

Mississippi Oral History Program

World War II Veterans
National WWII Museum/103rd Infantry
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

James J. Mulligan

Interviewer: Olivia Moore

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An Oral History with James J. Mulligan, Volume 1272, Part 7

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0:03:06.8	Joining the military
0:04:38.2; 0:16:42.2	Basic training
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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

JAMES J. MULLIGAN

This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi, National WWII Museum/103rd Infantry Project. The interview is with James J. Mulligan and is taking place on October 8, 2015. The interviewer is Olivia Moore.

Time stamps are recorded in the manuscript and the recording log using Express Scribe.

Moore: This is an interview for the University of Southern Mississippi's Oral History Program. The interview is with Mr. James Mulligan, and it is taking place on Thursday the eighth of October. The interviewer is Olivia Moore. First I'd like to thank you, James Mulligan, for taking the time to talk with me today, and I'll ask for the record, for you to state your name?

Mulligan: James J. Mulligan.

Moore: And for the record how do you spell your name?

Mulligan: M-U-L-L-I-G-A-N.

Moore: Thank you. So to begin, I'd just like to ask you some basic questions about your upbringing. Could you tell me where and when you were born? 0:00:39.0

Mulligan: October the twelfth, in 1925.

Moore: And whereabouts were you born, which city, which state?

Mulligan: Detroit, Michigan. I was born at home. Most children were born at home rather than the hospitals at that time.

Moore: So you were born in a big city then. How was it growing up in the city?

Mulligan: Well, it wasn't a big city then, but it is now. Well, it's growing now. It was a big city, and it degenerated, and now it's coming back, so.

Moore: Yeah. I can imagine. Were any of your ancestors, if you know of, in the military? Can you think back to your family history? Do you know of anyone before you who served in any other wars?

Mulligan: My dad came over from Ireland in probably 1912, somewhere, maybe sooner, and he enlisted in the U.S. Army but only for a very short time. 0:01:40.7 Then he was released. So that was the only military in my direct family. My uncle, a couple of uncles and cousins were enlisted in World War II, but that's all. None of the others in World War I.

Moore: And what were you doing before you entered the service? 0:02:02.2 What jobs did you do before?

Mulligan: Well, I was in high school, and while I was in high school, the war was starting, and there was a lot of war production on, so I got a job when I was about seventeen, working in a war factory, where they built trucks, Army trucks.

Moore: And how was your school experience? 0:02:28.3

Mulligan: It was good. I wasn't a great student, but I managed and partook in some sports but not many.

Moore: Oh, really? What sports did you do?

Mulligan: Football mainly.

Moore: Did you play for the school team or anything?

Mulligan: School team, yeah.

Moore: That's cool, obviously football, American football, because in England we call—

Mulligan: Oh, yeah, well, it's different.

Moore: Well, we call soccer "football" in England so I have to remind myself that—(laughter) And can you tell us what branch of the military you served in?

Mulligan: Which branch?

Moore: Branch, yeah.

Mulligan: The U.S. Army. 0:03:06.8

Moore: Um-hm. And when did your service start? Tell me a little bit about that, when you joined?

Mulligan: When I joined I was, at that time, everybody that was able-bodied and the right age was going to be in the military in some respect. So I wanted to go in the Navy, but they wouldn't accept me because I was colorblind, so I just waited, and I was drafted into the Army.

Moore: What was it that made you want to be in the Navy to begin with?

Mulligan: Well, I didn't like the idea of being in the Army, especially the infantry, and that's where I ended up, but that's about the worst job you can get, in my opinion.

Moore: Hm, on the frontlines, yeah. And what happened when you departed for training camp during the early days of training?

Mulligan: What happened?

Moore: Yeah. Can you explain that process a little bit? Where did you go for your training?

Mulligan: Oh, well, I left on the train from Royal Oak(?), Michigan, and I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where they inducted people, put them through a lot of tests. And then they decided what they were going to do with us. So then they sent me to Camp Blanding in Florida, and my job was to be a second-echelon mechanic. So that was my basic training, basic thing. 0:04:38.2

Moore: Can you remember what the days would go like during the days of basic training? How did they train you? What things did you do?

Mulligan: Well, naturally they had us up early in the morning, and fall out for inspection, then go and eat breakfast, and then come back in and get ready to go to school, but then we had breaks in the school, during the day, and then we had to go out and do different marching. I forget what they call it, doing calisthenics and marching during our break from school. Then we'd go back into school and finish that schooling for the day, and then go back to our barracks and get ready and go and eat. And when bedtime came, you were tired, so there wasn't much partying, although we could go to the PX [post exchange] and have ice cream, or something, if we could buy it, so.

Moore: Very nice. Do you remember any of the instructors, particularly, at your training? Is there anybody that, you know, that stood out to you at that time?

Mulligan: Well, like I say, I couldn't remember his name, but there was one guy, and he'd just finished his basic, but he was a mean, little guy. But we managed, so.

