

This note is from...

Lee Awatt



Dear Mike,

Wed P.M.

8-14-13

I'm sending both interviews so you can get what you want from them. I don't know if you want to know where Cury is buried but its Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

The little picture is his kid in the wall of Honor.

Call if I can help you -
Lee

A Veteran of the Battle of the Bulge

December 16, 1944 - January 25, 1945

"This is undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever famous American victory."

--Sir Winston Churchill

Memorial Wall

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE PROGRAM

The National Museum of the Pacific War



ARLOS L AWALT
WWII EUROPE
DOOLE TEXAS



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**National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with Arlos L. (Curley) Awalt
May 29, 2007**

Tape Number 1821

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**National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas**

Interview with Arlos L. (Curley) Awalt

Good afternoon. My name is William G. Cox, volunteer with the oral history program at the National Museum of the Pacific War. This afternoon I am located in the Nimitz Museum, Fredericksburg, Texas, and preparing to do an oral history for Mr. Arlos Awalt.

Mr. Cox: Good afternoon, Mr. Awalt.

Mr. Awalt: Good afternoon, Mr. Cox.

Mr. Cox: How are you today?

Mr. Awalt: I'm fine, thank you.

Mr. Cox: To begin, let's start off and find out a little bit about you - your history as family - where you were born.

Mr. Awalt: I was born up north of Brady, Texas. I attended school at Doole, which is a little community out northwest of Brady, Texas. I graduated in 1944, and immediately afterwards, they drafted me into the armed forces, and I was selected by the Army. I went from McCulloch County to Fort Sam Houston where I was inducted. I was inducted in San Antonio, and went to Camp Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas, for my basic training. We were supposed to have seventeen weeks of basic infantry training, and we knew that there was something serious overseas, so they cut us short and we only had eleven weeks. We had to qualify on every infantry weapon in eleven weeks. After that we made our 25-mile march, and they put us on a troop train, not knowing where we were going. We stopped in Ft. Meade, Maryland, which was the next stop on the troop train. We did not

know where we were – it didn't matter to them whether we knew or not. We stayed there for a couple of days, and then they put us on another train, and took us down to New York Harbor.

They put us on a troop boat, the Louis S. Pasteur, which was named after the Frenchman that pasteurized milk. We were on the boat for seven days, and it was stormy all the way. We took seven days, and I was sick seven days. We landed in Liverpool, England. They had another train waiting for us. It took us down to Southampton, and put us on another boat. We went out into the English Channel, and they dropped the anchor. The boat was like an iceberg – it was solid ice. It was raining, and freezing. There was as many on there as they could put on. After about two days of that, they took us in near the shore and put as many of us as could stand with our packs on landing craft and we went in to Le Havre, France about midnight.

We hadn't had a good meal or a night's sleep in about three weeks. We thought we might get a night's sleep, but they came through blowing whistles about two hours later and we had to get up and get everything ready, and they put us on the train again and took us to Belgium. Again, we didn't know where we were. They put us through a processing staging area up there, and then assigned us to different units – but not knowing that we were going in to the Battle of the Bulge.

They assigned me to the 106th Infantry Division. We had the 422nd, 423rd, and 424th regiments. I was in the 424th Regiment. The first three days at

the Bulge – I will back up one step – we were the greenest division in Europe. And somehow the Germans knew that.

Mr. Cox: Had the Battle of the Bulge started at this time?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir. It was going on when I joined them. So they hit us first. And we lost the 422nd and 423rd regiments the first three days. I can document this, that they came at us with two hundred and fifty thousand men, and twenty-two hundred tanks. Just before they got to us, they split, and put us in a pocket. They thought they had all of us. But we were down protecting Bastogne, and the other two regiments were up around Saint Vith and Saint Lo, and they came in between us. We were not captured like the 422nd and 423rd, but we had to protect Bastogne, which was very bloody.

Mr. Cox: Now was the airborne division already in Bastogne at that time?

Mr. Awalt: No, we were the only ones there. The 99th Division was coming close by, and the 101st Airborne arrived at Bastogne to relieve us after we had been defending Bastogne for ten days. So we bore the brunt of the first attack.

Mr. Cox: Did the 101st relieve you at that time?

