

INTERVIEW

Arnold L. Hartnett

YEAR

2005

**GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**NAME:** Arnold Hartnett

**DATE:** November 29, 2005

**PLACE:** Ensign, Kansas

**INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Suellentrop

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

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

Arnold Hartnett was drafted and went to Fort Leavenworth for physical and induction soon after high school. From there, he went to basic training in the Airborne Infantry. He was trained in glider and paratrooper training. He shipped out of Boston in 1944 for England. On the front lines in the Battle of the Bulge, his company suffered great loss of life. The severe winter, at that time, caused his feet to freeze and he spent some time in hospitals in Paris and England. Able to return to his unit in Germany, they were brought to New York, and Arnold was later discharged at Fort Riley, Kansas. Since then, Arnold has spent his life in farming in the Ensign area.

**SUBJECTS DISCUSSED:** Entering the service and training and life as a part of war zone front line action in Belgium and Germany. His experience as a glider serviceman and his European experience were discussed.

**COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:**

**SOUND RECORDINGS:** 60 minute tape

**LENGTH OF INTERVIEW:** 1 hour

**RESTRICTIONS ON USE:** none

**TRANSCRIPT:** 22 pages

**ORAL HISTORY**  
**Hartnett, Arnold L**  
**Interview Date: November 29, 2005**

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**  
**Interviewee: Arnold Hartnett (AH)**  
**Tape 1 of 1**  
**Side A**

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**JS -** You were born in 1924, so when World War Two started in 1939, you would have been about fifteen years old. Is that right?

**AH -** I graduated from high school in 1942 and I was eighteen then.

**JS -** Do you remember when the war started?

**AH -** Oh yes, I remember exactly when the war started.

**JS -** What do you remember about it?

**AH -** At the L. A. Nelsons, sometimes we would gather there after school and other times and have toasted cheese sandwiches and we would just visit and have a big time. That announcement came in while we were there.

**JS -** Do you remember what you thought, your family and your friends thought, and what the people in the community thought about the war?

**AH -** I can remember that it was terrible. They attacked Pearl Harbor, it was all over that. I figured, "I probably know where I'm going after I get out of school."

**JS -** Was there anyone in the community that was opposed to the war?

**AH -** I don't really know of anyone that was opposed after they attacked us, that was against the war, no.

**JS -** You said when you graduated, did you think that you would be drafted or were you thinking of enlisting?

**AH -** I was thinking about enlisting for awhile, but the draft got me before I got enlisted.

**JS -** Before you were drafted, there were other young men in the community that had joined?

**AH -** Yes, some of them that were older than I am had joined.

**JS** - If they came home on leave, did they tell you stories?

**AH** - No, I never really visited with anybody that came home on leave after that.

**JS** - When were you drafted?

**AH** - 1943.

**JS** - How were you notified that you were drafted?

**AH** - By mail; I was supposed to report to Leavenworth, which I did, and a school friend of mine reported the same time I did. I told them my preference was to get into the air force and they sent me to the Airborne Infantry.

**JS** - Why did you want to go into the air force?

**AH** - I thought that would be a more fun place to be than in the infantry.

**JS** - What is the Airborne Infantry?

**AH** - It is an infantry that has gliders and paratroopers. I was in a glider regiment and we flew in gliders so they could fly them back of the lines and release them. Then, they weren't paying us extra, but paratroopers got \$50 a month so I took paratroop training so I could get that \$50 a month. It was rough, but it was worth it after I got through with it.

**JS** - So you went to Leavenworth, had a physical and they told you it was Airborne Infantry?

**AH** - I didn't know I was in the Airborne Infantry until I got down to North Carolina.

**JS** - Was that Fort Bragg?

**AH** - No, it was right next to Fort Bragg; it was Camp McCall. That's where I did my basic training.

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

**AH** - Rough.

**JS** - What were some of the things you did?

**AH** - Well of course, you went to the rifle range and they ran you, ran you, and ran you to get you in shape. They had twenty-five-mile hikes and we would go on maneuvers and there would be make believe, one Army get the other. We

had maneuvers and calisthenics and just physical endurance and it was rough on us.

**JS** - Was that the first time that you had been away from home?

**AH** - Really yes, that was the first time I had been away from home.

**JS** - What did your parents think about it?

**AH** - They accepted it. My dad was in the service in World War One. They just accepted it as everyday life, what was going to happen.