Moore: Why was he mean?

Mulligan: Oh, I don't know. There was one guy that couldn't stay in step, and he went over and kicked his ankles (inaudible). And then he put a rock in his hand and tell him which one was his right hand and which was the left, which would kind of embarrass him, naturally, so. But other than that most of them were decent people.

Moore: That's great. Did you receive any specialized type of training, or was it just the basic training that you went through?

Mulligan: It was motor mechanic's training where that was a specialized training. The rest of them took infantry basic, which is just going out in the fields and doing maneuvers and rifle ranges and things like that. But we had schooling rather than field training.

Moore: And how did you adapt to military life? Because you were quite young at this time.

Mulligan: Oh, well, I accepted it. You know. It was just something you had to do, and you know, you weren't alone. There were, I think, sixteen million others that joined the military in some respect, so you know. (laughter)

Moore: Um-hm. How about the food at the barracks? 0:07:24.0 Do you remember anything.

Mulligan: Feuds?

Moore: The food.

Mulligan: Oh, the food?

Moore: Yeah.

Mulligan: Oh, the food was basically real good. Now, on Sunday morning they would have it where you could order your eggs the way you wanted them. If you wanted them over-easy or scrambled or whatever, that was sort of a privilege on Sunday morning.

Moore: That sounds nice. Do you have any—do you remember any particular friendships during your time at the barracks? 0:07:55.0

Mulligan: Friendships?

Moore: Yeah.

Mulligan: Yeah. There was a couple of guys that were older than me, and when we finished our basic, we could go on a pass, and we went into town. And the older guys, they wanted to get some whiskey. So it was dry, what they called dry there; they

didn't allow liquor to be in that county. So they asked a cabdriver where he could get some. So he said, "Hop in. I'll take you out there." So he came back with a bottle of whiskey, and he was going to take it back into camp. And when he got there, there was a Red Cross, that was looking for him, because his son had died. And so he was going to get a pass, but he was so upset; he took that bottle of whiskey and a water glass, and he filled it almost half full with that moonshine and drank it. And by that time he was drunk, and we took him down to the train station. And I don't know how he got home or what. We never heard from him again, but that was a bad experience.

Moore: I can imagine. So that was the last time you saw him.

Mulligan: Yeah.

Moore: So what happened once you finished your training? Where did you go?

Mulligan: Well, when we finished basic training, they gave us a fourteen-day delay in route, and I was supposed to report back to Fort Meade in Maryland, and so we got there, and we was there a few days. And they called some of us out of the lineup, and we didn't know why. But it ended up that we weren't old enough to go overseas in a combat unit. 0:10:02.1 So they took us out and sent us down to Mississippi, here, somewhere, Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi; I don't know where that's at. But we were there for a couple of months, maybe, and then by that time I was old enough, almost old enough, so they sent me to Camp Howze to join the 103rd. So we left port on [October] the sixth and landed the twentieth, and my birthday was on the twelfth. So my birthday was in the middle of the Atlantic, so that's when I became eligible to be in a combat unit.

Moore: Oh, wow. So it was pretty close.

Mulligan: So that was only two days ago, the anniversary.

Moore: Of course. It was, indeed. Obviously, I know you went outside the U.S., but before that, had you traveled around the U.S. much? Was it only when you were in the Army when you had to go to all the different training bases? Was that the first time that you'd traveled round the U.S.?

Mulligan: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'd never been out of Michigan, probably, unless, well, we lived in Detroit, which was right across the river from Windsor, Canada. So I'd been over to Canada and had traveled around Michigan and maybe Wisconsin or Illinois. I'm not sure. But we never did much traveling.

Moore: And you served abroad in France, right?

Mulligan: Pardon?

Moore: In France, right, you served abroad in France?

Mulligan: Yeah.

Moore: Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience in France, perhaps traveling there? And then what happened when you first got there? 0:11:56.7

Mulligan: Well, we were on this ship for fourteen days, and when we got to Marseilles, France, there were ships sunk in the harbor, so they couldn't pull up to a dock. So they lowered nets, and we had to go down nets into smaller boats to go to shore. And then we went to a campsite. We pitched our tents, and we were there for a few weeks; I guess. I'm not sure how long, but—

Moore: What were your first thoughts about France, like the weather?

Mulligan: It was almost like home at that time, you know. It was mild weather. So there was not too much difference.

Moore: And when you traveled, you said you went by ship. Was that your first time traveling?

Mulligan: Oh, yeah. On the ship?

Moore: Yeah.

Mulligan: Oh, yeah.

Moore: And what was it like on there? Do you remember? Do you have any particular memories being on the ship?

Mulligan: Oh, there's a lot of memories on that ship. We were packed in there. There was bunks up four, at least four high, maybe five high, and a guy in each one. And we ran into some rough weather. And when we went to the mess hall to eat—they didn't call it the mess hall, but whatever they call it on a ship. And people were getting seasick, and they would throw up right on the table that we were eating on. 0:13:29.8 And the gangways were covered with vomit. It wasn't much fun. But I had one break, though. Our company was chosen to stand guard on the ship, on the deck, so that got us out of the hold for quite a while, so that was good.

