's all kind of a blur to me, I can't remember. I know that at one time there were four days and nights that we didn't get to sleep.

**JS** - How did you get through that?

**MC** - You just had to. There are little old things that you think about or remember that weren't very important. I can remember, I got so sleepy that I slipped off and I just sat in the truck and I got to sleep an hour before they found me. Man, that was a relief to get to sleep that long.

**JS** - Did you get to eat?

**MC** - Yes, we had our mess crew and we ate as we could get it. I don't remember very much about that part about it.

**JS** - That was your first experience with war?

**MC** - Right.

**JS** - Then you began to move?

**MC** - Yes, after we got started pushing the enemy back, why we moved pretty fast. We moved a lot of miles at a time to keep up. Of course the planes weren't on that front line altogether, but they used us for whatever was necessary.

**JS** - Did you march or were there trucks for you?

**MC** - We had our vehicles, we had to carry all of our equipment. We had to load all of it and get it in march order to move it as we went. We weren't foot soldiers. We had it easier than they did by a whole lot.

**JS** - Did you know, at the time, or even think about the history that you were making?

**MC** - Oh no, it never entered my mind that we were making history. We were just trying to do our job and stay alive. That was basically how it went.

**JS** - Describe moving forward. What were some of the conditions and if there weren't planes, you were just moving forward?

**MC** - The officers took care of all that. We guys did what we were called to do. How they knew where to move to; they had their maps and their generals to tell them where we were needed. We had calls to go in and help other units that were pinned down or we would be called for antipersonnel in the crossroad. So many little things like that they would call to do that wasn't part of our job, but we were able to help them out. In England, I can remember one little call and I can't tell you where it was, but the Germans took that little town one night and for three nights they would switch back and forth. They would take it back and they'd take it back. They finally called us for help. They never did come back after that.

**JS** - How did you help them?

**MC** - We were able to give them more fire power. We were able to aid their units with whatever they were lacking in.

**JS** - What did you think of the countryside or did you even have time to think of it?

**MC** - It was pretty well tore up, a lot of it was. The towns were pretty well torn up. We had to kind of deal with the native people that lived there because we were enough behind that they could feel liberated. I never thought very much about it at the time, about the country. We would move up into position and we may not be there, but one night, and then be called some other place.

**JS** - You had your food with you?

**MC** - Sometimes, there were times that we would run out of food. We would kill deer and we'd raid German warehouses and we would raid chicken houses and get eggs. We kind of did what we had to do until our mess cook got there.

**JS** - You kept moving and the next big thing was the Battle of the Bulge?

**MC** - No, that was pretty much towards the last. We were called up at St. Lo and they bombed that. Our planes dropped a lot of bombs short on our own boys. We were pulled back about twelve miles from the front line at St. Lo for this raid. After the raid, we moved on and at Cologne, they made another big bombing raid there. We were designated to mark the bomb release line.

**JS** - Explain that.

**MC** - We set our guns up in a line and set it at a certain elevation and fired all these smoke shells. It made a smoke screen and the planes coming over would know where to start releasing their bombs. We got a commendation for that, there wasn't one soldier killed in our own short stay there. We just fired blank shells for smoke at the bomb release line.

**JS** - When they were coming into Cologne, they were bombing the bridges on the river?

**MC** - The town mostly, it was just a stronghold. We were coming up behind, we didn't see any of it. We were just firing the shells. The infantry and the little artillery were all between us. Seemed like at St. Lo, there were 12,000 planes in that raid. They just came over in formations. I can remember that during that time we fell back and we were watching the planes as they came over. We were twelve miles from the front line and the ground was shaking just like you were in a strong wind. There was that much vibration for all the bombs that were being dropped twelve miles away.

**JS** - The planes were flying from England?

**MC** - England, yes.

**JS** - Then eventually you moved further in?

**MC** - We had our smaller bases, yeah. We captured some of their bases, but the biggest planes mostly went back to England. That was no distance at all for them. They could all go home and get a good night sleep and be ready for the next run.

**JS** - And you could keep moving yourselves forward?

**MC** - After that we were pulled up there to fire at these buzz bombs. They had these buzz bombs, we called them, the Germans would send over. They were radio controlled. There wasn't a man on them, but there were tons and tons of explosives. They guided them at different cities. Our job was to knock them down before they got to their destination. That is where we were when the Battle of the Bulge broke out. We were up there trying to keep these buzz bombs down.