**JS** - Did he ever talk about his experiences in World War One?

**AH** - Not really to me, he never did really talk about it. I don't think he ever went overseas.

**JS** - You got through basic training all right and then found out where you were going to go for training?

**AH** - We went to Camp McCall in Tennessee.

**JS** - You were in glider training?

**AH** - I was in glider training, yeah. They did take us up in gliders and fly us and everything like that and they could land anyplace.

**JS** - So, your training consisted of what?

**AH** - Everything they do in the Army infantry training, I guess, basically, except for the glider part of it.

**JS** - Why don't you explain the glider?

**AH** - These gliders would hold fifteen troops in each glider and they could put Jeeps and stuff like that in them, but of course, then there wouldn't be very many men in them. They were just kind of a frame covered with what looked and felt like paper and when they were pulling us behind C47s, they would just rattle like the dickens. When they would cut you loose, you just soared without a bit of noise. It was nice and they could land them.

**JS** - So there was a pilot?

**AH** - Yes, there was a glider pilot.

**JS** - And they had some kind of steering mechanism?

**AH** - They had regular ways to fly gliders and they would try to get to a place to land. Some of them lit in trees. They didn't tear up much.

**JS** -Were they camouflaged?

**AH** - No, they weren't camouflaged.

**JS** - I didn't realize they were that large, to handle fifteen men.

**AH** - The British had some that would handle thirty-one men.

**JS** - Where were those gliders made, do you know?

**AH** - I have no idea.

**JS** - You moved on to take paratrooper training also.

**AH** - Right, but I still remained in a glider regiment so I basically just got my jumps in and got my pay and was in a glider regiment.

**JS** - What was the paratrooper training?

**AH** - It was basically the same thing, only they jumped out of planes and we glided out of them.

**JS** - So, in paratroop training they would take you up with your parachute on?

**AH** - Yes, in paratroop training we would go up and they would line you up and stand by the door and if you were in the middle of the line, it didn't make any difference what happened, you were going to go.

**JS** - What did you think the first time you jumped?

**AH** - I thought, "That's a long way down."

**JS** - You had to learn to pull the parachute?

**AH** - No, we had a static line and we hooked up and when we jumped out of the plane the static line opened our chute.

**JS** - So that was automatic?

**AH** - Yeah, it was automatic. We did have an emergency chute on our chest; and if our first chute didn't work we could pull our emergency chute, which I had to do one time.

I had what they call a Mae West.

**JS** - What was that?

**AH** - Lines up over the parachute to make it into two and I noticed I was passing everybody on the way down and that's not a good thing. I pulled my emergency chute and it flopped up in my face and I had an awful time getting it out.

**JS** - In the training, did they teach you how to guide yourself down?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - What were some of the things they told you or how did you do that and how did you land?

**AH** - Like if you wanted to go forward, you grab the lines on the front of the chute and pull them down. If you wanted to go sideways, you pulled the edge of the chute down and it would drift that way.

**JS** - And how did you land?

**AH** - Hopefully on a good spot. Some of them lit in trees.

**JS** - Did you land and immediately sit down?

**AH** - They showed us how to land. As soon as your feet hit the ground you just kind of roll into it. Some of them landed standing up, but they didn't recommend that.

**JS** - Because you might break your leg or something?

**AH** - Yeah.

**JS** - How long was the glider and paratroop training?

**AH** - The glider training we just did now and then while we were training and the paratroop training took about, maybe, a month. Oh, they were mean to you in there.

**JS** - How so?

**AH** - They tried to make sure you weren't going to quit. They wanted to be sure you wanted to be a paratrooper and they would run you. When you got so tired you couldn't do anything sometimes they would give you twenty-five pushups if you just sat down wrong. It so happened that in our training, our officers took training at the same time. They set up a special school for paratroop. One day

we saw our Colonel running around saying, "I'm a bad Colonel, I spit in the sand."

**JS** - That was his punishment?

**AH** - That was his punishment. Lots of times if you did something wrong, it was nothing for them to say, "Give me twenty-five pushups." At that time I got to where I could do seventy-five pushups.