Moore: That's nice. What did you do for fun on the ship?

Mulligan: For fun?

Moore: Yeah.

Mulligan: Well, there was some gambling; that's about all. They didn't have any entertainment that I remember, but they did allow us to gamble, as long as you didn't

show any money. 0:14:13.2 So my cousin and I—I accidentally run into my cousin in that same company. And we were playing blackjack, so my cousin, he would take in the money, and I would deal the cards, or we'd switch off. And we had quite a bit of money, and we kept it under a blanket, which was legal. But this lieutenant walked by, and he flipped the blanket open. He said, "Whose money is this?" And I said, "It's mine." So he took it, but he gave it back to me a few days before we landed, so.

Moore: That's nice. So you say that you ran into your cousin. What was that like when you first saw him? 0:14:54.1

Mulligan: Well, that was really unique. When I was transferred into the 103rd, I was supposed to be in the motor pool as the second-echelon mechanic, but when I got there, they said the motor pool was over-strength, and they were going to put me in a rifle company until we got overseas, and then transfer me back into motor pool. Well, I never saw the motor pool, again, and I think he was lying to me about going back. But yeah, when I got to the barracks that I was assigned to, I didn't know a soul. I'd always traveled by myself. So I was sitting at my footlocker, and this guy kept walking by, and he was tanned and fresh haircut. And, "Damn, he looks familiar." So finally I said, "Are you Pat Griffith(?)?" He said, "Yeah." So here was my cousin. So they had lost my clothes, and it was a mess. So anyway, they were going to go on a twenty-five mile hike the next day, and my cousin Pat says—he was a staff sergeant. He says, "I can get you off of that hike." I said, "No." I said, "I don't want to alienate the guys that I'm with by favoritism." (Inaudible)

Moore: That's funny. So what was the—I forgot to ask before—the physical training like? When you were training, did you have to wake up for PT in the mornings? Was that—

Mulligan: Oh, yeah.

Moore: Was it tough? What kind of things did you do?

Mulligan: Well, there was a lot of calisthenics and marching and close-order drills and things like that. 0:16:42.2 So they kept us busy. It wasn't real strenuous because I was going to school. So compared to what I was doing, the people who were in the regular rifle companies and heavy weapons companies, we had it pretty easy. Some of those guys, we could see them coming back in from the field, and they were beat. You know, they were carrying their heavy equipment, and so we had it pretty easy compared to what they were doing.

Moore: That makes sense. So going back to your time in France, obviously because you were in the infantry, you were on the frontlines quite a lot. And could you speak a little bit about the combat action that you witnessed when you were in France?
0:17:26.2

Mulligan: Well, when I first was relieved, when (inaudible) relieved the 3rd Division, and they had just taken a big chateau that day, I think. And we got there in the middle of the night. It was so dark you couldn't see the guy in front of you. So if there was a rock or a boulder or a log or something, we had to tell the guy behind us, "Be careful." So we got there and relieved them; went into the chateau, and they had dug foxholes out there. And so when daylight came, we went upstairs, and here there's two or three dead Germans up there in their full uniforms, laying there in the bathroom, and then they said that there was a dead GI out in one of the foxholes. And what had happened: the Germans were throwing in some mortars, and they were out talking to each other, and they heard the mortars coming in, so he ran back to his foxhole, and the mortar landed in there with him, so it killed him. And nobody came to get him. And the quartermaster's supposed to come up and pick up the dead bodies, but no one—they wouldn't do it. So our sergeant said, "Well, we'll take them back." So we made a litter; I forget how we made it, but we took them back, anyhow. And the odor from that guy stayed in my nostrils for months; it seemed like, you know. I could smell the dead body, so. That was our first baptism of combat, seeing that, and then the Germans, we could see them across the valley, and they would, if they saw us out, walking around, they would throw some mortars in, but they never hurt anybody. So then we stayed there probably four or five days, and then our other regiment (inaudible) through us. And that was awful. And I'd just turned nineteen and lived a quiet life, and then all of a sudden, all this noise, and the machine guns and mortars, and all this stuff going off. And then these guys went through this valley, and the Germans just sort of mowed them down, and they were just like sitting ducks out there with no protection. I was surprised that they would do that to people, but they did.
0:20:22.5

Moore: How did you feel, witnessing the casualties and the destruction? Because like you said, you were so young at this time. It must have been massively overwhelming.

Mulligan: You mean seeing the dead bodies? Oh, it was traumatic, you know, just to see what's going on. "What am I in for here?"

Moore: How about casualties among your own men, not just Germans, as well?