**JS** - Was that difficult to do?

**MC** - We didn't always get our target, but we got a lot of them. That is when the Battle of the Bulge broke out. This old colonel was stationed in a headquarters battery and they shelled that pretty hard down there. We asked for march orders to get out of there. He said, "It ain't that bad, just hang on until I get there." We held until he got there and when he got out of his Jeep, a shell hit behind it.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Marvin Clark (MC)**

**Tape 1 of 2**

**Side B**

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**MC** - We didn't have time because the Germans were on us before we could get away. We pulled back into Belgium then to be reequipped.

**JS** - Did that take long?

**MC** - It was better than a month that we were there. We had to get new guns and all of our clothing and blankets and stuff like that we had to leave.

**JS** - During that month, what?

**MC** - We had the life of Riley. We had big tents. The snow was almost waist deep so it was real cold, but we had big tents. We got some coal stoves and we were just as warm as toast.

**JS** - But that had to end?

**MC** - It didn't last long, but it was good while it lasted.

**JS** - Then you were sent back up?

**MC** - From then, it was pretty well over. That was the beginning of the end. We weren't needed so much after that because they didn't have too many planes left. We had got most of them. It was just basically mopping up, we called it. I know I

went with a unit and we hauled prisoners. That's where I was the day the war was over. I was up there just out of Berlin with a convoy of trucks hauling prisoners to whatever they did with them.

**JS** - So, you did make it into Germany, then?

**MC** - Yes, I never did quite get to Berlin. We were right on the skirts of it. That is where I was when I heard the war was over. I can remember that. We were lined up there waiting to get loaded. A priest came down the street standing up in the back of a Jeep hollering that the war was over. That's where I heard the news.

**JS** - What were your thoughts?

**MC** - It was a good day. We had to go ahead and do our job until it was all straightened out and then they had us booked to go to Japan. We weren't even going to get to come home. They were going to send us directly to there. When the war ended there, it was about as good a day as where we were.

**JS** - So, when you left Belgium after spending about a month in Belgium and then you went on in close to Berlin, what were you doing as you moved on?

**MC** - We were just kind of mopping up and we took a lot of prisoners during that time because they were giving up when they could. Basically, just being there, our main job was over, kind of. We had to go through the motions, but we were ready whatever happened and there would be a plane pop up every once in a while.

**JS** - Again, what impression did you have of the German countryside or the towns that you went through?

**MC** - They were quite different from what we were used to here, all right, because you have to remember our country is not like it was then. The homes were a lot different here than they are now.

**JS** - Did you have any interaction with the German people at all?

**MC** - Yes, like I said, we were hauling the prisoners and we had to work with them. We had some places where they would capture papers and they were like in our courthouses, kind of a deal. We would have to be guards for them and the people that would come and go that work there. We had to try to talk to them and we couldn't. We didn't know the language, but we would have to go through the motions to screen out the ones we wanted.

**JS** - Did you pick up any German at all?

**MC** - A few words and you did mostly hand talk and motioning. We had enough guys that could speak English that could interpret for us. I never did learn very much of it myself. I learned a lot more than I remember now, I guess.

**JS** - What were you hearing as you moved forward about, say, the Russians coming in or maybe the concentration camps or things like that?

**MC** - They didn't get along too good with the Russians and the scuttle, but they called it, back at that time, we figured we may have to fight the Russians. I don't know why, I wasn't in a position to know the why of it, but we didn't get along too good. They were a different breed of people. We didn't have to associate with them a lot in my part of it.

**JS** - Did you hear anything about the concentration camps?

**MC** - We didn't at that time, no. Where we were, I don't remember that we were close to one of them. We heard about them later, but during that time, I don't believe we ever did.

**JS** - So the war had ended and how long were you over there after the war ended?

**MC** - Well, it wasn't very long. I don't remember now, a few months. It wasn't long because I had enough points. They took us out by points and each major battle was awarded so many points. They only had five or six major battles and I was in all of them.

They gave you; I believe it was 12 points for each child. I had this one boy so that made for more so I was along towards the front of being sent home.