**JS** - Seventy-five, that's a lot.

**AH** - I know, but we had plenty of physical training.

**JS** - When you were training and jumping out did you have a gun?

**AH** - Full packs? Most of the time we didn't while we were taking our training, then we jumped with full packs.

**JS** - What would have been in a full pack?

**AH** - You would have had half a tent and a blanket and canteen. We never did jump with them, but I presume you would have food rations in them.

**JS** - That was because the paratroopers were going to be basically jumping behind the lines.

**AH** - Behind the lines and the glider troops would also land behind the lines.

**JS** - When you were taking the training did you have any idea where you would go?

**AH** - No, we didn't have any idea where we were going until we shipped out and we went to Boston so we knew we were going to Europe.

**JS** - You took a train to Boston?

**AH** - Troop train.

**JS** - Got on a ship and that was the first time you had left the United' States?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - What were you thinking?

**AH** - When you are young you just take everything as it comes. We went on a big ship so most of our division was on this ship. We weren't with other ships because it was fast enough that we could zigzag and went over that way.

**JS** - That would have been two or three months after you joined?

**AH** - Oh no, that was a year after I joined. I probably took a year's training.

**JS** - This would have been in 1944 then?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - Where did you go?

**AH** - We landed in England and stayed there and still did training there. When the Battle of the Bulge broke loose, they took us out to the airport so we stayed at the airport for three or four days till a fog lifted. Then they flew us over in planes and landed us over there and took us in trucks and we didn't parachute or anything out of that or the gliders didn't go that way. They took us up and, as a matter of fact, we relieved the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne that was trapped in Bastogne because they had been surrounded in the Battle of the Bulge. It was pretty rough there for a few days. We had two battalions and a regiment and my battalion was almost wiped out. So they did away with making us the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion to make us the 94<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

**JS** - You were just marching into the area and the Germans were still holding and you had to fight and push them back?

**AH** - Yes, there was something I never understood. Of course this was winter time and there you could see dead Germans all over the area. The day we were making our attack and when my company really got slaughtered, they had us take off our overshoes and turn them in. We had to go through water and everything else and they really clobbered my company. The whole battalion really got slaughtered that day. That was before the Germans had gotten weak enough that they were on the run. They were kind of on the run, but they were stubborn about running.

**JS** - Why would they make you turn your overshoes in?

**AH** - Because they would slow us down. I got frozen feet out of the deal.

**JS** - I can imagine. You said your company took a lot of losses. How many days was that?

**AH** - My Company was pretty well wiped out in one day. We would attack a hill and they were waiting. Before we attacked they would shoot their artillery and

our artillery was falling a little bit short and it was getting our scouts rather than the Germans. With their 88s and their mortars they really turned loose on us. I was in a Mortar Regiment, but our machine gun squads got up there and, I am not sure, but all of them didn't get wiped out.

**JS** - What were you thinking?

**AH** - That we have got to charge. That is what we were doing. We were charging and we kind of overtook them. They brought in relief for us and we finally overtook them, as far as that is concerned.

**JS** - Did you think of not charging?

**AH** - Well, you don't have much choice. You follow orders. You better follow orders.

**JS** - Did you have trouble learning to take orders and to obey when you went in?

**AH** - Not really, there were some that did and they usually had a lot of details to do.

**JS** - You would have been about nineteen or twenty then?

**AH** - Probably twenty when I went in, I believe I was twenty-one when I got out.

**JS** - That was quite an experience to see the loss of life.

**AH** - Land yes. It was an experience, but I don't know how to explain it, but you kind of get accustomed to knowing that this is what is going to happen.

**JS** - Because it is war.

**AH** - Yeah, it is war.

**JS** - Had you been with the same group of men?

**AH** - From basic training right on through so really a lot of good friends that you make in two year' time, sleeping in the same barracks.

**JS** - When those men were killed, did someone come and retrieve the bodies?

**AH** - They did do that if it was possible, they did. Like I say, there were dead Germans lying all over and they were retreating so they couldn't recover their bodies. United States Army did a good job as far as recovering the bodies. Of course, if they got pushed back they could not get them. We had the upper hand really. When they first started the Battle of the Bulge, they were set up to where

they moved fast and the 106<sup>th</sup> Division just ran clear over them. They finally got them slowed down and stopped and their supplies weren't keeping up with them, thank goodness. It wasn't near as bad for us as the front lines that made their last try to come in and take over.