Mulligan: Well, there weren't any that I know of now, and there may have been some that I didn't know about. But they brought a lot of the wounded into the chateau because in those days, they didn't have helicopters or any way to get wounded people out of the war zone. 0:21:12.7 So they brought them into the chateau, and they were just laying there on litters, or just on the floor, wounded, and they didn't even—I walked by them, and I didn't even talk to them. I can't remember. I can't believe that I didn't communicate more with them. I don't know; just it was too traumatic for me, I guess; I don't know.

Moore: Um-hm. Are there any other particular moments other than that, that stick out in your memory during combat in France? 0:21:52.2

Mulligan: Yeah. We were dug in by a (inaudible) over (inaudible), and just holding our line. And during the night or late afternoon, the German SS overran this town. So they told our captain we were going to go in there. And so our platoon went in one side, and another platoon went in another. And as we were going in, they were shooting at us, but they didn't hit anybody until we got into the village. And once we got in there, we'd run from one building or one side of the street to another, and the Germans would shoot at us, but luckily they didn't hit any during that process. But we got into one village, one courtyard, and one of the guys went around in back of it, in back of the barn, behind a log, and he heard Germans. He had (inaudible) and killed them. So we went out there, but we didn't get hit, but then one of the other fellows, he got hit in the hand, and so anyhow, I don't know. But I came back in, and we were in the house, and this one fellow, Carlson(?), he was supposed to guard the street corner, but he had a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle, M1918], and the BAR froze up because we'd go in buildings when we could, when it was warm enough, or when we could. So going from the heat to the cold, condensation built up ice in that weapon, so it wouldn't fire. 0:24:13.3 And he told the lieutenant that, and the lieutenant said, "Well, hit them with it then," which was just a—I don't know why he would say that, but he knew better. Anyhow his name was Carlson, and so we'd been behind this barn, so we went; Carlson and I were heading back out there again, to see what was going on. And a shell hit, and I think it hit on the roof, and I looked back, and Carlson was dead. I believed he was dead, but I wasn't sure. I mean, I was sure at the time, but—

Moore: Would you like me to take a moment to stop the tape? I'm going to stop the tape just for one second. (brief interruption) So could you tell me a little bit about the toll on your body and having lack of sleep and difficult places to sleep and not much food? How did that affect your body?

Mulligan: Well, we seemed to get enough food. We had C-rations or K-rations, mostly. 0:00:22.0 But the clothing we had was not very adequate, but we just had woolen gloves, which were not very warm and just a field jacket and a sweater and long underwear. And so it was cold, but somehow we managed, as I said. 0:00:52.0 But we had what they called shoepacs, and we had two sets of pants, and one pants you kept, and your shirt, to keep them dry, and the other one, and your boots. But some of the guys still ended up with trench foot or frozen feet. 0:01:13.5 So that was quite common. Sometimes guys would get dysentery, and that was a mess, trying to walk down the road and make a big mess, and you'd have to have somebody to come over and help you clean up. But that didn't happen that much. It was weather. But we had to dig foxholes, and sometimes with the frozen ground, it was very difficult. 0:01:45.6 You brought up an explosive. If we could dig a little hole and get down below the frost, we could (inaudible) some of that off and get the hole big enough to get into. (Inaudible) stand out there, in the wind, blowing, and below zero and cold, and it was very miserable.

Moore: And did you get much sleep? And if you ever did sleep, whereabouts were you sleeping? 0:02:19.7

Mulligan: Well, there were times when we didn't get much sleep. In fact one time I fell asleep walking, but I didn't fall for some reason. I know I fell asleep, and I started to fall, and I caught myself; I woke up. But then there were other times, like one other time I was really tired, and I was supposed to be on guard, and it was really wet, and we'd dig what they called a slit trench, which is just something a foot or two deep, just to get in, in case of an air raid of some kind. But they filled up with water, so we just had to lay on top of the ground. And I was laying on a big sheet of metal, and I fell asleep. And one of the officers found out, so one of the noncoms come by and woke me up. You could get in trouble falling asleep.

Moore: And how would they punish you if they caught you falling asleep?

Mulligan: Oh, I don't know what they would've done because when we were in Marseilles, after we landed, there was not much food available, and we heard that some of the guys were going into Marseilles without a pass. So three of us decided we were going to go in without a pass. 0:03:48.3 So we got in there, and we looked around, and there was a Red Cross there, and you could get a cup of coffee and a donut for ten cents, but you could only get one. 0:04:01.5 So we were walking down the street, and an MP [military police] hollered; he wanted to see our passes. Well, my two buddies, they scooted around the corner, but they caught me, and they locked me up overnight in a little schoolhouse, I guess it was. And so next morning they called my captain; they said, "What the hell do you want to do with this guy?" Said, "Send him back; I need him." We were going into combat. And while I was in there, there was one guy; his picture was on the wall like they got at the post office. At first I didn't—he told me the story, but I didn't believe him until I saw his picture up there. 0:04:50.7 But he was over in Italy, I think it was; and he stole a GI truck, and he would take it to a gas stop, where they have all these gas cans, fill up the gas and sell it to the Italians. So finally they caught him and locked him up over there, so I don't know what they did with him.