Mr. Awalt: No, after ten days one of the doctors that interviewed me for reevaluation for my frostbite told me that I have reviewed your case and you don't have to tell me about the weather. He said, "I was in the 101st Airborne and we were sitting on the sidelines ready to relieve you all." So they came in and relieved us after the thing really, you might say, ended. Same way with the 3rd Army came up – that was General Patton's army – he was in

southern France, and they called for him to come up and help us. He said, "I'll be there as soon as I get fuel." So they also got up there on the very tail end of the Battle of the Bulge. So the Battle of the Bulge was over, but that did not end the war. The Battle of the Bulge ended on January 25, 1945, and the war did not end until May 1945. So there was fighting continually in between that also.

But after Germany signed the peace treaty with us, then they put us in the occupation army, in charge of prisoner of war camps. We literally had thousands and thousands of P.W.'s and displaced persons. They all had to be interrogated individually, and by the Geneva Conference of 1918, if they were fit to be released on the streets, we had to get them as close to their homes as we could get them. And that's what we did. We abided by the treaties and peace agreements that were set out before us, where the ones in the Pacific, they did not honor any treaties – I'm talking about the Japanese people – they did not honor any treaties – we did. We treated our prisoners with respect and they did not go hungry and they got the best clothing that we find available for them, so they would not suffer from the cold weather. It was the coldest winter they had ever recorded in Europe.

Mr. Cox: Let's wait just a minute. Let's go back and clarify a little bit of information here for the record. You took your training at Camp Wolters, and that was infantry?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: What was your M.O.S., or your title? Were you a rifleman?

Mr. Awalt: No, I was in the 81 MM Mortars. In the Battle of the Bulge, I was in the 81 Mortars.

Mr. Cox: Now, the 81 is a description of what? The size of the mortar?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir. The size of the tube, and the round that it fired.

Mr. Cox: Were there some smaller than that, and some larger?

Mr. Awalt: There was a 60 MM, which the rifle companies carried. I was in H company, which at that time was classified as a heavy weapons company.

Mr. Cox: H stands for what?

Mr. Awalt: How.

Mr. Cox: That's the military...

Mr. Awalt: Terminology.

Mr. Cox: So you had A, B, C, and so on?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, Fox, and How.

Mr. Cox: So this would put you in what battalion in your regiment?

Mr. Awalt: You had your same companies within a battalion. But you had four battalions made a regiment. But you had four companies, and you would have rifle companies, and your heavy weapons company in each one of them.

Mr. Cox: So, how many companies were in a battalion?

Mr. Awalt: There were four.

Mr. Cox: And they would be in your case, since you were H, were there some letters before that or after that?

Mr. Awalt: Yes – Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog. We didn't have all of those, see. There

weren't necessarily all of those in your battalion. But that was the nicknames of them – you didn't have to have all of those within a company. We just had like Able, Baker, Charlie, and then How. You could skip – there was no I company. Because in World War I, they had I company and the whole company was wiped out. So they eliminated I company. They retired I company from the army ranks.

Mr. Cox: I was trying to get your position in what was going on there. After you left Camp Wolters – correct me if I'm wrong – you traveled by train.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: And you wound up in New York.

Mr. Awalt: No, Maryland. And then to New York.

Mr. Cox: And then you went to Europe.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: Did you go through – what did they call those - replacement depots?

Mr. Awalt: Port of Debarkation.

Mr. Cox: When you landed?

Mr. Awalt: When we left the United States, we left from a Port of Debarkation. When we came back, we left from a Port of Debarkation in Europe. That's the port that you leave from to go to a different zone or country.

Mr. Cox: Did you go through a replacement depot?

Mr. Awalt: On the way back I did. After the war was over, I went back through a replacement depot. After we got through with the prisoners I mentioned, they put me in a headquarters company. I completed my tour in

headquarters companies. My first assignment then after that was in the little red schoolhouse in Rheims, France. That doesn't ring a bell to a lot of people.

Mr. Cox: Did they make pretty good wine there?

Mr. Awalt: Champagne. But the little red schoolhouse in Rheims, France is where peace was signed. I worked in the same building, on the same floor where peace was signed. After about six months, they came out with a bulletin that they were going to move the headquarters, the entire headquarters, to Bad Nauheim, Germany. Again I asked if I could come home. They said, "No, personnel goes with the office." So I moved to Bad Nauheim, Germany. Our office was in the Grand Hotel, and that's where General Patton's office was. I worked in the same building – and that's where he was killed.