**JS** - Of the five major battles you were in, is it the invasion that sticks in your mind the most?

**MC** - Yes, the major battles are strongholds like St. Lo was one of those. They gave bronze stars for each major battle. I think it was 6 of them that they gave and I got five of them and the other ones were given to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, Patton's Army. That came in from Southern France.

**JS** - So this map shows your route?

**MC** - That's kind of the route that we went. I don't know who came up with that. At one of our reunions, somebody came up with that map. I didn't know the country and I couldn't pronounce half the towns' names, much less know where we were.

**JS** - Did you think that the training that you got in California and on the East Coast was adequate when you got over there?

**MC** - I guess it was. It had to be. We had to have troops there and quick. There were lots of fellows that came in as replacements that had far less than we got. They needed them quick and they didn't get very much training. I didn't know the company, but in the Bulge they had pulled the 1<sup>st</sup> Army back for a rest because the main fighting was over. They brought in two battalions. I am not sure I am right about this, one was a hundred and something and the other was 99<sup>th</sup> Division or something like that. They brought them in to replace us guys that were in there in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. They lost almost all of them because they weren't trained. The officers didn't have the training so they lost real heavy in that break through. I know they had cut us off and we were trying to get out. There was a Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant McGowan, was one of our officers and he dropped out and stopped a battalion of small tanks and asked for volunteers to help us get out. They opened the road for us to get out or we may not have gotten out. We got most of our equipment out or a lot of it. He got out himself, he made it. That was one of the things that happened. Then the 1<sup>st</sup> Army was called back in. That Division, Big Red One, they called it, was called back in to take over and they stopped it right quick. They were all trained. They had been all through with us. They knew where to put their power.

**JS** - How did you deal with it? What would a day be like and certainly people were losing their lives around you, how did you deal with that?

**MC** - I don't know. You couldn't dwell on it. You couldn't do that, you had to go on. It didn't happen to you so make the best of it. That's kind of the way it was. We didn't have the heavy loss like a lot of companies; like the infantry boys up front. We didn't have the turnover like they did. We were very lucky people to be where we were. It was in a danger zone, but we take the hat off to those other guys. They had it rough.

**JS** - I know when I was interviewing someone, they said that there was no atheist in a foxhole and they were talking about praying and their religious faith. Was that an important part of your experience?

**MC** - I can't recall that it was. I guess it was important, yes, but there was some that pursued it a lot harder, maybe.

**JS** - Before we move on to you getting out and coming back to the United States, you said that you kept up with many of the people?

**MC** - Oh yes, my wife was my big helper. While we were in the states, before I went overseas, while she was still with me, me and some other fellows would get out and find a house that we could rent. We'd have it for them when they would get there. Those girls made friends with them they kept real close with each other while we were overseas. We maintained that after we got out. I have had them come here. I have had a number of them come. After we got to have our

reunions we got acquainted with people we didn't know before from different parts of the company. We got pretty close. I still call a lot of them once or twice a week in different places. I have got some pictures I will show you after while that we had made just the other day.

**JS** - Your wife's experience was unique in a way because she was here while you were over there. Did she talk much about what life was like while you were over there?

**MC** - Yes, about the food rations, it was tough on them. We weren't the only ones in war. America was in war then, it wasn't just the soldiers. There was not anybody that wasn't affected by it. She was a trooper.

**JS** - You said she lived with her family and your family so she had people here?

**MC** - She had family she stayed with part of the time and later she got her grandmother. She didn't have a place to stay and she got her to come and live with her. They rented a house and stayed together. That's where they were until I was on my way home. She went and rented us a house and had all our furniture and stuff moved to the house before I got home.

**JS** - When you were gone and she was here, did she have to work or did you send money home?

**MC** - I sent all the money I made. I kept six dollars when I was overseas. The rest was sent to her and she drew a check for the boy, too, as a dependent.

**JS** - Do you remember how much you got per month?

**MC** - Seems like it was twenty-one dollars or something like that.

**JS** - What would you need money for while you were over there?

**MC** - Toothpaste and stuff like that; after I got overseas, I made a little rating. Then I had more money at the time, but you had to pay for your own insurance. It didn't take much.

