

Ghost Army
GEORGE REBH

[GREBHT01]

{{Ghost Army 001}}

Q Tell me your name and what your position was in the 23rd Headquarters.

A (start?) Well, my name is Major General George A. Rebh, retired. I was a .. commanding officer of the– (I better clear my throat.) {*Go ahead, . . . it's not a problem.*} Okay, we'll try again.

Q Go for it.

0:00:41.7 A My name is George A. Rebh. I was retired, a major general in the Corps of Engineers. During the Deception Unit, our activities in Europe, I was a commanding officer of the 406th Engineer Combat Company Special.

Q What, broadly, was the mission of the 23rd, and how did you carry it out?

0:01:11.7 A Broadly, there were two main ones. One was to provide security for the unit, the perimeter security in case the enemy actually did attack. And secondly was to do any demolition work for construction, or we also had extra bulldozers which would create track marks on a train, over which then the dummy tanks would be put, plus the camouflage.

Q To make it look more realistic?

A That is correct.

Q The 406th was also involved in special effects, was it not? {*yes*} Tell me about that.

0:02:07.9 A Probably the main one was my first platoon under the command of Lt. Daley, was the MP platoon for divisions. And those people would have a checkpoint at the commanding general's place, and then also we'd put men out on the major crossroads, and then also we had roaming patrols to keep civilians, anybody else other than military persons, [through] the area. And di- We did this also during the night, after curfew, to make sure that the indigenous people didn't come into the operation. One other thing was, we had flash tubes to simulate artillery fire. And most of the time, our people managed those.

Q Tell me about the flash canisters. How did they work?

0:03:12.9 A Well, it was- I believe it was a sh..... 105 artillery piece, which would put in a certain amount of powder, and then would ignite it to give it to the flash. Now, usually the artillery piece, the dummies were set forward of the real artillery, and they were coordinated so that the sound and the flash would appear to the enemy at the same time. So they wouldn't feel it's really a deception going on, but that this was the real thing.

Q So somebody'd be on the radio with the real artillery unit, so they could happen simultaneously?

A Correct.

Q You were a West Point graduate?

A Correct.

Q Class of?

A January '43.

Q How did you and your engineering company end up in this Deception Unit?

0:04:28.2 A That's a question I'd like to have answered. Because you look back, when we were on a, there were about six battalions of engineers out there. And for us to get picked out of that one was surprise to me, also when you consider all the engineer companies in the

Army at that time. When Jonathan Gawne was writing his book, *Ghosts of the ETO*, I asked him when he did his research, if he ever found out the reason, I'd certainly appreciate knowing.

Q Do you remember how you got that news?

0:05:03.1 A Yes. We were out in Yuma, Arizona, (o) doing maneuver work. We weren't on maneuvers at the time, and the battalion commander received a message that Company A of the 293rd, which we were at that time, (w) had been selected for a secret mission, and that they would be detached from the battalion. And I don't know whether it was that message, but subsequently informed that we were going to Camp Forrest, Tennessee.

Q When you found out what the secret mission was, what did you think about it?

0:05:51.4 A Well, we thought it was going to be some kind of a special engineer mission, involving demotions, maybe going in early on attack with the infantry, and that sort of thing. So it was that kind of activity that we sort of thought we were going to do.

Q When you realized what you *were* going to do, were you disappointed, surprised?

0:06:20.3 A (well, no) I was disappointed. Being a regular Army officer, you go to the sound of where the guns are firing. And so I had expected, as I—we were in the 293rd, combat battalion [minus] a company, that we'd be supporting the infantry (or) and armored units. So it was a disappointment. But let me add, while it's a disappointment, it pro-ved to be very beneficial in my Army career later on, because the knowledge I gained of battalion, regimental, division, corps, Army organizations and what they did, helped me later on.

Q As part of special effects, you would impersonate officers. Can you tell me about that?

0:07:32.5 A Yes. Well, the most notable example is in the Operation Vier-Viersen, where the 23rd simulated two divisions, the 30th and the 79th, for the crossing of the Rhine. Now, these two divisions were in the 13th Corps, which was the middle of the 9th Army Corps zone.

And they were to simulate the 30th and the 79th crossing on the first of April. Now, the real 79th and 30th had moved up into the 16th Corps, which was to the north, near Wesel, to make the main attack.

0:08:11.8 Now, I was designated as a regimental commander of the 199th Regiment in the 30th Division. So we set up our CP, and I wore the colonel's insignia, the eagles. And I think three or four times— Well, many people came in to visit in the CP. But three or four times, they were West Point graduates who were senior to me. They had graduated before me. But they knew me because I was a regular— on the regular basketball team, the first five, for three years and captain the last year. So they'd come in and we'd talk. And then on the way out, they'd ask the— my first sergeant, who was a sergeant major, "What happened to Rebh?" And the answer was, "Well, you know how it is in war. If you're at the right place at the right time, and you do a good job, you get promoted." So that was the story. It made [go away], of, quite mystified, but that was one case where my rank was higher than a captain's.

Q Tell me again what rank officer you would have been impersonating at that point.

0:09:38.9 A I was really a captain, but I was impersonating a colonel, a full colonel, as the (c) regimental commander.

Q What were your West Point friends surprised at?

0:10:02.0 A Well, that I had graduated in January '43, and here we are in '44, well, '45. (you know) It's a short period of time to go from captain— or from cadet to full colonel. Because they were either majors or lieutenant colonels.

Q Tell me again. They were surprised that you'd gone from cadet to colonel in two years.

0:10:41.5 A Well, what surprised them was, the last time they'd seen me, I was a cadet, and graduated in January '43. And here we are, about two years later, and here I'd gone from a cadet to

a full colonel, which is quite unusual for such a short period of time. But again, in war anything can happen.

Q Why couldn't you tell them the truth?

0:11:05.6 A [laugh] Why couldn't we tell the truth? Well, that was part of the deception, was— Because not only did we have to deceive the enemy, but we also had to deceive our own people, so they wouldn't spread the word and possibly through that the enemy [would] find out there is such a thing as a Deception Unit.

Q You couldn't tell other units what you were doing?