Mr. Cox: Did you get to pet his dog?

Mr. Awalt: Sir?

Mr. Cox: Did you get to pet his dog?

Mr. Awalt: No, sir. I never did see him. But that's where he was killed. A freakish accident, you might say. But he went all through North Africa like General Rommel who was called the Desert Fox.

Mr. Cox: We're talking about General Patton, now?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir. Then he came over and was killed in a little freakish accident, an automobile accident. Bad Nauheim was down in a hole. He had a villa up on the side of a mountain. His driver was bringing him to work, hit an icy

spot and they rolled off the mountain. He lived for three days. But he is buried in the country of Luxembourg, right out of Luxembourg city. I've been by that. It was always his desire to be buried with his men – that's the reason for him being buried in Luxembourg rather than being brought back to the United States.

Mr. Cox: Was the Battle of the Bulge the only battle that you participated in?

Mr. Awalt: No, I had four battle stars. I don't even remember the name of them. But I have the medal and I have four stars on it.

Mr. Cox: What were the living conditions during the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Awalt: Terrible.

Mr. Cox: Would you describe them?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir. We didn't have the proper clothing, it was the coldest winter they had ever recorded. The canteen on our belt would freeze solid.

Mr. Cox: What type of food did you have?

Mr. Awalt: K rations, and C rations.

Mr. Cox: For the benefit of those of us who don't know, what is a K ration? How is it different from a C ration?

Mr. Awalt: Well, C rations were little cans of food, and K rations were little "crackerjack" boxes. You got three of them, and they had five cigarettes in each one, and if you didn't smoke, you could give them to your buddy, and expect a favor from him. We couldn't heat them...we couldn't build fires. We didn't have any hot food, we didn't have any water to drink, other than melted snow. We'd get snow, and let it melt in our canteen

cup.

Mr. Cox: When this was going on, what type of shelters did you have?

Mr. Awalt: We didn't have any. We didn't even have a tent to sleep in, if we got a night's sleep.

Mr. Cox: Were you able to improvise, to come up with some type...

Mr. Awalt: We would find a tree where the artillery had shot the tops out, and we would gather the limbs and put them on the snow. We would get our sleeping bags out of our pack, take our steel helmet and use it for a pillow. Get into our sleeping bag, zip up, and the next morning we would be covered with snow.

Mr. Cox: Earlier you had mentioned that there was two or three of the regiments that you lost. You mean they got lost?

Mr. Awalt: No, they were captured or killed.

Mr. Cox: So were you directly exposed to those losses?

Mr. Awalt: No. No, we were not, because there was a distance of probably ten miles between us. We were exposed to a lot of the enemies who had fallen.

Mr. Cox: Were your units split on a line like this (gesturing), or did they have depth?

Mr. Awalt: There was a 27-mile front. Twenty seven mile line. A division normally at that time would protect five miles -- we were protecting twenty-seven.

Mr. Cox: So, it was pretty thin?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir. Very thin.

Mr. Cox: How did, at least in your thinking, being exposed to it, did this weather

seem to affect the Germans as much as it did the U. S. troops?

Mr. Awalt: No, they were more or less used to it, because a lot of them had come from the Eastern Front.

Mr. Cox: That would be the Russians?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, over on the Russian Front. Over in eastern Germany, and in Russia. A lot of the troops had come from there, and they brought the proper clothing with them. But we did not have it. We didn't have a change of clothes on us. We wore our clothing until if we got lucky we could go back once a month and get a shower and a new set of clothes.

Mr. Cox: What type of clothing did you have to wear?

Mr. Awalt: We had the regular wool pants and shirt, and the wool underwear, and the raincoat.

Mr. Cox: How about what we might refer to as long-johns?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, we had those.

Mr. Cox: What type of boots?

Mr. Awalt: Just regular combat boots, with a pair of wool socks. We couldn't dry the socks. We had galoshes, but when you were in snow twenty-four hours a day, the moisture would soak through, so that's how most of us came out with frostbite.

Mr. Cox: You didn't have a chance to dry your boots out? While all of this was going on, obviously there were casualties in your unit, is that correct?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: Did you lose some close friends?

Mr. Awalt: Yes. Yes, sir. I'd rather not say anymore concerning this.