**JS** - I suppose they gave you combat pay, since you were in combat?

**MC** - I don't know that they did. I can't remember that part about it, whether she drew anymore for that or not. They didn't have any money before so it was no hardship, not having money.

**JS** - There weren't a lot of things to buy because of the rationing?

**MC** - No, and we didn't have a car so we didn't have that expense.

**JS** - When you think about those days, is there a memory that you have that you really haven't talked about? It could be about a person or an event or anything.

**MC** - I don't know that there is. I forgot a lot of it. I made up my mind before I came home that I would leave it there. I feel I have done an awful good job of it. After I came back and moved back here to Kansas, there wasn't a soul in this area that was in my outfit, not a soul to talk to. I didn't have anybody to reminisce with and I didn't discuss it very much. My wife knew it. I didn't have to discuss it with her. She lived it right with me. It wasn't like she didn't understand what went on. We had the little boy and I guess everybody had that same feeling when they got out. We didn't have a trade. We were not educated. We didn't have a thing to come back to. There were a million other boys out the same day I was hunting a job. That was pretty scary, because I didn't know how I was going to support my child. We didn't have that problem. It wasn't necessary for me to worry about it, but you do. I just went to work as soon as I got home. It wasn't paying much, but I got a job and I've worked ever since.

**JS** - You came back to Arkansas?

**MC** - We came back to Arkansas and I stayed two months down there close to where my folks lived. By that time, my wife's folks had moved back to Kansas where I had been before I went in the service. We came out on a visit and I got a job while I was on the visit. We just moved our stuff out here and have stayed here ever since. We came in '46. I got out in '45 and it was in January of '46 when we came back out here.

**JS** - When you came back, there were millions of others, of course, young men getting out. Did you think that the government should have helped in some way? I know eventually they had the GI Bill for college.

**MC** - They did, but no, I didn't expect them to help me. They never had before. We didn't have all this help that we have nowadays. We didn't expect it and we didn't know of it. That was my job, to take care of my family. No, I didn't expect or even think they should help us. They are helping me more right now than they ever helped me before. I am getting all my medicine furnished.

**JS** - Let's backtrack a little bit. Is there any other memory that you can think of? Think about that. So you were close to Berlin when you found out you were going to be discharged?

**MC** - We were in a little town called Dillenburg. It was where we were stationed before we came home.

**JS** - When you found that out what was your feeling?

**MC** - We were all tickled to go home. That's what we lived for. That's what it was all about. It wasn't a career or anything like that. It was just a matter of getting home and get on with your life.

**JS** - How long did it take you, then, to get home?

**MC** - We were eight days on the boat coming home, I don't remember how long it took from the time we started. They moved them pretty fast.

**JS** - You got officially out once you got to the states?

**MC** - Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, is where they sent me to be separated. That's where I got my discharge from and then I rode a train back to where I lived in Arkansas.

**JS** - You were not injured at anytime?

**MC** - Not once, I was very, very lucky.

**JS** - You said that when you came home you made up your mind that you were going to leave your experiences over there and that really there was no one to talk to. You mentioned that eventually there were reunions. Is it important to get together with those men that shared that experience?

**MC** - It wasn't important, but we did have a lot of fun at it. The first one we had was in Kansas City. The whole group that we could find was invited and it seems like there were about 160 of us altogether at that first one. That was the first get together for most of us with those fellows in thirty-three years. That's what we talk about. We talk about the funny things that went on, bring up things the others had forgotten. It is kind of interesting. I really feel that my wife enjoyed those times better than I did. She got to meet a lot of the people and get their stories. All of them are different from mine. Everybody perceives it different. She was very, very good at mixing with people and she enjoyed that. My daughter is doing it for her now. She has been to two or three little reunions that we have had.

**JS** - Do you remember any of the funny things that happened?

**MC** - Those I try to remember. That's all I could ever communicate with my kids about. I guess I have worn it out with them because I have told them over and over. The gruesome things are not necessary. That was why I left them.

**JS** - Could you tell a few of the funny things?

**MC** - I don't think so. They wouldn't be very important, the funny things. It gave us a chance to kid each other, to joke about the funny things that happened at

the time. There are a lot of little funny things that I can remember that maybe nobody else remembered.

**JS** - What were the things that surprised you most about being in the service and serving during the war? What were you surprised at?