Moore: That would be interesting.

Mulligan: But it was a bitter, cold winter, and I really don't know how they survived because in Korea, that was bad over there and very cold, but they had different clothing, a lot different clothing, so. I imagine there were people, for a while, I know there were some guys that were wounded, and nobody could get to them, and eventually they just froze to death, so. 0:05:42.3

Moore: Could you tell us—I know you mentioned it briefly earlier—a little bit more about your uniform and your equipment? So what were you wearing and carrying? 0:05:52.6

Mulligan: What we wore?

Moore: Yeah, and like what weapons you carried, as well.

Mulligan: We carried an M1 rifle, and I had a grenade launcher and my rifle, and I also was assistant bazooka; I carried a couple rounds of bazooka ammunition. But the clothing was just a steel helmet, and a helmet liner, and then we had a warm hat we wore underneath the helmet. There were no scarves that I remember; it was just our field jacket, and our long underwear. Well, we had a shirt and then long underwear, a woolen shirt and then long underwear and summer underwear, and that was about it. And then the pants we wore, they had a lining in them, more like a cotton lining, and it helped a little bit. Then the boots we wore, web tanks(?) they called them; they were [rubber] up to the ankle and then leather from there on up, to about here, (inaudible).

Moore: Hm. And what kind of friendships did you form when you were in France? And can you tell us who with and a little bit about them?

Mulligan: Well, I just went into this outfit, like I say, just before going overseas. I didn't have a lot of time to form friendships. 0:07:48.8 But I did have friends, naturally, because we were in foxholes; usually two men to a foxhole, so they become friendly. And there was one guy in particular, Epstein(?), a Jewish guy, and the unique thing about him: he loved to write letters. And we'd sit in the foxhole, and we had Zippo lighters, which I don't know if you know what those are, but just a little cigarette lighter. And he would light that thing, and make a little shelf in that foxhole, and sit there and write letters, so. And we were pretty good friends, but never exchanged addresses or anything like that. So I really regretted that because I wanted to contact some of these guys, and I tried. There was one little, Mexican guy, and he would—right at the first start, when we first started combat, he got shell-shocked, and then eventually he came back up to the company, and him and I were together. He was supposed to be the bazooka man. 0:09:06.8 So just before dark we were—I don't remember where we were at, but we were behind a little knoll, and some tanks came and started shooting at us, and one shot landed close to us. And he went crazy again. So here I am with this guy, and the captain told us to pull back. I said, "Come on; let's go." And he said, "No. Leave me here. Leave me here." So I said, "You can't stay here." So I leaned my rifle against a tree, and I grabbed him, and I said, "Come on; we're going." So I dragged him back to the medic, and I went back to get my rifle; I couldn't find it. So I just used his; he didn't need it anymore, so. And he said one time, "If you ever want to get in contact with me, call at King's Ranch." Did you ever hear of the King's Ranch?

Moore: No.

Mulligan: It's a huge ranch in Texas, almost like a (inaudible). And so I tried that one time, and it didn't work. So I never could contact anyone that I wanted to.

Moore: That's sad. And you said he wrote letters. How did you stay in contact with your family or your friends back home? Did you write letters, too? 0:10:39.5

Mulligan: Well, I wasn't a great letter-writer, but I did write some, and I'd get letters. My mother would send me boxes of cookies sometimes. But that was the only communication then. And our mail was censored part of the time. And then they also had the airmail, which was real thin paper. You could write on that, and they would send that airmail.

Moore: So did many people receive packages from family members like that with, you know, cookies or candy and stuff like that? Was that a common thing to be sent?

Mulligan: To send to the—

Moore: Cookies, yeah, to the soldiers.

Mulligan: Yeah. Well, yeah. One time they said, "What can we send to a GI?" And they'd say, "Well, send them a carton of cigarettes." Well, now, we found out that that was (inaudible). But just boxes of cookies or candies. And my parents did send me a pair of gloves one time, and that helped.

Moore: That's nice. Did lots of people smoke then?

Mulligan: Practically everyone. 0:12:05.0

Moore: Everybody.

Mulligan: And we'd get cigarettes in our rations. With every meal we had four cigarettes.

Moore: Could you tell us a little bit more about the rations? What you had, what you were allowed.

Mulligan: Well, (inaudible) like C-rations, and we didn't get them, anyhow. They were heavier, and they were in cans. A K-ration was almost like—you probably don't know, but—a Cracker-Jack box, but just a small box, but it was just little cans of—one of the meals was cheese, just a little can, maybe three inches diameter, about [an] inch and a half thick, with cheese in it. And then for breakfast the same size can was bacon and eggs or ham and eggs. And then for supper was beef, some kind of greasy beef. It was all OK; breakfast and dinner was OK if you could heat it up. But most of the time we couldn't heat it up because we couldn't have any fires, and we had a little stove, but most of the time we didn't have gas for it, so we just had to eat it cold. But it was good. When you're hungry, most anything tastes good.