0:11:37.6 A Well, let me give you another example, not exactly in terms of the rank business, but in the Battle of the Brest, Battle of Brest, I and my jeep driver drove into the 29th Division area. And I'm want-wanting to learn, was always wanting to go up forward, and especially this time, to listen to the Sonic Unit portray tanks going down the road. I went off there, left him with the jeep, and he got talk[ing] with some of the 29th people there, and he was asking questions, so some of them thought that he must be a agent or something. So they took him to the S2 section of the regiment, and he didn't say anything about what he really was, and then they took him to the Division S2. Finally, the people up there contacted some of the thirty— 23rd Headquarters people, which solved that problem.

0:12:36.6 Another time was during the Operation Casanova. One of my MPs was approached by General Twaddle, who was the commanding general of the 95th, because we're portray— using some of his people to portray the 90th Division. And so he stopped us at the MP's post on the road, started asking questions, so forth. And the fellow just stuck right to it, despite the questions that Twaddle was trying to get him to say, which were not true. And so the General went back and somehow Col. Simenson— talked with Col. Simenson, was praising the soldier for not having revealed the identity of what he was really doing, and so Simenson came down and applauded, commended the soldier.

Q Did it ever seem almost silly? A very serious job with some humorous aspects?

0:13:51.8 A Well, I sort of indicated too. But I really don't think so, except, you know, the ones I've already indicated, and there may have been others like it. But to us, it was really a serious job because deception, to be successful, people have to be discipline, they [be] attention to detail, and stick with the story. And that was one of the things that— part of the special effects— Let me just say one thing.

0:14:19.6 When we trained in the United States—because as you know, we started with no SOPs, no past experience, so forth, and we sort of learned by trial and error. But nobody really thought seriously about special effects. It was only when we got into the continent, we seen what the situation, understood the significance of it. For example, when we went into pre-simulated division, our people found out who— learned who the commanders were, what battles they had been in previously, really knew the history of that division to considerable detail. Because they'd go into town, and they'd probably meet soldiers that were associated with the real one, asking questions, so they could (you know) answer those kinds of questions. So it-it was a very good experience, and the soldiers played their part— that— This was sort of a role model, or a play model—

Q Start that thought again.

0:15:28.0 A (yeah) What we're really doing was playing roles like in a play or something. People (s) knew what the lines were, and they repeated them according to the situation.

Q Why is deception important to the Army?

0:16:16.1 A Well, in the matter of deception, fact, the 23rd Headquarters is the first unit in the history of warfare that was dedicated solely to deception. Now you take Napoleon and Lee and Caesar, they had performed deception operations. But what they did, they would take part of their fighting force and use them for deception, but when they got through, they would come back as fighting force. In contrast, our sole mission was deception. So we moved from one deception unit to— operation to another. In fact, in some cases we carried on two or three deception operations at the same time.

0:16:55.9 Now the importance of deception is, you go back to Sun-tzu, the Chinese philosopher, who indicated that what you're trying to do is to make the enemy think you are where

you aren't, or that you're larger than you are, and this sort of thing, because this affects the thinking and the actions of the enemy. Because you're trying to portray that this is a strong spot when it's really a weak spot, but you're using your strength over here for a main attack. Well, it's like in football. You know, we have deception and .. do it—

Q That's a good answer.

0:17:38.6 A Just let me say one thing. I think that's the value of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, is that it got involved in deception and did a good job. And as .. Jonathan Gawne in his book *Ghosts of the ETO*, he says something about: we got to start thinking about using [it] in the future. Well, what I have said is that we really got to get serious about it, in the sense that the enemy now knows what we did during World War II. His intelligence people, schools, and so forth. .. And what we should do is to have a special unit that exists to continuously think about deception, incorporating the latest military think and technology, from the smallest level to the highest level. I'm not saying to duplicate the [293rd's] activities, but beyond that is to— other ways that we can do deception; and that it should be involved in the research and development of equipment, in the doctrine, rewriting the doctrine for deception; but most importantly is teaching in schools, so that it becomes part of the process of our thinking.

0:18:58.3 Now, Col. Simenson, who was the S3, really believed in this. Because after he retired, I used to get letters, I mean, sheafs of-of letters, on his thinking. In fact, he wrote one Deception 101. And he was trying to promulgate this idea throughout the Army. In fact, when I wrote my review for Gawne's book, I gave it— a copy to the Chief of Engineers, which incorporated these things. And he said that he gave it to the commander of TRADOC, but whether he did or didn't, I don't know. But I've never since then had any access to current Army thinking on deception. But it is a formidable force if it's used properly.

0:19:55.5 Now, that was one of the troubles during our operations in Europe. Some of the commanders didn't understand it. Some of [it] would only use it half-heartedly. Some of them wouldn't use it at all, and some of [it] misused it. So that's where we get into the

thinking that this has to be started in the teaching and the training and so forth, so it (be) really becomes effective—because it *is* effective, as our operations Europe demonstrated.

Q When you were impersonating a colonel, how old was he? You would have been 24-25?

A Twenty-four, 25.

Q Very young colonel.

A Oh, but war— [laugh] *{but war}* Yeah. It's a war.

Q Did you have any sense at the time that particular operations were successful?

0:22:03.5 A Well, as I say, we had some which were aborted, some were misused, and there were several that I remember (I can't the details right now) where they were considered successful. In fact, overall, the evaluation even was that it was successful, many times.

0:22:26.9 The one that is— stands out is the crossing of the Rhine. Now, the history on the 23rd was that General Devers, who was the commanding general of the American forces, and he was stationed at London before Ike took over, had heard about deception. And it's my understanding he sent a team down there to study it. They came back and wrote up a report. Now, Billy Harris, Col. Harris, was head of that, because Devers had established this deception branch, [of] which Col. Harris headed. And it recommended an infantry division and an armored division, as I recall. And Gen. Devers was about to send that to the Army— the Army staff in Washington, the War Department, to implement it. But Gen. Bradley came aboard, and he suggested we add another infantry division so that it would be a corps size unit. So that went back to War Department, they approved it, and the units were—

Q So it was big enough to imitate an entire corps, you're saying? Explain that.