**MC** - I suppose I would have to say, how fast our country came together. We were as unprepared as any country could be. The way everybody filled in and they built our armies so fast is still mind-boggling to me.

**JS** - Did everyone feel they were a part of it?

**MC** - Oh I think so. They jumped onto us. They declared war on us. We had no choices, but to win them, that's all. They don't win them anymore. They were better to us than they are to their boys now. They won't let them win it. That's my feeling. I know my son went through as much trauma as I did, or maybe more, maybe a lot more. He was a crew chief on a helicopter and he got fourteen Oak Leaf Clusters plus a Bronze Star so he had been through hell.

**JS** - When he decided that he would join, what did you tell him?

**MC** - They drafted him just like they did me. I couldn't tell him anything. I don't remember that we discussed it. I can't recall that we did. We talked a lot since he came back. He came back and wasn't bitter like a lot of the Vietnam boys were. I think he had it as rough as about any of them. He felt it was his job so he did it and let's get on with it. He and I would be out together and we'd talk a little bit about it then. He wouldn't talk to you about it.

**JS** - What do you think that being in the service and being in the war taught you and when you look at it, what are your reflections about it?

**MC** - I hadn't thought much about that part of it. I guess meeting all the boys and we were all the same during that time. It brought us close. I got a lot of those old boys that I got awful close with, maybe almost as close as family in some respects.

**JS** - Is there a particular officer or a particular soldier that you have a vivid memory of and why might you have that memory?

**MC** - Oh, I can think of lots of them. To name one would be difficult. Our old battery commander was a captain. He came to see me. He lived in Dillon, Montana, and we got pretty close. We weren't close during the war because he had a job to do. I didn't watch him at all. He came and spent three days with me one time. He and his wife came and spent some time with us. He got killed just a couple of years ago in a car accident, he and his wife both. Some of the boys are closer than others, but I'd have a hard time picking out one over the others.

We've had a good experience with most of them. Some of our boys had a hard time when they got back. I had one that committed suicide. Several have turned out to be alcoholics and things like that, pretty tough.

**JS** - It is tough and you lived through that and you managed to cope in a way. How did that experience change you? Why were you able to come back and get back in your life and some others were not? What do you think was there about you?

**MC** - About me, I wouldn't say anything, but I had a loving wife. No matter what, she was there. We had a wonderful life together. Without her, I don't know what would have happened to me. I don't know that. Like she always said, we had each other and nothing else mattered.

**JS** - She was right, wasn't she?

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Marvin Clark (MC)**

**Tape 2 of 2**

**Side A**

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**JS** - Could you describe what happened there?

**MC** - We were pulled back at the time they captured that bridge. I don't remember where we were when we got the news that they had captured the bridge. They gave us march orders that night in the middle of the night and we drove all night to get there in the blackout. We set up on this end of the bridge to guard it. We protected it along with everybody that could get there. After we got most everybody across the bridge, it collapsed. They built a pontoon bridge across it. We crossed with it to the other side and set up on the other side as soon as we could get across. That was the first time I ever saw a jet plane. We had a target while we were up there at the bridge. A German plane came over. We didn't get him either. He was so high he looked like a little speck. He dropped his bomb. We watched him and we could see the bomb coming and it looked like it was coming right square at us. It missed us two miles. In his speed and the high altitude he was getting rid of it so he could hurry. It didn't hit anything, but it was one of those things that gave us a little scare for a little bit.

**JS** - When you said blackout, how did you drive during the blackout if you couldn't use lights?

**MC** - However you could get there; they had little lights on the vehicles that were a little slit. It was just a little slit in the light and you could see them in front of you there, but they couldn't pick you up from above. We had officers in Jeeps or whatever to lead us to wherever we would be going. We had to move in blackouts and weren't allowed to have headlights on or anything.

**JS** - I suppose some nights there would have been starlight?

**MC** - Oh sure, we had moonlit nights and there were more active nights.

**JS** - When you were camped somewhere that meant you were in a tent or foxhole you couldn't have any kind of light either, right?