**JS** - When you were there you had support, how did you eat and sleep?

**AH** - We had K-Rations and some C-Rations.

**JS** - What were those?

**AH** - You don't really want to know. In K-Rations you had three crackers and some cheese. You might have a little can of some kind of meat. C-Rations had a can of meat and some kind of stuff that was supposed to keep you going.

**JS** - For every meal, you had those?

**AH** - Yes, and in our K-Rations we would get three cigarettes--three or four in those little packs. That wasn't good for us now.

**JS** - Did you smoke?

**AH** - I did then, yeah.

**JS** - Did most everyone smoke?

**AH** - Seemed like most everyone did, yes. When you weren't in battle, in the little towns in Belgium or Germany you could trade the cigarettes for about anything you wanted.

**JS** - For food?

**AH** - Food or drinks.

**JS** - You had a canteen with water? Where did you get water?

**AH** - If they couldn't bring water to us we could get it out of a stream or anyplace and we had pills to put in it to purify it.

**JS** - Where did you sleep?

**AH** - Right there on the ground. We would dig a foxhole. If the ground wasn't too frozen we would dig a foxhole and get down in the foxhole.

**JS** - You had a blanket?

**AH** - We had a blanket with us, yeah.

**JS** - Pretty cold.

**AH** - Pretty miserable times.

**JS** - Did it seem as if it weren't real?

**AH** - I can't say they seemed unreal. You were just there; you had been trained long enough and you'd just accept things as they come and do it.

**JS** - How long were you there?

**AH** - I think probably about a week or two. Then I got sent on a patrol and my company moved out on me. It was a regiment and they picked so many out of each company. We were out guarding a land mine and because there had been some soldiers from another division that had been surrounded. When they tried to come back we'd lead them through this land mine. We were out there all night and it was cold and miserable. When I got out of there they had moved my company to another town and my feet had been frozen when I got back. Only other accident that I had was a mortar shell that knocked about that big a hole in my steel helmet and it knocked me out for a little bit and left the little piece in my head. Outside of that I was never wounded except for my frozen feet. That's when they took me back to the hospital.

**JS** - How did they treat your frozen feet?

**AH** - They just washed them. I don't think they did much for them. It depended on how bad they got. Sometimes they amputated them if they were too bad. It looked like I might have lost some toes, but I didn't. My feet came out of it in good shape. They finally got me back in England.

**JS** - The hospital was behind the lines?

**AH** -Yes, they kept moving you back. The first move was back in to a field hospital.

**JS** - That was in a tent?

**AH** - Yeah, and then they moved you on and moved me back into Paris for a little while. While I was there the hospital was so full that I was out in the hall. I saw a bunch of nurses go by and this one gal had to be my cousin. When they first went by, I just looked because they had slanted eyes like nobody else. When they came back by, I said, "Are you Mary?" She said, "No, I've got a sister Mary, I'm Florraine." I told her who I was so we had a nice visit there. She was a nurse in that hospital.

**JS** - What a coincidence.

**AH** - She wrote my folks about me. I guess I wasn't very good about writing about then. I didn't have anything to write with. She wrote the folks and told them she had seen me and I was doing all right. Then they sent me on back to England from there.

**JS** - When you were in France, basically all you were doing was fighting?

**AH** - This was in Belgium, where we were.

**JS** - They took you in to Paris. What was Paris like?

**AH** - I couldn't really tell you. You arrive there and are put in a hospital and I didn't see Paris. All I saw was the inside of that hospital.

**JS** - How long were you in the hospital?

**AH** - In Paris, probably about a week or ten days and then they shipped me out of there and flew me over to England.

**JS** - Were you in a hospital in England?

**AH** - I was in the hospital in England for quite a while, three or four weeks or longer. Then I flew back over and joined my company.

**JS** - Where were they?

**AH** - They were in Germany.

**JS** - Do you know where in Germany?

**AH** - Hamburg was the name of one of the towns. One thing I missed, which was probably lucky, was they made an airborne invasion. I was in the hospital during that so I joined up with them after that.

**JS** - Were they doing it in gliders, then?

**AH** - Yeah, my company was in gliders. In our division we had two glider regiments and one paratroop regiment. They flew and the paratroopers jumped and the glider men came in gliders.

**JS** - So you were trained, but never did either?

**AH** - Not as far as landing in war time, no. I was lucky enough to be in the hospital and they made contact with the British Army.