0:23:52.3 A Well, a corps is usually three divisions—along with its extra units. Now, in the crossing of the Rhine, we simulated two divisions, the 30th and the 79th. [..... dressed as a corps], was part of a corps, the 13th Corps. And they simulated the-the 30th and 79th. We moved into position, set up everything, while the real divisions moved north in the 16th

Corps, near Wesel. They made the main attack. And we carried on all the activities, the sights and sounds, of those division. In addition, just to make them more realistic, we had real units, which we had on previous operations. We had a tank battalion, infantry battalion, anti-aircraft, artillery, that sort of thing. And we usually put them on the perimeter of our operations, so that anybody passing through, if they were accidentally in the unit, they would see the real ones. The dummies would be on the interior.

Q Do you have particular memories of Operation Viersen?

0:25:22.2 A Well, being interested in the engineer aspect of it, there was a lake in the rear part of the 13th Corps area where at night we would practice assaults, through sound, with the sonic people. And also bridge-making sounds that we would have.

Q What exactly are you doing there, and how does that fit into the deception?

0:26:07.1 A Well, the thing was, we were crossing the Rhine River, which is a [formidable] river, is a large obstacle, and normally in a operation you have to establish a bridgehead on the other side first. And to do that, you'd use assault boats to transport your people across, because they're not going to walk on water. Not yet. So we had this lake back there, and we would use the Sonic Unit to simulate the sound of assault boats crossing the river, so that people would understand that (you know) we're getting— really going to cross, because we were practicing, getting ourselves ready for it.

Q So you're pretending to be rehearsing? *{That is correct.}* Can you say that?

0:26:59.2 A Yeah. The-the whole reason for this was to convey the impression to people that we're rehearsing and really serious about a river crossing. And we would be using the assault boats for the crossing. (OK)

Q Were there occasions where you were in harm's way while you were in the unit?

0:27:42.8 A Yes. In the Operation Koblenz, which took place in mid-December '44, we were simulating the 75th Division. And this would involve a crossing because we were going to attack up through the Koblenz sort of corridor, Trier to [Koblenz]. And so Lt. Col. Fitz, who was the commander of the 603rd, and I went out to make a reconnaissance of where we might cross the river. So we had two jeeps, four men in each, and we parked our jeeps behind a building and started walking down toward the river. Well, we had an open space around the building, and then we entered the tree line. It was shortly after we entered the tree line, bullets started flying over our head. You could hear them, (you know) hearing the leaves in the tree[s]. So we hit the ground, and some of us retire-returned fire. For about 15 minutes, this occurred. But I got the word out that we don't want to go any further; we don't want to get captured, because of the information that we had about deception. And so gradually withdrew, and Sgt. Duckworth, who was a really an expert shot, I had in the rear, so he sort of covered us as we crawled back. He says he saw three Germans, and he shot, and he thinks he hit one of them. So that was the main instance.

0:29:15.9 The only other one was in— It was an operation just before Viersen, where I was on a road—road, and on a hill, and you could go down the hill and there was a culvert. There was a small stream going through. And the Germans were periodically putting shells in mortars on that bridge. And so it was a matter of waiting till one came in, then get up, then just get through there. Now, this is the same town, I think the day before, that [Capt. Wells] of the Headquarters was killed by an artillery barrage, evidently. So knowing that, well, I was especially cautious and sure of what we were going to do as we drove down that road. But I think that's about the only two times that—

0:30:08.8 There're other times that— Well, one of them, which had nothing to do with deception, was I wanted to know what's going on. So whenever we weren't pulling an operation (this was— happened in Normandy), I went along the front lines, and there was a battalion of tanks there. And so I got talking with the-the lieutenant colonel, tank commander. And while we were talking, the Germans started putting TOTs (time on target) artillery drop. So bo— we just scooted underneath a tank to protect ourselves [on it].

0:30:42.4 Other times, again, because I was anxious to understand about war and what we did, I can remember especially in Normandy driving down the road, you see a couple of

soldier, you go beyond there and it's just quiet as everything. So I'd just tell the jeep driver, "We're getting too far away. We better get on back." But [it was] that sort of eerie feeling of knowing that you were in no— discovering that you were in no man's land.

Q . . . Did things happen that didn't make it into the history books, in terms of operations?

A To be honest, I really don't know of any instances. I've thought about that question, but nothing comes to mind.

Q What was going on in Operation Brest?

0:32:32.1 A Well, the 6th Armored Division had knifed through and gotten out to Brest. And then I believe it was the 80th, the 29th, and the 2nd Armored that were the follow-up in there. And the 6th Armored withdrew. But yet [it was] wanted that the 6th Armored would be portrayed as still being there. And so one of the operations there was to take a—a company of tanks and to pretend that they were a battalion of tanks of the 6th Armored. In fact, reports on the German side they always thought that the 6th Armored was in there. So we set them up as a unit. But— And it was a favorable pathway through the German lines. But before that came off, the division commander decided he wanted to make *his* actual [tack] through there. And so we stopped our operations so we wouldn't attract more anti-tank guns in the area, and they— the division tacked through that area.

0:34:00.5 The other thing I enjoyed in that area was that during the day you'd see the B-17s coming over, dropping their bombs, and you could watch them leave the plane, hit the ground, and see the smoke and that. And then at night the RAF would come by, put on their searchlights and that sort of thing, and drop their bombs. So it was really a fine aerial display.

Q Operation Bettemourg, September '44, after Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Patton was trying to attack Metz, and there was a hole in the line north of there that you were plugging?

0:34:59.9 A The only one that I remember is Casanova. {*Okay, that's later, I think.*} Right. That was in November, as I recall. But that was near Uckange, where they took part of the 95th (I

think it was a battalion; we were going to build them up to a regiment) for a simulate—well, for a crossing to take place, [is all] we're going to; whereas the 90th then would be in the north of us, and they'd make the real crossing. Now, the nine— the bat-battalion (I think it was) of the 95th wore the 90th patches and everything like that, to make the Army think that this was where the 90th was going to attack, but it didn't attack, because the real one took place later on. We had brought the engineering equipment for building a bridge, and sonic people'd been down there making noise and so forth. And this was to take place, I think, on the 8th of December— 9th of November of that year. And the— Yeah, that day. And that morning, we got word to cancel because the division (the 95th now) was going to make its real attack through this area. So we pulled out.