Moore: Yeah. I can imagine. And what did you do for recreation when you were off duty?

Mulligan: I was never off of duty, really. 0:13:45.9 Some of the guys got passes back to Nancy or Brussels, but I never did. But when I was wounded on March the twenty-second of [19]45, I went back to a hospital. I never did go back to my division. But then hospital life was good; they treated us good and fed us good. There was no recreation there (inaudible) although sometimes they would have what do you call that when you—they would give us leather to make wallets out of? I forget what they call it.

Moore: I'm not sure what the name is.

Mulligan: But anyhow, it was some of things like that, simple things, but no recreation that I know of.

Moore: I can imagine not. And you said you were wounded. Could you tell us a little bit more about the day, how that day played out when you were wounded, and exactly what happened to you?

Mulligan: Well, we followed when the—March the fifteenth they had a big jump-off, and there was artillery barrage for about fifteen to twenty minutes, just a solid shells going over our heads, going towards the Germans. And then we took off. But we were in reserve. We followed another company or another regiment. And March the twenty-second we were going to relieve them, but really as we were following them, we'd see guys coming back that had stepped on shoe mines or something, and they blew their foot off, and if they had German prisoners, they'd make the German prisoners carry the guys back on their backs. 0:15:54.4 So anyhow, March the twenty-first, I guess it would be, we were an exchange. We were going to relieve this other outfit. So the Germans could hear us, and they were just firing blindly in this wooded area, but they couldn't see us, so I don't know if anybody got hurt. Anyhow the next morning we were going to take off on the attack, so my Lieutenant Reese(?) says, "OK, Mulligan, you're first scout, and Epstein, you're second scout." And so we took off through the woods, and all of a sudden this guy started shooting at me. So he shot a few rounds at me, and I thought, "I'd better find a safer, a safe place." So I got behind a tree; I thought I was safe. But he hit me in the leg. 0:16:54.0 So that was the end of my career in the military.

Moore: You spoke a little bit about the time in the hospital, but what happened after you were wounded?

Mulligan: Well, I crawled back by the medic, and he started working on me, and there was a reconnaissance vehicle there. And the Germans kept shooting at us, so we couldn't really move very much. So finally they let up, and I got in this recon car, and they took me back to a field hospital. And then they took care of me then eventually sent me back to a general hospital, which was in Dijon, France.

Moore: And can you remember the day that you found out that the war had ended? What was that like? 0:17:57.1

Mulligan: Yeah. I was in the hospital in Dijon, and there was a lot of happiness, naturally. And the noncoms, we couldn't get whiskey, any alcohol, but there was a nurse walking by, and she had an armful of bottles of whiskey, or different liquors. So I said, "Can I buy one of those off you?" "No," she said, "I can't do that." So we didn't have any alcohol to celebrate with.

Moore: And did you ever come into contact with any other Allied soldiers? I remember you mentioned about hearing a British soldier once.

Mulligan: Well, that's about the only one, the British soldier in the hospital.
0:18:48.1

Moore: And what was he doing there?

Mulligan: I didn't really know him; I just heard his voice, and it was so distinctive that I knew it wasn't an American there. But then there were some bad experiences in the hospital; some of the guys were really hurt badly. One guy had his whole calf of his leg blown off. And they did skin grafting at that time, and we were making a big rollout for (inaudible) to transfer it and guys with their feet missing and burns; some of the guys were burned. One guy in particular, he was burned really badly. It took (inaudible). They would change his bandages every once in a while on a Saturday, and he would just lay there and moan. He was an Italian guy. He said, "Mama Mia." And just crying. I asked the nurse, I said, "Can't you give the guy something to kill his pain?" She said, "We're giving him all we can. Otherwise he'll become addicted to the painkiller." So.

Moore: And how about your wound? How long did it take to heal, or did it never fully heal?

Mulligan: I was very fortunate; it just missed my ankle. It went right through here, so probably—there was a scar about that long. It didn't hit a bone; otherwise I'd be crippled. I was very fortunate in that, but it healed up nicely, and they were going to send me back to my unit, but they gave me a job, taking specimens from one building to another at that hospital. And it broke open, and from then on it wouldn't heal. And it just went on and on and on. And they tried skin grafts, and finally they must have given up on it. I don't know.

Moore: And how did you return home? 0:21:09.2

Mulligan: Well, after the war was over, I was still in that hospital in Dijon. So they sent me and some other guys to Paris where there was an airport, and they were going to send us home, fly us home. So they did. We flew home on a C-54 from Paris to New York. So that was nice, rather than take a ride on a ship, again. That was pretty good.