**JS** - So when you joined them, they were still marching toward Berlin?

**AH** - Yes, they were chasing the Germans back and after that the war ended pretty quick.

**JS** - So you were over there when the war ended?

**AH** - Yes, we were in this town, I don't remember if it was Hamburg or just close to Hamburg, but it was near the Rhine River and we patrolled the Rhine River while we were there. We chased the German families out of their apartments and we moved in.

**JS** - So you lived in them?

**AH** - Lived in an apartment, actually. There would be more people than would be in a normal apartment.

**JS** - Where did the German people go?

**AH** - They had to find them someplace else to live. Matter of fact, the ones that were in the apartment we were in were right across the street.

**JS** - Was that a normal practice?

**AH** - Yes that was our practice. I wouldn't know if it was fair or not. If I was German, I wouldn't think so, but if they had a radio and we wanted it, all we had to do was take it.

**JS** - Well, it was wartime.

**AH** - Yeah.

**JS** - Were you still eating the C-Rations?

**AH** - No, we had our own kitchen.

**JS** - And cooks?

**AH** - Yeah, they would fix our meals.

**JS** - Do you remember the day the war ended? It would have been May 5<sup>th</sup> in '45?

**AH** - It was a kind of gradual thing with us as far as that deal.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Arnold Hartnett (AH)**

**Tape 1 of 1**

**Side B**

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**AH** - Then they shipped us out and that thing bounced and we dipped water and they got sick on there. It was terrible. I was one of the fortunate ones, I never did get sick. They were just throwing up all over that ship. I finally went down below and got in my bunk and stayed there. It was a rough ride over. The intention was that we were going to come home and get a 30 day leave and then we would go to Japan or the Pacific. Thank goodness, the Japanese surrendered while we were on our way home. I came back and went to Fort Riley and got my thirty-day leave. They sent me a fifteen-day extension because I had enough points to get out in a short time. Then I went back and in forty-five days I would have enough points to get out so they sent me home for forty-five days so I was home for two and a half months before I got my discharge. Then I went back and got my discharge.

**JS** - You just went back to Fort Riley?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - When the Japanese surrendered, of course, we had dropped the atomic bomb. Do you remember what people thought about that?

**AH** - We thought that was the greatest thing that ever happened.

**JS** - Because then your war was over?

**AH** - Yes. We were all smiles and really joyous about that.

**JS** - You said earlier that you met your cousin. Was your cousin from around here?

**AH** - She was from Stafford. I didn't know she was a nurse over there. I could tell what family she belonged to on account of her eyes.

**JS** - Was she a member of the WACS or what?

**AH** - It was the Nurse Corps whatever it was. I am not right sure. She was an Army Nurse, but I couldn't tell you the branch of the service she was in.

**JS** - When you were talking about her you said you didn't write letters home much.

**AH** - At that time, when they took me away, I didn't have anything to write with. I probably could have made arrangements, but I wasn't even thinking about that for awhile.

**JS** - Did you receive mail from your parents?

**AH** - When I got over to England my mail finally caught up with me. I had to sort them out as to what weeks they were. Then my pay caught up with me, too. There was about four months in there we didn't get paid. I lent some money to a buddy of mine and we'd go out on the town and spend money and have a big time.

**JS** - When you went out on the town what would you do?

**AH** - We don't tell that kind of stuff.

**JS** - I want to know.

**AH** - We picked up some girls once in a while and went to movies.

**JS** - And to bars or clubs?

**AH** -Yeah.

**JS** - When you were in basic training and other training, what did you do when you had free time?

**AH** - We had a beer garden where families go or we'd play cards.

**JS** - What kind of cards would they be?

**AH** - Depended on how close to payday it was. Right after payday, it was poker and they'd shoot craps and stuff like that, but otherwise you could play pitch or whatever you wanted to play.

**JS** - Do you remember how much money you got a month?

**AH** - Yes I do. By the time they took out \$6.50 for insurance and a little bit for laundry or something, I was getting less than \$50 a month until I took my paratrooper training and then I got more. After we went overseas, we got combat infantry pay, which was \$10 a month. They pay you \$10 a month for fighting.