0:36:34.2 The infantry was able to establish a bridgehead overhead, but they— when they started building the treadway bridge to—for the crossing, this is on the [Mose] River, as I recall, or Moselle, one of them. {*Moselle, I think*} Moselle, right. The artillery came down on the site, so they were not able to build a bridge that day. The infantry went [and] established a larger bridgehead, then they were able to put it on.

Q Did you find yourself being shelled by the enemy? Was that frequent, infrequent?

0:37:22.1 A I never had that experience. Because one of the problems was, my company, which was good, was split up in the three platoons, and they would be attached to Simenson, who's running the operation, this sort of thing. In fact, at the beginning, that did not happen and I complained about it because I couldn't control all three, spread all over the (s) landscape. So they then started attaching my platoons to whoever the (s) task force commander was on that. So in many instances, I did not have personal knowledge of what was going on. In other words, I wasn't into the area.

Q Operation Koblenz. Do you have recollections of that experience?

0:38:27.1 A Well, at that time—because I'd run that ridge many times. The 28th was spread out very thinly. So what was desired was that to bring the 75th Infantry Division into play. Now, they had left England and they were still just starting out in France. I can remember sending trucks back, simulating the 75th coming through, and the signal people say, “We

passed through such-and-such town,” and that sort of thing. Well, this was the 75th, and this is when Col. Fritz and I were making that reconnaissance for the crossing. So I remember that.

0:39:14.4 The other thing that happened: When we returned after the operation was called off, returning back to Luxembourg, [in a] nighttime movement, all we had were the little lights on, and my jeep (t) driver, we hit a hairpin turn. So he started to turn on here, didn't turn quick enough, so we went over this embankment and rolled down. Fortunately, he and I were not hurt. The dam- jeep was pretty well damaged. I went to the hospital in Luxembourg. I had 32 stitches in my left ear put in. But I say, we were very, very fortunate that jeep didn't roll on us, because it went rolling down the hill. I can remember that.

Q When you were under fire in the woods, those were probably the troops that the Germans were assembling for the attack.

0:40:12.4 A Might well have been. Yeah, they could have been over there re-reconnoitering the area, see who's there and so forth.

Q Your timing was lucky, that you weren't there the next day or the day after that.
{ *Correct* } Can you explain how close a call that would have been, with Operation Koblenz coming right up to- You didn't know the Germans were going to attack, right?

A That is correct. What's your question, please?

Q In Operation Koblenz, you're imitating the 75th Infantry Division on the line. How close was it to the Battle of the Bulge? And did it have any impact on it?

0:41:11.7 A Right, except maybe Germans made sure to reinforce their troops so they had enough to come through to .. overcome the resistance of the 75th. That's about the best I can say on the subject. { *okay* } (Let me take a drink of water.)

Q Clifford Simenson, a colonel or a lieutenant?

A Lieutenant colonel. All the staff officer[s], lieutenant colonel.

Q There are a lot of West Point officers in this small unit, weren't there?

0:42:11.9 A Oh yes. Proportion to other units, we were far— I think we had six or seven lieutenant colonel West Pointers.

Q Why do you think you had so many?

0:42:21.6 A Well, because we were doing the sounds and sights of a arm— of a army, you know, the battalion and all that. So then, so you got infantry units, you've got artillery units, you've got tank units, so you had to have people on the staff who knew how they operated and carried on.

Q // Again, why so many high-ranking West Point officers in the unit?

0:43:32.9 A Well, again, because we were simulating units from battalion up to army. And you get infantry units, you get artillery units, you get tank units, anti-aircraft units, so you had to have people who were experienced in the doctrine of those units and how they operate on the battlefield.

Q Tell me about Lt. Col. Simenson. What was his job, and what kind of person was he?

A I have such high regard for Col. Simenson. He was the S3 of the Headquarters.

Q S3 is operations? Most people won't know what the S3 is.

0:44:20.4 A Col. Simenson was the S3 of the Headquarters. Now, the S3's responsible for the training and the operations of the unit. And I have the highest regard for Col. Simenson. He was a hard-working, knew his business, dedicated, and— Because I enjoyed S3 operations, because studying warfare at West Point, I'd hoped some day to be an S3, I mean, which could lead to be a commander. And so I spent a lot of time with him, got to know him very well, and would often go out on reconnaissance with him and so forth.

0:45:03.5 After the war, he was just rabid in getting deception sold to the Army. He wanted to do the same things I wanted to do, with again an organization established that would dedicate itself to deception. And I would say, at least a couple times a month I'd get a sheaf of papers on deception. As I think I may mention before, he even wrote out a manual, (s) *Deception 101*. And he had other letters that he'd write to people within the Army. And he'd get comments from people who'd been in the 23rd on it. So I got to know him very, very well. As I say, highest regard, respect for him.

0:45:50.3 The one thing I remember that he said when we were in Europe, he said, "I'm not the smartest guy, but I know my limitations," which I thought was a very astute statement and a recognition of his abilities.

Q I always feel like he was an important part of the 23rd's success.

A He was. He a driver, a leader, a— His concepts, his thoughts, and very active in the deception picture.

Q The commander of the unit was Col. Harry Reeder. {*Correct*} Tell me about him.

0:46:25.6 A Well, he'd been a World War I participant in the war. And being an infantryman, he was looking for combat. He wanted to, course, start out with a regiment, hopefully be a division commander. So he was kind of disgruntled when he got this assignment. But I'll say, I don't think it really bothered (you know) what happened, but it was just internally that he was unsatisfied. At least that was my impression.

0:46:55.2 Now, when my company came from the desert to Camp Forrest, I remember early on we were given a exercise where we'd ride down the road and given a spot where we would set up our bivouac. Well, we had done this many times in the desert, and my SOP was that in that situation I, my jeep driver and first sergeant and a runner from one of the platoons would be in the first jeep. In the second jeep would be the runners from the other three platoons, either the second, third, and headquarters, and then the first with me. So once we hit the entrance to the area we [were] going to be in, I would drive in and, if possible, drive through the area and figure out this— where the first platoon's going, the second, the third, the headquarters, and that sort of thing. And each of the runners, I

would indicate where their area was. So that when the [colonel] came up and started leaving the road, if was the first— which was normally the first platoon was first, the runner would get with the lieutenant, lead the platoon to its area; the second one would do it, and the third one would get it. They start— Oh, they start digging their [sweat tr-] or their foxholes, and mess would get set up. And he was there watching, so he was extremely impressed. I never had a word from him again, because we had impressed— Course, after he saw [as] the 603rd and the signal going through, something like that, well, made quite an impression.

