

Interview with **Rueben Taylor**

By Deborah Miles

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In 1940, Rueben Taylor was at Cherokee Boarding School. The schools were set up in a military style with lots of marching. He said “We went to war easy”. He recalls at the bombing of Pearl Harbor that he heard it over the radio and hollered down the hall. As soon as he was old enough to enlist he did so as did almost all of his friends “It was an honor to serve”. He went with a few friends to Camp Croft to enlist. He ran into a friend, Fred Radly, who was in the Air Force and decided that was where he would go, too.

He was first sent to England where he recalled the kindness of the people in the countryside. As soon as we got a pass we would hit the bars. The English were always inviting him to the homes for a meal. The folks in the company called him “Chief” and still do today.

He recalls they were training all the time to go to Holland. On Sept. 17, 1944 the Allies sent 1200 planes and 600 gliders over Holland. Mr. Taylor was a paratrooper that made his first jump over Niamegan, Holland. “It was a warm day and a good landing” though shots were being fired at soldiers all around him. The job of his unit was to take the bridge at Niamagen – after 73 days of intense fighting it was complete. They slept in a sitting position in fox holes in 2 hour shifts. Food was mostly K-rations with a hot meal only every now and then. The kitchen was at least a mile behind his location. Afterwards they were sent to France to rest. The tents were a lot more comfortable than the foxholes. Though he did not speak French he had several friends who did when they got the chance to visit with the French. They were in Reems which was like a carnival.

On December 11, 1944 Taylor’s unit received orders in France to go to the front for the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge in Weehermont, Holland. He recalls the subzero weather, the deep snow, the fir forests and many fallen fellow soldiers. They would select already bombed craters to complete their foxholes – “an old Indian trick”. . By December 31 they had reached the Zeigfreid Line and by January 3 they were into Germany. Once he was shot in the knee by a sniper while returning from patrol. There were six men in his unit on the way out with him in the lead. On the way back he was in the rear position. “They knocked the corner off of the cap”. They patched him and up and sent him back to the front line.

He was not writing home at any point in the war, as no one knew his address. “My division made it when a full German Army Division of 145,000 soldiers surrendered to us. He had to disarm and guard them. They did not want the Russians to get them. There was not much left of Germany after the bombing thanks to him (referring to Soldier Sanders)” Later, he was assigned to Police Duty with the Occupation Forces in Berlin. The Italians “were just about a bunch of boy scouts”.

When it came time for his discharge, he took a bus to Cherokee. He did not tell anyone he was coming in. His mother was living over by the river. Due to the time of day, he knew that

everyone would be in the auditorium watching a movie so he walked over there to surprise them. Later, Mr. Taylor used the GI bill to get electrical and plumbing courses for a license.