

TIP RAINEY

Amthor: This is a portion of the Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri of the 1940s Program. The Nodaway County Historical Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support of the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Today is Feb 5, 2009, and this interview is being conducted at the King City Manor in King City, Missouri, in Gentry County. The interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting is Margaret Kelley. We're here to interview Clyde Tipton Rainey, known as Tip, and his birthday is January 8, 1923. He lived during the 1940s and he served in World War II in the army and he was a private first class.

Amthor: Tip, could you tell us a little bit about your background, where and when you were born, what was your parents' occupation, and whether you had brothers or sisters?

Rainey: I was born about twelve miles northeast of King City and my dad and my mother, they was farmers. I had a brother, Joe, and a sister, Opal. And I guess that was my family.

Amthor: And you said they were farmers?

Rainey: Farmers.

Amthor: What was it like in 1940 before you went into the war?

Rainey: Well, it wasn't too bad. We - uh- I went to school at Gentryville and I went to high school in Albany. And, I don't know, things was pretty rough part of the time and part of the time it wasn't, but it wasn't too bad.

Amthor: Do you remember what they were saying, the propaganda at the time about the war in Europe before we entered the war?

Rainey: There wasn't too much said other than the fact that they was bombing England real bad and, of course, they was taking over most of Europe, Germany had, was bombing England and was looking for maybe an invasion sometime for England before we entered the war.

Amthor: Do you remember what you were doing on the day that they bombed Pearl Harbor?

Rainey: I don't remember exactly what I was doing. I remember at the time. And I remember I was with some younger people my age. Some was playing, but I don't remember exactly what we was doing, but I remember when the news come that we was bombed.

Amthor: Did you enlist or were you drafted into the service?

Rainey: I was drafted in the service.

Amthor: What year was this?

Rainey: 1943

Amthor: How old were you?

Rainey: I was – just was 20 years old – and it was January, the last part of January, and I went into active duty on Feb 1, '43.

Amthor: Could you tell us a little bit about your basic training camp memories?

Rainey: I went to Leavenworth and was processed there. I went from there to Fort Custer, Michigan. And on the way to Fort Custer, Michigan, the sergeant had an order that said, “You’ll be given 6 weeks training and you’ll be sent overseas to Africa to take care of German prisoners.” And that’s exactly what we did.

Amthor: Did you get any specialized training for that?

Rainey: Yeah, we got quite a bit of specialized training.

Amthor: What was that like?

Rainey: Well, I suppose most of that was like basic training, but a lot of it was personal conflict, hand to hand, things like that.

Amthor: How did you adapt to military life?

Rainey: Just about like everybody else – just adopt it.

Amthor: You said you went to Africa. Is that the only place you served? Did you go into Europe. Did you go....

Rainey: We was in England. Took a load of Italian prisoners from Africa to England. I didn’t – I mean, our round trip did – took 500 Italians on a ship and we picked up a convoy in the Straits of Gibraltar and took them to England and we landed at Liverpool, England, and we was there about 17 days and we went from there across England up through Scotland and went on to Glasgow, Scotland, and got on another ship and didn’t know where we was going, but we went back to Algiers, Africa.

Amthor: How was it like guarding the German prisoners? What was it ...on a day to day basis? What did they do? What did you do?

Rainey: When we first got them, we processed them and deloused them and made sure they didn't have weapons and we had built a stockade east of Casablanca sort of in the desert and put a lot of them there and a lot of them we put on ships to send to the United States and I don't know, they wasn't that rough a duty, really, because they was prisoners.

Amthor: Why did they ship them to the United States?

Rainey: They shipped them over here and put them in camps and they worked them. They done things with them.

Amthor: I didn't know if they just wanted to get them out of the country or if they...

Rainey: They wanted to get them out of the way and, yeah, they wanted to get them away from Africa and they got some Italian prisoners and a lot of Germans from Italy when they had conflict there.

Amthor: Did a lot of those prisoners go back after the war or did they stay in the United States?

Rainey: Most of them had to go back, but a lot of them come back to the United States. I know several people that come back to the United States.

Amthor: How were the barracks and the facilities at these camps?

Rainey: The Africa barracks was tents, for us and them, too. I don't know what they was like in the states. We never was here.