Q Not to knock the guys in the 603rd, but you guys were the real soldiers.

A That is correct. {*adjust mic*}

Q So you guys were the real soldiers.

0:49:17.3 A Well, again, reading (you know) stories about warfare, engineers had to be prepared to step into the line as infantry. And I really believe that. And I trained my people that way. In fact, when I took over the company, I told them. One of the first things I said, (you know) “My mission is to bring you back alive. And so the-the training you’re going to get, it’s going to be hard, and maybe difficult. You just bear with me.”

0:49:46.0 So when we were out in the desert on the weekends, the other units all go into [Juarez] and so forth, but—not every weekend, but on several—I kept them out. And we ran exercises, pretending we were infantry. I remember one was, we set up the unit and bivouac, and then the first sergeant and I and another one got blank ammunition, and we attacked it. And I’d already told the [US soldier] that what to do. So at one time then they all started getting out, evacuating the site. And this was a good experience, because oftentimes the trucks would go front into the position, then they’d have to back out and do. But I told them that you go in backwards so that’s you’re ready really to move out. (and) So some of them (you know) were slow in doing that. And the other thing: Only one case I know that anybody left any equipment behind, was a rifle. So again that was a lesson to impress upon them.

0:50:45.0 No, I thought they should be infantry. The thing I want to do, not only to [install] the discipline but to develop trust with the people. When you go out on guard, you’re

guarding your people. And I don't want anybody going to sleep, and so forth. So a lot of these exercises— Seriously. When we got into situations in Europe where we had to post the guard, I never worried about them, because I knew they would perform as they should be. So they were a real battle-hard—

0:51:16.1 Let me tell you another one, was: At Camp Forrest the 7th Airborne Division came in. And we were given a road test on that one. anti-aircraft. And we placed either second or third in comparison to all the units of the 17th Airborne Division. So they were really, as I say, a very well, well trained, disciplined outfit.

0:51:43.9 Just let me carry that forward a bit. On V-J Day we were up at Watertown, Camp Drum. And they had the V Day— V-J Day parade. And my unit marched in it. And fortunately for me, a photographer (a newspaper) was up on the first floor taking a picture, looking down on They used to always call this the West Point Company anyway. But there's no West Point Unit I've ever seen that was as good as this one, because every man was in line, and in column, and you look at the rifles and what they're bearing, (you know) they're all in line So I was real proud. So that's again a manifestation of what a great outfit it was.

Q Why did they call you the West Point Company?

0:52:33.9 A Because I was from West Point and I treat 'em like cadets. You know, the discipline. On training exercises, if we're going from station A to station B, once— well, we marched for a while, [practice]. But most of the time we double-timed, because I wanted to get them into physical condition.

Q Col. Reeder: people didn't have positive things to say about him. Is that fair or unfair?

0:53:21.1 A Yeah, I can see where some— the lower ranks would think, because he spent more time overseeing them. As I say, he didn't come to my unit very often.

Q Tell me about Billy Harris. I know you had a postwar relationship with him as well.

0:53:44.8 A Okay. My first contact with Billy Harris was on the beaches of Normandy. I had my unit in bivouac and so forth, and he came by to inspect it. He was a full colonel at the time. And he took me around. He was nit picking. And so when he got through, I said, "Sir, if you don't like the way I'm running this company, get me relieved." Now, I hearken back to this because later on, 1963, I was commanding the 521st Engineer Combat Group—or group, not combat—521st Group in Europe. And we were the maintenance/supply group of the engineers. And we were responsible for the maintenance and supply of all engineer equipment in the Army area. Well, I'd had that group for a year, and I was scheduled to go on to 7th Army Headquarters as the Plans Officer, which I really would have liked, because ... as I was, G3 because I'd been in the G3 in 8th Army as the Plans Officer. So I just loved Plans.

0:55:00.7 So one day he comes along with his helicopter, drops into my— said, "George, I want you to come ride with me." So we flew over to the five-fifty-thir-fifth Engineer Company, which was at [Swessing], which wasn't too far away. We dropped down and then the commander came out and reported. And so Harris says (I forget his name), he said, "I'd like to use your conference room for a few minutes, if I may." So we marched, walked into that. He says, "George, I don't want you to go to 7th Army." He said (th), "You'll waste your talents up there." He said, "I want you to be my chief of staff." Because one was rotating out. So I thought about it and I— Chief of staff sounds pretty good in your resume. So I became his chief of staff.

0:55:47.5 And I can remember when he took over the Headquarters when I was the Engineer Group commander. I remember one statement he said. He said, "I never worry about my efficiency report if I take care of my man." I— To me, he was the best commanding general of troops and so forth I served under, because he really did take care of his people. Several times— Well, his practice [it], when any soldier died and the widow was departing to go to Europe (they usually went out Frankfurt), he would be at that airport to say goodbye to them. And I remember one instance where a little child said, "Sir can I have one of your stars?" So he picked it— in fact, he took both of them off and gave it to the ...

And I also know that after he retired—because I was at his retirement at San Antonio. I was at that time then the district engineer, the Tulsa district in Tulsa. So I used to go

down there to see him before he retired. But I know that after he retired, he was sending out letters to widows. He kept in good touch with them. He really took care of those ladies. So I respect him very much.

0:57:07.0 The other thing was discipline. I can remember a couple instances, at least two, where one of the soldiers— We had .. about eight groups and about seven battalions, about total of 16-18 major units under us. And so we covered the whole area of 7th Army. So if a soldier was picked up for being not clean and that sort [of thing], the word got back to Harris, he would have the squad leader, the platoon leader, the platoon officer, the company commander, right up to the battalion and the group. And they'd come in the [office lineup], and he would talk to him, this sort of thing. So he re-really knew how to command, [in my—].