Moore: Did you spend any time in Paris? Did you get to see Paris, at all? 0:21:47.2

Mulligan: Yeah. We were there for about four days and walked around and went to see Napoleon's Tomb, but we were there since, but at that time the Eiffel Tower was still blocked off. You couldn't use it because during the war it was blocked off. But we got to see some of it.

Moore: That's nice. Paris is lovely. And when you got home, how were you received by your family and your community in general? 0:22:26.1

Mulligan: There was no big celebration. In fact when I was—they sent me to a hospital in Chicago, and then I came home, but I didn't tell my parents I was coming home, and I walked in the house, and that was sort of a dramatic experience, just to walk in and my mother and dad there. And they were happy to see I made it home.

Moore: I can imagine. And how did you readjust to civilian life?

Mulligan: Oh, good, because at that time there were so many people in the same condition, the same situation, and there were no jobs available because the war effort was—they shut down the war plants, naturally. And they had them geared up for getting back to making cars and (inaudible). So they had—you could get fifty-two months of unemployment, so they called it Fifty-two/twenty Club. You could get fifty-two twenty-dollar checks for that year. So a good share of the guys, that's what they did, maybe not for the whole year. I didn't do it for the whole year, but so that's how we—but then there was a lot of—not everybody. A lot of guys went to bars, and it was just sort of joyous times, so.

Moore: I can imagine. And what career did you go into after the war? 0:24:14.4

Mulligan: Well, at first I took almost any job I could find. Before the war, when I was still in high school, I got a job at Dodge Truck where they were building trucks for the war effort. And so when I got out, they had a law or some agreement that if you had been working at a job and went to war and came back, you could get that job back, again. But the job I had at Dodge Truck I didn't like because being just seventeen, they didn't give me much of a job. So I didn't go back there. But then I liked mechanical things, so I tried to become a toolmaker. So I would to work for Ford Motor Company, and I was an apprentice for a while, for Ford. And there became a layoff at Ford, so they had to lay off apprentices at the same ratio as journeymen. So they laid me off. So about a year later they called me back, but in the meantime, I was married and moved quite a ways away from that job. So I didn't go back, but I did finish it at a smaller shop, and I became a toolmaker. And I worked for Packard Motor Company for about four years as a gauge-maker. And then when Packard went out of business, I applied for a job at General Motors, and I was accepted, and I spent thirty-two and a half years at General Motors at the Tech Center in Warren, Michigan. And then I retired, and it was a very good job. I enjoyed it. It was different work every day and enjoyable for me.

Moore: And how did you meet your wife? 0:26:46.9

Mulligan: There was a football game at our home school, and me and two of my buddies went there, to the game, and in the bleachers there were two girls and their mother behind us. And they started bantering back and forth, we decided to meet each other and go on a date. So we did, but I don't know if I wasn't interested or what happened, or maybe didn't like me. But anyhow, (laughter) the one guy, he was a little guy and really a nice guy. In fact I saw him a couple of years ago in (inaudible). And this gal that became my wife, she decided she didn't like him too well. So the other guy, he invited me to go on a blind date with them. So I did, and we ended up, eventually ended up in a marriage, so.

Moore: And how many children do you have?

Mulligan: Four children.

Moore: What have they done in their lives? What jobs did they do?

Mulligan: My daughter that's here with me now, she became a nurse anesthetist. My oldest son, he became an RN [registered nurse]. And my next son, he's in Charleston, South Carolina. He retired from the Air Force; was about twenty-five years. And my other son, he's (inaudible) those CAT [computerized axial tomography] scans at a big hospital around home.

Moore: So lots of different things.

Mulligan: Yeah.

Moore: That's awesome. And I know that you've been awarded with several military decorations. Can you tell us which ones you've been awarded and why you were awarded them?

Mulligan: Well, I guess I never did anything very heroic, but I ended up with a Purple Heart, and with a Purple Heart you're also awarded a Bronze Star. 0:29:15.4 So that's about the extent of my awards. And then they announced here again, last night, but if you apply to the French Embassy, they'll give you a French medal. And it dates back to Napoleon's time. So I did, and it's a beautiful medal. I brought it with me. But I've never worn it.

Moore: And how about the Combat Infantry Badge?

Mulligan: Yeah. Well, (inaudible) Yeah. That's sort of a prestigious medal. (Inaudible) about that one.

Moore: I remember you were saying the other day that that used to only be awarded to people in the infantry, that they've since got another one for people who were not just in the infantry. So that's a pretty special award for people in the infantry there.

Mulligan: Oh, yeah. It's strictly for infantry, and as I remember it, you had to be in combat for thirty days or something to get it. But I don't think that's true anymore. As long as you're in combat one day, I think you're entitled to it.

Moore: Are you a member of any veterans' organizations? And if you are, which ones?

Mulligan: Yeah. I belong to the American Legion, the VFW, Veteran of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and I belong to a Purple Heart Group. 0:30:52.3

Moore: So quite a lot.