**MC** - You'd better not, you don't have to be told that.

**JS** - Your survival skills kick in pretty fast?

**MC** - Sure, we had the pleasure of picking a building at times. Infantry couldn't do that. We never were on the frontline. We were almost to it. They'd take us down as a tank destroyer whenever they would have a breakthrough of a bunch of tanks. They would pull us up for anti-personnel. We would be right behind the infantry boys, but we weren't on that frontline. They had to be there night and day. We had a chance to get more rest than they did.

**JS** - What is antipersonnel?

**MC** - If they had an intersection someplace where there is a lot of traffic, a lot of machinery moving up or whatever, where Germans were moving, in this junction we would fire harassing fire into this junction. No target, just into this position to keep that traffic from moving. The same was true if they had infantry that was tied down. Sometimes we could fire and help them out. That is usually when they would call in a plane, most generally, but there was always time for field artillery. That was their job; basically we were called in to help at that time.

**JS** - Communication between all of these units was very important. How did they communicate?

**MC** - Yes, they had linemen, a communication group that laid down field lines. For each battery, they had runners. They had officers with a little Jeep that would go where they could get to if they could get there. I know this captain that came to see me had a little boy, we called him Jonesy. A little bitty redheaded boy was on a mission one time and hit a mine and killed the little boy, but it didn't him. He got out of it all right, but when Fred was back over in Germany on a trip, he went back to the cemetery where Little Red was to remember his little buddy.

**JS** - Were you ever able or did you even want to go back?

**MC** - I didn't want to go back. When we were in Kansas City, the first reunion, I think it was the first, they tried to get a group together, then, to go back and a bunch of them did, but I didn't choose to go. I had one guy that was on my gun crew, name was Jim Gibson from Alabama. He came in as a replacement. He

was quite a bit younger than most of us and he went back with that group, he and his wife. He said he didn't get to see what he wanted to see with the group. Later, he and his wife made a trip by themselves and rented a car and drove all over that country over there. He said he enjoyed that a lot more than he did going with a group. I got a little shoulder patch that my captain sent to me after he was back in Belgium. They issued this in commemoration of a group that liberated them. He said he should have gotten a bunch of them to give the boys, but he never thought of it. He called back over there to get them to make some more for us and they wouldn't set up to make them. He took a picture of it and I have it on the wall. It is just a shoulder patch, is what it is, but he took a picture of it with the computer and sent me that so we framed it. That's all we got, but the state of Belgium issued it to our unit.

**JS** - Because they were so appreciative of what you had done.

**MC** - Yes.

**JS** - As you were over there and you saw everything working and the communication and all the units and all the planning, was it sort of amazing to see that work done?

**MC** - I never thought about it. I wasn't in communications so I didn't see a lot of it. They had some radios, but they always had to be so secret, but everybody had his job. We had a communication group in our battery. Like I said, it was made up of five batteries, four batteries plus headquarters battery. There were about 160 some men in each battery so we had the communication system, radar equipment and they had all of this and had their jobs to do. I was on the big gun. That's all I ever did do. That was the only job I ever had was the fuse setter. That is where they put me and I never did ever change.

**JS** - Did people name guns like they named the planes?

**MC** - Yes, I don't remember that we had that name for ours. I know there was one in the Belgium breakthrough in the Bulge, we lost with some equipment there and we recaptured it later. It was number two gun in B battery, I believe it was. I know we had the guns numbered so everybody knew what number they belonged on.

**JS** - You were the fuse setter, how many other people were there on that gun?

**MC** - We had about eight or nine I think. We had the ammunition crew, the gunner, the fuse setter, azimuths and elevation setters, a prime mover to pull that gun and the truck driver.

**JS** - Were you close to that gun when it went off?

**MC** - I was sitting on it.

**JS** - You were sitting on it?

**MC** - It had a platform.

**JS** - How long is the barrel of the gun?

**MC** - Twenty-one feet.

**JS** - Twenty-one feet, and where is the platform, then?

**MC** - Whenever there was march order, we put it up on a dolly just like the bed of a truck. We raised it up and set it on that and pulled it just like a trailer. When it was set down it had outriggers and a platform. We had to dig that in if we had time. We'd dig it in and sandbag around it for protection. The gun weighed nine tons, that's how big it was. Whenever we were getting ready to move, then we had to take it down and put it in what we called march order. Everybody had their job at that time, but when we were in action why these azimuths and elevation pointers worked. We got all that from a spotter group. If they had a plane coming in they had to pick it up, declare whether it was friendly, how fast it was going, how high it was going, how high it was and they set all that on the computer. Then they would send that data to our guns by electric cable. Our job was then to match these pointers with their signal and that gave us where to set the fuse.