0:57:56.7 In fact Billy Harris, during the Korean War, commanded the (s) 7th Calvary, (you know) the old one that was— (Trying to think of who commanded.) { *Custer* } (c) Yeah. And when they broke out of Pusan, he led the breakout, and his unit (7th Cav.) marked some— marched something like 80 miles against a determined enemy. That was the longest march of any Army unit ever in the history of the Army, against the determined enemy. So he was quite-quite a fellow. I had great respect for him. Just loved working with him as his chief of staff.

Q Whose idea was the Ghost Army? Ralph Ingersoll? Did you discuss it with Harris, or do you have opinions based on your own observations?

0:59:17.2 A No, I do not, except I know he was active to— in the plans, because during our operations he would often come down to observe what's going on. And also, he would be the one to go to the Corps and the Armies to recommend .. situations for the use of the unit.

Q . . . Who decided what deceptions the Ghost Army was going to do?

1:00:22.9 A Well, that's a little different question. All I know is that Devers [is] the one who initiated the thing, and Bradley got into it, and their concept was to develop this deception unit for the crossing of the Rhine River, because they knew that was .. a major obstacle, would be a major fight. In fact, estimates were, at the time we were on the Rhine, that (you know)

as high as 12,000 people could be casualties. Actually happened, only 31 were, in it. So that, to me, marked the great success of it. But that was the purpose of the— of the unit. And I think (you know) having the two infantry [armored] divisions, to utilize them as they best they can. So that's the only thinking I can think of, advance of the formation of the unit, because from then on, the— actually we learned by trial and error.

Q Weren't the Special Plans branch and Harris involved in saying what operations would take place? Was that the level it was decided on?

1:01:39.5 A Well, I think it was in conjunction with the Corps— the Army division commanders, ... they wanted to do it or not. As I say, some of them were very enthusiastic; others were not.

Q A lot of deceptions ended up in the 3rd Army area, Patton's area of control.

A I think that's a true statement, yes, as I reflect back on the areas and so forth.

Q Tell me about Lts. Aliopolous and Daley, what they did and what they were like.

1:02:40.9 A Yeah. Of the three platoon leaders, I'll put Aliopolous by far the best. He was a— of Greek descent and very conscientious. I think he was a little older than the others, too. And you could give him a mission and you didn't have to worry about it, because he would carry it out. In fact, if I had an opportunity to promote him to a company commander, or have him promoted, I would be. In [fact] I think, toward the end of the operation, I know he was taken away from me and put in the 603rd, and I think that was probably what they had in mind. But of course, but we were deactivated before that could take place. But Aliopolous was an excellent soldier, best one, and his men just loved him.

Q Lt. Daley. What's his first name? {George} And he's still alive?

1:03:37.6 A Yes. I think he's got Alzheimer's now, I think. George was a very intelligent officer, a little bit immature at that time, and needed a little extra tradition. I can remember when

we were in Camp Forrest that we had to run the platoons through attacking a village and so forth. So the first time, he was not passed. So I took him in hand and we practiced and practiced and educated him, trained him and this sort of thing. So he passed the second time. But George was a good commander. He had the first platoon, which was the MP platoon on all the operations, and they did an excellent job.

[GREBHT02]

Q The official history says that the 23rd Special Troops was the first American unit into Saint-Lô. What's your take on that?

0:00:27.3 A Well, when we came ashore in Normandy, we had that first operation, which was to simulate one [of] the armored divisions. Now, I can't understand why they'd be the first ones in there, because the real troops were the ones that went into Saint-Lô. So I can't visualize that any of the two-nine— the 23rd Headquarters was into [Lô-Saint] earlier. I can remember passing through Saint-Lô, when we started out on the missions toward Brest and the like.

Q Official says you went in, and when you discovered that you'd gotten ahead of the people you were supposed to be ahead of, you got out.

A I have no knowledge of that.

Q When you were impersonating regimental commanders, about how old were you?

0:01:31.5 A Somewheres around 24 or 25, in there. Probably 24, going on 25.

Q And what was the average age of a colonel at that point?

0:01:41.6 A [laugh] Reed was— Reeder was a elderly gentleman by that time. I'm sure he must have been in his forties. But as far as the youngest .., I don't think any of them were (you know) in that range. .. Because they'd probably— Well, let's see now. General who— No, I

have no idea [one], because he was taken out and put in the 6th Army, and they went to the Pacific. And that's where he became a full colonel. (and) I remember corresponding with him during the war. We kept close contact. But generally, they weren't that early. I imagine the Airborne Unit is where you found some young folk colonels.

Q Was it at the end of Operation Koblenz that you got injured in the jeep accident?

0:03:00.1 A Yes. That was only about, I think, the 15th or 14th of December.

Q What's your recollection of the whole period of the attack in the Bulge?

0:03:13.8 A Well, we went back to Luxembourg, and then the Signal Company only performed an operation as the 4th Infantry—or maybe it was the 4th Armored and the 80th Infantry—were moving up that area. They halted outside of Luxembourg City, to the north of it, and our signal people positioned them a bit east and south of Luxembourg, to portray to the Germans that this is where they were located; whereas actually they're closer to (b) Bastogne. So when they attacked, they were much closer than the Germans would have thought them to be.

Q So you were actually operating an electronic deception while the units were moving in toward Bastogne?

0:04:16.0 A Yes. Because they had moved through Luxembourg and had stopped in this position. And our people portrayed them as being—having stopped some other place, further away from Bastogne.

Q There are pictures of Marlene Dietrich in and forward in the area where the 23rd Special Troops were. Did you run into her? Did you know why she was there?

0:04:55.2 A Oh yeah. She put on a performance, sort of a USO performance. Yeah, (w) we watched her perform and so forth, right.

Q What did the 23rd Special Troops, and specifically your company, do immediately at the German surrender?

0:05:25.9 A Well, 23rd was given the mission of handling the DPs: the Russians, the Poles, and the others that were in Europe—in Germany, I mean. I'm sorry. {uh} Well, if you [like], I'll go through what we did. {wait for noise}

Q Explain what DPs are, how you got them, and what you did with them.