**JS** - And the chance that you are going to die?

**AH** - Yeah, I think I was getting up there to a \$100 a month then I would send \$25 a month home.

**JS** - To save?

**AH** - To save for me, yes.

**JS** - When you were in England, did you buy things to send home, like souvenirs?

**AH** - I never really sent many souvenirs home. I came home with some souvenirs. I've got a German sword.

**JS** - Where did you get that?

**AH** - While we were in Germany and I don't remember the circumstances. I do remember some of them, I don't remember that I did that, would take their watches off of German bodies. Basically, that's where these souvenirs came from.

**JS** - What did you think of the Germans?

**AH** - The German people or the soldiers? Depended on which group they were. Some of them were mean like the SS troops. You didn't want much to do with them. We had some prisoners and they were just about like us. And the German people, I liked them. They were almost like being a neighbor at home or something.

**JS** - When you took a prisoner, what happened to the prisoner?

**AH** - They had fenced-in places built to keep the prisoners.

**JS** - Toward the end of the war, I have always heard that Germany was so short that there were old men and young boys fighting. Did you see that?

**AH** - The ones I ran onto weren't old men or young boys.

**JS** - Did you have a particular friend or a particular officer or a very specific thing that happened that is a story you tell if somebody asks you about World War Two?

**AH** - I had several close friends. As a matter of fact one of my close friends got killed that one day I was talking about, I got a letter from his folks. They were asking me what I knew. I said all I knew. Of course, I couldn't tell too much. Our

mail could be censored or was. I said, "I'm afraid the information you got is true and he was really a good man."

**JS** - Were most of you friends married or not married?

**AH** - Some were married, but most of them weren't married. There were some in my outfit that were married. They weren't very true to their wives while they were over there, some of them. I knew one from Kansas City that was very unfaithful to his wife.

**JS** - When you went into the service it was the first time you had been out of Kansas. You met men from all over the United States. When you look back, what do you think was significant about that experience?

**AH** - I enjoyed the people I was with. I wouldn't want to go through it again, if I was young enough to do it. It wouldn't be something I would create. It was a learning experience.

**JS** - What did you learn?

**AH** - I learned it was different than living on a farm in Kansas. Actually you just lived a different life altogether.

**JS** - When you went to Boston or when you came back from the war did you have an opportunity to see some of New York City or Boston?

**AH** - The most we saw of New York City, when we came in, we came by the Statue of Liberty and down the Hudson River and they threw confetti and stuff out. We went by Coney Island when we came in. I won't tell you what we saw floating in the water around Coney Island. Then we went to an Army camp and they just shipped us out, so as far as running the streets of New York, no. We didn't get leaves or anything like that while we were in New York City.

**JS** - When you came home and got all that leave, did you know that you were going to come home here and farm in Kansas?

**AH** - I figured I probably would. I was working at a grain elevator at the time and that's what I did for awhile after I came back. Then I got an opportunity to move to the farm. My dad was living on a farm, but I got an opportunity to move out here. His farm was east of Ensign. I did buy it, however, and I own it now and I have a son living out there. Another man owned this ground out here and the tenant he had died and he came and talked to me. I said I'd love to move out here.

**JS** - When did you start farming, then?

**AH** - 1957.

**JS** - So you worked at the grain elevator quite a few years?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - How do you think the experience of serving in the armed forces and fighting in World War Two changed you, or did it?

**AH** - I don't really know except I still have memories of it that I never talked about to anybody. We just tried to go ahead with our lives and I still remember some of my friends that got killed in the service. I also, was in touch for awhile, with some of them that lived in other states. We stayed in touch for awhile. In fact, one of them came up to Dodge City one time and I went up there and we went out and enjoyed each other's company.

**JS** - No longer, do you?

**AH** - No, I haven't had contact with any of them for, I don't know how long. Now, some people still have reunions. They have reunions, but it is a combination of two or three divisions and I figured if I ever went to one I would know nobody so I have never been to one of their reunions. I thought about it a time or two. There was this one fellow that was in my company that was attached to those that had the reunion. Baldanger was his name and his was the only name that I could recognize and he was just an acquaintance. So, I never did go.

**JS** - Was it difficult to live in a barracks situation?

**AH** - I didn't mind it. You have friends there and I guess you just get used to it. They make you make your bed a certain way and have various inspections every once in a while and you'd better be up to snuff or you don't get a weekend pass.