Amthor: Did you have some kind of fence around the camps? How did you keep them in the camp so they wouldn't run off?

Rainey: We had a fence around the camp and guards, of course. I didn't have to do too much guarding in the stockades. I was mostly running up and down the coast of Africa bringing them back and taking them where they wanted to go. And when they come to the states, I wasn't here, but they went, what I know of it, they went to Fort Carson, Colorado. And I know they scattered out quite a bit over the United States.

Amthor: Were you aware that there was a prison camp in Clarinda, Iowa?

Rainey: Not really, but I'm sure they was – they was probably all around.

Amthor: I think there was a prison camp in Clarinda.

Rainey: I'm sure there was.

Amthor: So did you see any combat while you were transporting?

Rainey: No. Well, there was bombs and seige when we went to England, but I don't know whether they counted that as combat or not. I suppose ...we was under fire.

Amthor: In prison camps, did you ever have any entertainment like the USO come visit or what did you do during your leisure time?

Rainey: We didn't have too much leisure time. But there was different things come, to do.

Amthor: Did you have any other special missions that really stand out in your mind other than the one to England?

Rainey: Well, nothing especially other than we was in Algiers and we was in Iran and we was in Casablanca, and then we was out in the Asian desert building stockades and things.

Amthor: Now did you have to, of course, what kind of artillery did you have there?

Rainey: Well, of course we had side arms, some of us, and we had M1 rifles, and we had shotguns with a long block in it and then we had machine guns.

Amthor: Do you have any one special story about anything in particular that happened while you were at the camps?

Rainey: Oh, there were so many things. I don't know.

Amthor: There's not one that stands out over the others?

Rainey: Not really.

Amthor: Did you ever have any try to escape?

Rainey: Yes, we did.

Amthor: How did that usually happen?

Rainey: It just happened and they got brought back.

Amthor: How did they get out?

Rainey: Well, we was transporting them. See, we transported everything on box cars there in Africa. And we was transporting them and two of them got away and slipped away and two of our guys went after them and brought them back.

Amthor: Did any of them get away that you never did retrieve again?

Rainey: No.

Amthor: Then you did your job well.

Rainey: We watched them.

Amthor: Did you make a lot of friendships and have comradery with the other fellow men in the army?

Rainey: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, and we had - when we come out – of course, we was on, as I said, detached service. We had army reunions until about the last two or three years because they all died off. But all of the time that we could and all the time we was alive, we had reunions. You know for the detachment that we had overseas.

Amthor: How about mail? Did you communicate with your family and friends back home?

Rainey: It was 6 months before I communicated with anybody – didn't hear from anybody. And I got about half a barracks bag full when we got mail. We was supposed to come to Africa. We was supposed to pick up 500 prisoners or whatever it took and we was supposed to bring them back to the United States and we was supposed to take them to Fort Carson, Colorado and there we'd be. Half of our outfit did just that. The other half stayed - about a year and a half, before we got back – but half of them - I never will forget, they called us out one time, we hadn't been there too long, and named the names that were coming back, and had the prisoners all ready to come back in, and we just stayed, the names that wasn't given. We stayed over there- which was an experience, a good experience. It wasn't bad.

Amthor: So where were you when the war ended in Europe?

Rainey: I was stationed at that time in Norfolk, Virginia.

Amthor: So did you have to go back after that – after the war ended in Europe?

Rainey: No.

Amthor: You were done.

Rainey: Yeah.

Amthor: What did you think about the atomic bomb? Did you agree with Truman when he dropped.....

Rainey: We was 100% in agreement because we was scheduled to go to the Pacific, so we was 100% for the atomic bomb.

Amthor: So, were you going to have to deal with Japanese prisoners?

Rainey: Probably.

Amthor: Did you ever hear Axis Sally?

Rainey: Yeah.

Amthor: Do you remember anything - of the comments?

Rainey: Just the comments that, you know, we was going to lose the war, you know, and things like that. Down on Americans, you know. And then sometimes they was real nice, sweet messages, you know. We didn't really pay much attention to it because we knew who she was.

Amthor: Did you see a lot of destruction when you were there – I mean, did you see casualties and destruction?

Rainey: Some.

Amthor: How did you and the other men handle it when you saw it?

Rainey: Well, we just took it that that's the way it was. I mean, you really didn't think about it too much.