0:06:11.4 A Well, they were displaced persons. That's what DP stood for. And after the war, they were being gathered together to be shipped back to their countries. The one I remember very well is, we had control of Baumholder. And they were in the barracks of the German army that were there. That's where they were housed. And there were something like 17,000 Germans, 2,000 Poles, and mixture of the other Eastern European countries. So I had— (I) There were five officers and 161 enlisted men. And so I had— (one) My object was for me to do nothing but just oversee what was going on. So daily I know— had the mission of going out in the country and collecting food for them from the Germans. Another one, I had security around the area so they weren't moving freely out into the countryside, because I knew they would attack the Germans and take whatever they wanted, the DPs. And then I had another one which were in charge of disciplinary matters. We had a court, and if they did something wrong, they'd be brought before them.

0:07:43.9 So I had a meeting with the leader of the Russian and the Poles the first night, because they were the two major factions. And, oh, the Poles just weren't about to let the Russians (h) be in charge of [them]. From my standpoint, they had the majority numbers of people. So I said, you know, "We're going to stay here all night if necessary till we solve this matter." So it ended up that the Russian (it was a major) was put in charge of the people. And I assured the Poles, I said, "If any time you think they're being unfair to you, you come directly to me, and I'll deal with them." So it worked out pretty well.

0:08:32.2 The one thing I can remember: I'd go see the Russian commander major about once a week, and it was the ritual, was the table there, and on it would be cherries and pieces of bread and so forth, and then they would bring in the vodka. They served the water-size drinks, and so I had to go and— up-up with them. And I'll tell you, after I got through that

meeting, I told my jeep, “[Brother], we’re going to noplac. We’re going out in the woods and let me rest.”

0:09:09.2 No, that was a fine experience [with] them. We taught them how to use the latrines. Built the wood latrines and so forth. And we found out some of them started out stand–standing and squatting on them and trying to hit the hole, and so forth.

0:09:28.3 Oh, one other thing. When we moved into Baumholder, I had to find billets for my people. I had done this before. So I got a hold of the mayor and I said (you know), “Where can we house my people?” and he said, “Well, over here, over here,” in the gym and that sort of thing. So then I said, “What about these houses here?” (you know) He said, “Well, they’re occupied.” “Okay. If those occupancies are good for my people, they’re good enough for your people. So you move out.” So we did. We took over the [housing]. And I set up a curfew. And I can remember the first night, about a half hour afterwards, a young lady (I’d say 22 or so), just in her plain clothes, was put in curfew. Well, I was living in a café. So I opened up the–the stairway into the basement, so forth. And so that’s where she spent the night. She got cold. But I never had anybody be– break curfew in the future.

Q Billy Harris did some presentations at the Command and General Staff College on deception, after the war. Were you there for any of those?

0:10:47.5 A Never was, no. No, it’s a shame. He wasn’t around when Gawne wrote his book and that sort of thing, because he could have added a lot of important details.

Q There was a survey after the German surrender of about 40 general officers, asking for their assessment of deception operations. Are you familiar with that?

A No, I am not.

Q Did you ever get a sense of what they thought about {no} deception operations during World War II?

0:11:30.4 A Regret I didn’t, but I had no opportunity.

[GREBHT03]

Q Tell me what kind of equipment your unit had.

0:00:17.3 A Okay. If you take a regular engineer company, it has water-cooled machine guns—I mean, light machine guns. They're not wa— So in our TE, we had water-cooled machines, because you can fire longer and the belts are bigger and so forth. The other cha— Another change was, every truck had a 60 caliber anti-aircraft, or a 60 caliber machine gun used for anti-aircraft [purposes]. Another one is, we had wat-water point equipment. So we could set up a water point so that the 23rd Headquarters had a source of potable water. The next big one was, in the engineer comp— Well, normal companies don't have the portable water. That's the [first] division. Another one was that in an engineer company, there's one bulldozer. But each of my platoons had one, so that gave us three bulldozers so we could lay out more track marks on the terrain.

Q Explain how bulldozers help you do a deception.

0:01:43.6 A Well, one of the main ways is by [scurrying] up the ground for tanks. You do that and then you put the dummy tank on top and cover it with a camouflage, so from air, it looks like you got a real tank there on the ground. The other one is that in the case of tanks, and also artillery pieces at times, depending upon the terrain and where the enemy is, we had to cut out excavated areas, holes, to emplace those tanks and artillery pieces so they would be better protected from [artillery or] fire into them. So that was probably the— Well, other things at times was, we had to clear paths through forests, (you know) light timber, so the bulldozers would clear those away. Or any time moving rubble or things like that, the bulldoze were handy.

Q Assume I know nothing about deception. Why do you need to put tank tracks in?

0:03:15.4 A Well, in the case of a real tank moving in— {wait for noise}

Q Why do you need bulldozers to make tank tracks for part of the deception?

0:04:30.1 A In an actual situation, when a tank moves into an area, especially if it's an open area, it's going to show its tracks, marks on the ground where the tank actually went. And in the case what we were doing was trying to replicate that by the use of the bulldozer tracks. So they would circle the area, move into a position that a real tank would take, and then put the inflated dummy tank on top of it, cover it with the camouflage, so that for aerial observation (this is the primary reason you're doing it) would show in its photograph the tank, the camouflage, and then the tracks leading up to the tank, so that you knew that this was a real tank down there. We (s) would indicate to the enemy that that was the case.

Q It's amazing how much detail goes into deception.

0:05:26.9 A That is one of the reasons why you need well trained, disciplined people, because you want to do it exactly, because if the enemy—or local natives who are unfriendly to us—pick up these irregularities, these things that aren't quite right, well, that starts tipping the enemy off that this could be deception rather than the real unit. So discipline of the people— This comes in wearing the shoulder patches, the bumper markings, to be sure that everybody does—

[GREBHT04]

Q You were telling us how much detail and discipline you need for deception.

0:00:11.9 A That is correct. And why it was important was that there are agents going around on the ground, and also (f) aerial photography. Whatever they see or hear, they're going to ask the question: is this real or not? And you—you don't want to have irregularities or mistakes in what you're doing, because this *would* alert the enemy to something that may be deception, not the real thing.

Q Did you learn more about deception as you went along? *{That is correct.}* Tell me about that.