**JS** - Did you have protection on your ears?

**MC** - They told us to wear them, but I didn't. You couldn't hear the orders or what you needed to hear so never wore them. That's the reason I'm hard of hearing. This ear doesn't work at all, but this one works pretty good so I turn my head whenever I am talking to you.

**JS** - It is not noticeable that you are hard of hearing.

**MC** - Is that right? Everybody else notices it. Whenever I talk to somebody where I can watch them, I can understand most all of it, but if somebody else is in the room I won't know what they said. The VA gave me hearing aids, but I don't like to wear them so I don't do that either.

**JS** - When you were setting fuses, did you have to set a lot in a short period of time?

**MC** - No, one at a time. They fired one at a time. I wish I had that picture. I have a little green book that was issued to me that has a picture of the gun on it. My daughter has it.

The gun rotates on this pedestal. It has a seat by each clock; azimuths, elevation and fuse. Whenever we get orders to fire, they put the fixed ammunition shell into this tube. Then whenever I got everything matched, I gave the order to cut. They set the fuse with a crank. There is one guy there and turned the crank to set the fuse of so many seconds. Then they would give the order to fire and they would load that shell into the breech. They would set the breech and then fire. That was the procedure. Then we had our ammunition crew that took the spent shells away and kept us in live ammunition.

**JS** - Was it dangerous? Did anything ever go wrong with that gun?

**MC** - We never had it happen, but yes, the potential was there, I suppose. If you dropped it on the nose or something like that, it could be dangerous. We didn't do anything from the time we got up until we went to bed that wasn't dangerous so we never gave it much of a thought, I guess. It was kind of interesting. We got quite a record behind us. I can remember one time back there in Belgium when we were set up waiting on our equipment. We had a plane come over in broad daylight. They tracked him for a long time. He wasn't sending the right data so they gave us fire. We knocked him down and he was an English plane. He bailed out and one of the officers went over to some other part of the country, over there to check on him and see what went wrong. He was an English pilot. He said, "I never saw such ack-ack in my life. I've been in a lot of it and it was nothing like that." He just wasn't doing his job. He wasn't sending the right data. He was just dozing on the job and he got shot down for it.

**JS** - If it had been our plane, he should have been sending certain data?

**MC** - They had to change the data every so many seconds to keep the Germans from picking it up. They could pick it up and they could control us. We had to change it every so often. They kept sending him signals and he never returned them. They thought it was our own plane, but he wouldn't give us the right signal so finally they shot him down. He wasn't hurt. He bailed out and wasn't hurt, but he said he never saw such ack-ack in his life. The shells would explode at a designated time whether it hit the target or not. If it hit on contact, it would explode or so many seconds. You didn't have to get a direct hit in order to get the job done.

**JS** - I read in one of these papers the number of things that you destroyed and the accuracy.

**MC** - That was some of the sheets after we got out. I believe we got credit for sixteen tanks, I believe it was. You might remember better than me if you read those. I don't remember how many planes we got credit for. There were a bunch of them.

**JS** - You must have been a good unit.

**MC** - We thought it was. We thought it was the best. We were used in so many, many different things because we were good.

**JS** - You have to be proud of that.

**MC** - Oh yes, that's why we are back here.

**JS** - That's right. Is there anything that you think would be important for people reading this in the future about your experience or your thoughts?

**MC** - I guess there was nothing that wasn't important, but to pick one, I don't guess I would have. I didn't do anything outstanding. I just did like a million other guys. I just tried to stay alive and I did, never got hurt. I was protected a lot more than I ever knew I was.

**JS** - If there isn't anything else?

**MC** - I don't know of anything else that would help you. I have been very, very fortunate, I think in my lifetime. My son went through a war that was terribly dangerous and he came home sound. I came home sound. I don't know how you could ask for much more than that.

**JS** - June 20, 2006, Marvin Clark

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Marvin Clark (MC)**

**Tape 2 of 2**

**End**

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