**JS** - You mentioned they took money out for taking care of your clothes so you didn't have to do laundry?

**AH** - We did a lot of our own laundry, but it seemed like they took a little out for laundry, but basically we went to the latrine and got our GI clothes down there and scrubbed them with a brush,

**JS** - What did you wear?

**AH** - We wore fatigues most of the time unless we went to town. Then you had dress uniforms. In the wintertime they were green wools and in the summertime they were khaki.

**JS** - When you traveled, you packed up. What did you pack in? Did you have some kind of a bag?

**AH** - Yeah, we had a duffel bag.

**JS** - Other than toiletries, did you have other personal items that you took along, like photographs?

**AH** - We could take our photographs and we could take stuff to write letters with. We had a backpack that we carried that had your blanket rolled up and tied on top of the backpack. We never had a lot of personal possessions.

**JS** - You had to carry them.

**AH** - Yeah.

**JS** - When you were fighting, you were in fatigues. Did they issue winter ones?

**AH** - Well, we had winter clothes. I can't remember if we had overcoats or not. It seems like we might have. Surely did, but I don't remember them. We got pretty doggone cold, I remember that. There was snow on the ground in Belgium, especially. It wasn't what you would call pleasant and if we could get in a building, we'd get in a building.

**JS** - When you dug a foxhole, could you light a fire in them?

**AH** - That would depend on location. They wouldn't allow fires if it would tell the enemy where your position was.

**JS** - Was there ever any rain?

**AH** - Not while we were there. Of course, it was January and February and it was winter over there with mostly snow.

**JS** - A building might be a barn?

**AH** - An old barn and we slept in barn lofts and things like that.

**JS** - As far as personal cleanliness was concerned, you couldn't bathe?

**AH** - Oh you could have sponge baths, but as far as having showers and stuff like that there is nothing like that while you are out in the field.

**JS** - In the beginning you said something about a half a tent. When you were fighting, you didn't carry a tent?

**AH** - You'd carry half a tent and somebody else carried half a tent and you could put them together to make a full tent, but in the fighting area, you dug a foxhole

**JS** - How large would a foxhole be?

**AH** - Just depended how frozen the ground was and when you got tired of digging.

**JS** - So you carried a shovel with you?

**AH** - We had a shovel and a pick.

**JS** - Several men would dig a foxhole?

**AH** - Sometimes each one person would dig his own foxhole and sometimes dig with someone else. Sometimes you would use one that someone else had already dug.

**JS** - As you were moving the Germans back, did the Germans also dig foxholes and leave them.

**AH** - As a matter of fact, I didn't do this, but one of my friends jumped in a foxhole and there was a dead German in it.

**JS** - I suppose you are right, after a while you just kind of expect that.

**AH** - Yeah, I guess you don't have time to think.

**JS** - You are thinking of fighting and surviving?

**AH** - Basically, survive.

**JS** - Is there any other account or experience of anything or a personality that you remember?

**AH** - Not really, everybody was over there in the same shape you were. It wasn't hard to make friends with people. When we were in Germany with a family we chased out, this lady had a nice clock hanging on the wall and she would come over and keep it wound up and one particular day this particular guy that I said wasn't very faithful to his wife and he was an ornery son of a gun too. He took his bayonet and he just wrecked that clock and I was kind of proud that this lady came over and she was just in tears and she said, "I know you didn't have anything to do with this." That made me feel good.

**JS** - Because you were always decent to her?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - When you were fighting, did you get news of how the war was going and how did you get news?

**AH** - We could hardly get news.

**JS** - So you just did what they told you to?

**AH** - Yeah, we didn't have a daily paper. There were always rumors going around, but as far as them coming around informing you what was going on or showing where you were going to attack, no.

**JS** - Did you have to read a map?

**AH** - I didn't have a map, but the commanders would have a map or the sergeants did.

**JS** - They would just tell you to go a certain direction?

**AH** - They would lead us in there, yes. They'd tell us, "We're taking that hill."

**JS** - They would be on the radio, I suppose.

**AH** - We had radios and stuff like that.

**JS** - The training that you got other than glider and paratroops, with the rifle etc. was that sufficient training?

**AH** - Oh yeah, I think so. We practiced throwing hand grenades and would go to shooting ranges and shoot our rifles and I was in a mortars squad. I was first gunner and I would go out and estimate the distance to where they wanted the shell to fall. We would shoot a round and see where it fell and if it was too long bring it down a few yards. You would shoot it and see if it was on target and when it was, you would say, "Rapid fire!"