0:00:49.4 A Well, back in Camp Forrest, really there was not much attention paid to special effects. And then when we got on the continent, we found that we had to do the shoulder patches, the bumper markings, the CP signs, and all that, which we really hadn't thought about back there. And then also, most importantly was that each of the soldiers when we went into an area ... simulated division, that the soldiers knew who the commanding general was, or if they're a regiment, the regimental commander, and so the history of the unit, so that when they got questioned by somebody, well, they could answer. Because it's not infrequent that—say we're simulating the 80th division—that a soldier from the 80th division comes through the area. Now he may be coming from a hospital, on his way back to his unit, and sees the 80th people so he starts asking, "Where's so-and-so?" that sort of thing.

Q Explain a radio-only deception during Battle of the Bulge. What was the point of that?

0:02:10.1 A Well, as you recall, General Patton's divisions were opposite Saar, which is quite a distance from—by a stone. And he had made this march up to attack at Bastogne, to relieve the encirclement. Well, the 4th Armored and the 80th Division, as I recall, (they're two division anyway) that had stopped north of Luxembourg. And what they wanted to do was to make it appear that those two divisions had not gotten that far, so they would be—Germans wouldn't think [they're that] imminent in attacking. So they portrayed those two divisions—I think it was somewhere southeast of Luxembourg anyway—from radio communications. It was only an operation, I think, 24 or 36 hours, because the real divisions then took off in the attack on Bastogne.

Q So this was to help Patton's drive to Bastogne?

0:03:15.0 A Well, what it was, was to make the Germans think that they were not that far up yet, that close to Bastogne; that they're regrouping, ready for the attack. So this would give the

Germans the impression that the divisions were further away and not as close to Bastogne and ready for the attack.

Q This must have been put together at the last minute. *{It was.}* Any memories of that?

0:03:44.3 A *{overlap}* No, no. [As I] say, that was purely signal, purely the signal people.

Q Why is this an important story for us to remember today?

0:04:23.2 A I think at one level, it's Devers' part and [so/some] others, **thinking out of the box, because we had never had a unit dedicated to deception before in our Army experience, a unit that would go from one operation to another. Sort of a traveling road show is what it was. And the players were players playing their part.** So I think that's one part. To me, is that it takes— that the deception helped reduce the number of casualties in the war. **It's not the Germans that were killed but how many American soldiers were saved because of it,** were let— were not casualties. I think those are the main things, but then again, as I have said, it's important to build upon what was learned during World War II as far as deception, and develop the equipment, the thinking, and the manuals and so forth, in the event we have to use [it] on a large scale in the future.

0:05:33.9 Now, **the reason that the 23 Headquarters was kept secret until 1996 was that there was thought, if the Russians [there] attack, we have to establish another one of these kinds of units and so forth.** So that was the reason for that delay.

Q In improvising the special effects, was there anything particularly innovative, unusual?

0:06:29.5 A Well, no. I think if you're going to do special effects, it's normal that you do the shoulder patches, the bumper markings, and the CP signs, that sort of thing, as what a real division would show [the]— But I think the real thing, to me, that was innovative in the sense that **each of the soldiers in that situation, for that regiment or division, knew the commanding officers, the history of the unit, what they had done. I thought that was rather innovative and extremely important, because people were questioned, either by civilians or by other soldiers or by members of that unit that were passing by.**

Q What goes into creating a phony command post?

0:07:25.2 A Well, depending upon where you are, it's putting up a tent for the commander, having the enlisted people present that would be in a normal command post, and depending upon the level, an MP guarding the command post, and picking the site, a one that would simulate what an actual commander would select for his command post.

Q Do you know who the soldier was who wrote the history of the 406th?

A Yeah, it's a little– I just can't recall it, but–

0:08:17.5 No. But what happened on that was, when (we) I found out what our mission was going to be, I said it'd be worthwhile to have a history of what we were doing. So I talked to several enlisted men; this one stepped forward, and he had experience in writing, said he'd do it. So he was in charge. I'd forgotten all about it till the end of the war; he came up and he presented it to me. Now, in my reading of it, to me it's extremely well detailed, well written, and very knowledgeable as to what went on. One thing I figured must have happened because– Take Brest. There were three task forces that moved out there. But each one of [them] was in detail. I know he couldn't have been on all three of them. So he must have had a group around him who provided information on it. Yeah, there's a lot of information there I was not aware of.

Q It's a terrific document.

0:09:14.8 A Yeah, I'm (g) going to finish it up and try to incorporate photographs and that sort of thing, not print it [publish]-publicly but give it to the Engineer History Division or– yeah, it is a division.

Q What was your unit doing in England before you went over?

0:09:46.5 A What we were doing in England was, (1) we were helping the 603rd test its inflatable equipment to see that it was operational.

Q Start again, and look at me. What did the 406th do in England before you went to Europe?

0:10:18.0 A (yeah) One of the things was to help the 603rd test this inflatable equipment, because they received it there in England, and so what they would do is inflate it, and then our people would move it around to positions and let it stand there for a while, and then if it had a leak in it, to do the repair, and so forth. So that was one of the main ones. Another one: There were some exercises that were run, which our platoons took part in. Well, the other one is, I kept them in training, I mean like physically. We ran exercises, as I did infantry exercises, tacking at night in woods and that sort of thing, keeping them in shape.

Q You said Col. Harris would come by to inspect. Did you ever see Major Ingersoll?

0:11:22.0 A Never saw him, no. {okay} I— His name is familiar to me (at the)— because he was, I think, a editor for somebody. He wrote a book, didn't he, [on it]?

Q He wrote a book during the war about the fighting in Italy. {I see.} . . . So he's around. People either seem to like him or really hate him.

0:11:58.5 A I had no personal contact with him.

Q Any unusual stories about dealing with inflatable tanks?

0:12:25.3 A I-I have no experience. {overlap} The only thing I remember back, just talking about the equipment, back in the— in the States, at Camp Forrest, my company was put on 12 hours, like chains of people, where they made dummy tanks with wood, you know, and covered it with canvas and that sort of thing.

Q For practice?

A For practicing purposes.

Q So you worked pretty closely with the men in the 603rd? {*Correct*} Less closely with the Sonic Unit?

0:13:04.4 A The o— Sonic Unit had their own security thing, capability. We may have provided security in terms of a larger operation, but really didn't have any contact. I knew the officers, acquaintances.

Q Did you see inflatables at Camp Forrest?

0:13:51.2 A I did not. No, I did not.

Q Some people have said that's where they first saw them, but there's nothing in the record.

[room tone]

[End of Interview]