Amthor: Now, where you were, was there much combat in Africa or was most of it north of you?

Rainey: There was a lot of combat in North Africa. And that's where we got a lot of prisoners, when we were over there, from Rommel's Army. And they was good soldiers – they was real good people. I mean, we'd march them in a thing..... where we did four abreast as far as you could see down the road and there wasn't no sections or nothing and they was all in step and all. They was soldiers.

Amthor: How were the other people and the other Europeans and Africans in that area? Did they get along with the military pretty good?

Rainey: Military in Africa? Not real good. Of course, it was French Morocco and they was quite a few French. But mostly they was Arabs, I call them. And we didn't get along with them too good.

Amthor: So locals were a little more hard to get along with?

Rainey: They didn't like us. The feeling was sort of mutual.

Amthor: So things haven't really changed over the years.

Rainey: No, not really.

Amthor: Do you remember your commanding officer's name?

Rainey: We didn't have what you'd call a commanding officer. The only thing we had a 2nd Lieutenant who was over our detachment.

Amthor: Do you remember who that was?

Rainey: I remember his last name was Ash.

Amthor: Did you ever have any of the big generals ever come down to your area?

Rainey: No.

Amthor: So, you were already in the states when you got home. Did you get to leave? Did you get to go home right after you heard the war was over or did you stay in the service?

Rainey: We stayed until they got ready to get us discharged which was quite a little while.

Amthor: Was there a lot of major celebrations when you heard the war was over?

Rainey: Not really. Not as far as we was concerned.

Amthor: Did your family give you a nice reception when you got home?

Rainey: Oh, yeah, good enough.

Amthor: Now, did you get married when you got back from the service?

Rainey: I got married in – come back here in '46 and I got married in '48.

Amthor: And was it tough to get back to civilian life when you came back?

Rainey: Well, no, not really.

Amthor: What did you do when you came back?

Rainey: I was farming. My brother, he was farming and I just helped him.

Amthor: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill when you got back?

Rainey: Yes, I did.

Amthor: And in the agriculture, did you help to take any of the housing or just...

Rainey: No housing. Just – you got paid so much for going to learn how to be a farmer. I was paid and then my wife, my first wife, Nancy, was a war widow. Her husband was killed in France - he was a pilot and he flew a B26 and he was killed. She had a little boy 2 years old – Jay – Allenbrand. I think I gave that.... That was my wife.

Amthor: You met her when you got back?

Rainey: It was quite a while. She lived in Kansas, Bonner Springs, Kansas, and her girlfriends was up for a visit 'cause they used to live here and she come with them. That's how I met her and I made some trips to Kansas.

Amthor: Did you ever join the American Legion or the VFW?

Rainey: Yeah, I belonged to both of them and I still belong to the American Legion.

Amthor: Are you proud to be a veteran of World War II?

Rainey: Oh, yeah.

Amthor: Were you ever concerned about the Soviet Union and the spread of Communism?

Rainey: Not really.

Amthor: What do you think are the differences between the war today and the war that you fought?

Rainey: I think there's lots of difference. I think it's totally different. A lot of difference. The difference in what they use and what they have – what they're equipped with. There's a difference in their training. There's a difference in how the war went. There's just a difference, a lot of difference.

Amthor: If there was something you could give to your experience in the army, what advice would you give to the new troops if you could?

Rainey: Now, most of the new troops now are all volunteers. They are National Guards, and whatever. This is another thing back in World War II, the national guards didn't go – didn't fight overseas, that I know of. They do now. And now half of the army must be them. And if I was giving them advice, if they wanted to be there, just go and do their

duty and do what you're told. Somebody said, "What did you do in the army?" and I said "Just what they told me to do."

Amthor: Is there any other story or comment you would like to leave us with?

Rainey: No, I don't know as – I've covered pretty much. I brought my itinerary – how the war was from the time I was in Michigan until we got back to the states.

Amthor: Wonderful. Could we make copies of that?

Rainey: You can, but I don't know as it – I don't know if you'd want to.

Amthor: Do you have a question for him?

Amthor: Well, I really thank you for coming. It's been a really interesting interview. You brought in a different perspective with the prison camps.

Rainey: Well, yeah. I was in a little different service than a lot of people do now. .