Mulligan: When I first retired, (inaudible). For all the years I was working I never joined anything. I didn't seem to have time to go to any meetings or anything. But after I retired they sort of talk you into it, or you're enticed to join some of those groups.

Moore: Could you talk a little bit about how your wartime experiences have affected your later life? Can you think of any particular ways?

Mulligan: Oh, I don't know. Sometimes I get really emotional. I can't believe it. Last year or the year before, a newspaper lady wanted to interview me, and we started out, and I just couldn't do it. 0:31:43.8 I had to just walk out. I guess—I don't know why.

Moore: It's understandable. How about some of the general life lessons you learned from your time in military service? What stuck with you throughout your life?

Mulligan: I don't know what connection that would have. I suppose just being able to get along with people. And I know how to make friends and depend on other people, if you need to.

Moore: Did you have any skills before—I know you were quite young, but were there any skills you learned before you went in the military that you found actually helped you when you were over in France, or did you have to learn everything from fresh?

Mulligan: Well, my dad came from Ireland, early in 1900s. 0:32:44.9 But he was almost like an orphan, although he wasn't. I don't know what; they never really talked about it. But he never knew his father, and it almost looked like his mother abandoned him. I'm not sure. But anyhow, he went to learn a trade, and in that time blacksmithing was a very skilled and great trade in the world. And it was like, I guess you'd call, indentured. He would stay with the journeyman and lived with them and

ate with them. And anyhow, he learned that trade, and he came over here, and naturally that's what he did when he got here. But when I was old enough I had to go and help him. So I spent a lot of time helping him do his job; I learned a lot of things from that experience.

Moore: And was there any time during the war that you feel that helped you or set you up for a situation at all?

Mulligan: You mean how did that help me?

Moore: Yeah.

Mulligan: Well, I don't know. I mean, it helped me be mechanically inclined, from that standpoint.

Moore: That makes sense. And how has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general today?

Mulligan: Well, I hate to see it happen because I think it's a crime to see people killed and maimed, and it just makes me sick to see what happened in Vietnam. 0:34:39.1 I wasn't in favor of that war at all, and it just makes me sick. I have a nephew that has a lot of problems because of being in Vietnam. So I don't know. I hate to see them send boys to war, but I know sometimes it's unavoidable.

Moore: And other than your nephew, has any of your other relatives served in any branch of the military?

Mulligan: And of my other relatives?

Moore: Since the Second World War?

Mulligan: Well, one my uncles and my cousin served in World War II, also. And then my two brothers, they served, but they were never involved in the war. But (inaudible) in the military, and my one son, one son was in for about twenty-five years. 0:35:33.8 My daughter spent over thirty years, a lot of it in the Reserves, but she was involved in the Gulf War. And my youngest son, he was involved for a little while, but he got out as soon as he could. He couldn't stand it; the officers picked on him, I guess.

Moore: And is there a message that you would like to leave for future generations who are going to hear this interview, maybe based on something that you learned during your experience in the war? What would you say to the future generation, if there's anything?

Mulligan: Well, I would say not to pick the infantry as a profession, number one. 0:36:35.9 That's the bloodiest and nastiest job you can get; although, the 8th Air Force

that was stationed in England during the war, they lost a lot of planes and a lot of men, killed and prisoners. That was devastating, but even at that I think the Air Force is a much better choice than the infantry would be. But I never encouraged any of my children to go in the military. They went in on their own, and not because I influenced them at all. I would discourage them, if anything.

Moore: That's interesting. I guess we're kind of coming to an end on the question side of things, so I'd just like to ask is there anything that you feel we haven't really discussed in enough depth that you might like to discuss, or is there anything in particular that you want to say?

Mulligan: Well, just that I don't know if I can continue. I know that Carlson being killed; it still bothers me today that I didn't go back and find out if Carlson was dead.

Moore: And you weren't able to remain in contact with anybody, and you tried; you said you tried to remain in contact with some of them, but you haven't.

Mulligan: I didn't. We never exchanged any addresses or phone numbers. But I wasn't with him very long during a peaceful era. 0:38:17.0 It was—I joined the 103rd, and shortly after that we went overseas, so there was not much of a chance to develop any friendships, so.

Moore: Yeah. That makes sense. I guess it all happened so very quickly at the time. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to say? It doesn't necessarily have to be about the war. It could be about anything.

Mulligan: Just that I was not a hero, and I did my job.

Moore: Well, I think you were, sir, so. I guess, just to end, I'd just like to say thank you so much for your service. So many people, obviously, really appreciate it. While I'm not an American, I am a British person, and obviously we were Allies, and you fought for my country, too, so I'd just like to say thank you so much. And so many people appreciate it. And we really appreciate you coming today. And this interview is going to be really helpful to researchers—

Mulligan: You're welcome.

Moore: —in the future, and I'm sure they're going to be so interested to hear all about your experiences. So thank you so much.

Mulligan: OK. Thank you. I didn't think I'd get through it, but—

Moore: You did. Thank you.

(end of interview)