**JS** - Weren't you exposed when you were going out there?

**AH** - Somewhat, yes. You had to be in the open in order to shoot the mortar out.

**JS** - These were handheld mortars?

**AH** - No, they had base plates on them and they had two legs in front. You set them down and you could tell them right so many degrees and they could screw this deal and make the barrel go to the right or elevation or lower.

**JS** - But you carried them?

**AH** - We carried them on our backs and the rest of the squad would carry the shells.

**JS** - How were you supplied with shells?

**AH** - I never was in the supply group, but they got stuff to you somehow.

**JS** - There would be trucks behind you?

**AH** - There would be something behind us, yes. There were a few times, not in the heat of battle, that we could go back a ways and eat a hot meal. They had a kitchen back there for us.

**JS** - That was when you were not in such a fight?

**AH** - Yes, we were up there in the front lines.

**JS** - What kind of food would that be?

**AH** - It was better than the K-Rations and C-Rations. It would be a solid meal.

**JS** - Like meat and potatoes?

**AH** - Yes.

**JS** - Did you have desserts?

**AH** - I don't remember desserts.

**JS** - I always thought there was chocolate for you.

**AH** - Oh, every once in a while they would have a candy bar in your rations. It was a small candy bar and would be in K-Rations or C-Rations.

**JS** - Did your parents send you packages?

**AH** - They sent cookies, but you couldn't get them until you were back where you could get your mail. Some of the cookies got kind of stale by the time they got to you, but they didn't last long.

**JS** - You would have been there for Christmas?

**AH** - Yeah.

**JS** - Was it noted in any way?

**AH** - We didn't even know it was Christmas. Matter of fact, I am not so sure we didn't fly out of England on Christmas.

**JS** - So any holiday like Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's you just were fighting?

**AH** - Yeah, if you were in the war zone you were fighting. Now I don't remember any turkey dinners for Thanksgiving, but we probably had some, but that's been a long time ago.

**JS** - Yes, it has been, I think you have good memory. You remember a lot.

**AH** - I don't remember everything by any means.

**JS** - Is there anything else that you think some future generation would like to know about World War Two?

**AH** - I can't really think there is. Of course the British Army and the American Army were working together. We had the equipment and we had the planes. That was what happened in Bastogne when the 101<sup>st</sup> got surrounded. They couldn't get planes in there to supply them or to shoot around them or drop bombs.

**JS** - Did you fight with the British, side by side?

**AH** - I never did. When I was in the hospital, my company made the airborne jump there behind the lines in Germany. They joined up with the British Army there.

**JS** - When you were in England, I know you were in the hospital, but before you were, did you get to see any of where you were?

**AH** - Oh yes, my friend and I went into London on weekends. He had a girlfriend over there and we went out there and had a party. There were good times.

**JS** - Before the fight?

**AH** - Before the fight.

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**

**Interviewee: Arnold Hartnett (AH)**

**Tape 1 of 1**

**END**

**ORAL HISTORY**  
**Hartnett, Arnold L**  
**Interview Date: November 29, 2005**

**Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)**  
**Interviewee: Arnold Hartnett (AH)**  
**Tape 1 of 1**  
**Side A**

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**JS -** You were born in 1924, so when World War Two started in 1939, you would have been about fifteen years old. Is that right?

**AH -** I graduated from high school in 1942 and I was eighteen then.

**JS -** Do you remember when the war started?

**AH -** Oh yes, I remember exactly when the war started.

**JS -** What do you remember about it?

**AH -** At the L. A. Nelsons, sometimes we would gather there after school and other times and have toasted cheese sandwiches and we would just visit and have a big time. That announcement came in while we were there.

**JS -** Do you remember what you thought, your family and your friends thought, and what the people in the community thought about the war?

**AH -** I can remember that it was terrible. They attacked Pearl Harbor, it was all over that. I figured, "I probably know where I'm going after I get out of school."

**JS -** Was there anyone in the community that was opposed to the war?

**AH -** I don't really know of anyone that was opposed after they attacked us, that was against the war, no.

**JS -** You said when you graduated, did you think that you would be drafted or were you thinking of enlisting?

**AH -** I was thinking about enlisting for awhile, but the draft got me before I got enlisted.

**JS -** Before you were drafted, there were other young men in the community that had joined?

**AH -** Yes, some of them that were older than I am had joined.