Mr. Cox: Okay, I understand. Were you wounded in any of those circumstances, other than frostbite?

Mr. Awalt: I was exposed to the cold weather so constantly that I had pneumonia, and frostbite, and was admitted to a front line hospital on two different occasions. They treated me in the hospital for one night on each occasion, and told me they need you worse over there on the front than we need you here. So they would release me and send me back.

Mr. Cox: So there really wasn't a matter of spending very much time in the hospital?

Mr. Awalt: No.

Mr. Cox: Might be better if you were moving.

Mr. Awalt: No. If you were wounded, and not evacuated within a minimum of two hours, you would freeze to death. It was that cold.

Mr. Cox: How many days were you in the lines when this was going on? Do you have an estimate?

Mr. Awalt: Six weeks. And we had – the Americans had 82,000 casualties in those six weeks.

Mr. Cox: Now, were you responsible for moving some of those bodies out of that area?

Mr. Awalt: No, we didn't have to do that. We had medics taking care of that for us. And believe me, you tried to stay good buddies with a frontline medic. They had the sulfa drugs, and the things for pain.

Mr. Cox: Was that maybe the guys you gave your surplus cigarettes to?

Mr. Awalt: (Laugh) Well, I don't think he smoked either. Of course, we didn't drink, either. Most of us had never had anything to drink, because we were too young.

Mr. Cox: Now, all your European experience was with the 106th?

Mr. Awalt: No. Sometime after the war, we got our other units at a little town in France named Renea Lanay, France. We had a long hike out to an old abandoned airport and we regained our two regiments that we lost. That put us back to full company, full division strength. Then they broke up the whole division then.

Mr. Cox: So what was the last place that you served in Europe?

Mr. Awalt: Bad Nauheim, Germany.

Mr. Cox: Was there a special headquarters there besides Patton's?

Mr. Awalt: No. That was the only one. Just his and ours.

Mr. Cox: Now, the war had pretty well wound down by the time you were there.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, the Bulge was over, but we were still in the occupation army. In other words, we were still under non-fraternization and all that. We could not talk to the German people. If we were caught talking to them, we could be severely punished.

Mr. Cox: When you left Germany, did you come back to England?

Mr. Awalt: No, we came right directly from Bad Nauheim, from northern Germany, to the port of Bremerhaven. We left there and came right back to New York. Another seven days, a sick seven days.

Mr. Cox: How long did you stay in New York?

Mr. Awalt: As well as I remember, it was about three days.

Mr. Cox: Were you transferred to some other point?

Mr. Awalt: I was transferred back to Brady, Texas. Fort Sam Houston. And then I was discharged where I went in.

Mr. Cox: When you went to Europe, what was your rank?

Mr. Awalt: A Private. I hadn't been in long enough...No! – I was a PFC!

Mr. Cox: When you were discharged at San Antonio, what was your rank?

Mr. Awalt: Corporal. I wasn't in there long enough (laugh).

Mr. Cox: Okay, since you brought that up, just what was the period of time that you were in the military?

Mr. Awalt: Twenty-two months. And I was overseas nineteen of them.

Mr. Cox: During that twenty-two months, did you receive any special awards or commendations?

Mr. Awalt: Well, yes. I have the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, two of the most important citations that I received.

Mr. Cox: The Combat Infantryman's Badge – how do you get that?

Mr. Awalt: You have to be in the infantry and you have to be in battle in hostile conditions. You don't just get that issued to you. You have to earn that. Same as the Bronze Star that I have. You have to earn that.

Mr. Cox: Could you describe the Combat Infantryman's Badge?

Mr. Awalt: Well, it is blue metal, about three inches long, has a pale blue background with a rifle across it. You can always distinguish that if anyone has it,

because it is worn above all the other medals. If you are a General, or whatever you might be, and you have Combat Infantryman's Badge, it is worn above all your medals.

Mr. Cox: So you are proud of that.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: So you mentioned the Bronze Star. How was that awarded?

Mr. Awalt: It was a unit citation. The whole battalion received that. For being in the Battle of the Bulge, and enduring the Battle of the Bulge. I have a big plaque about the Battle of the Bulge, and I also have a plaque in my entrance hall where I was issued the Bronze Star. That is the third highest ranking. The Medal of Honor, the Silver Star, and then the Bronze Star.

Mr. Cox: That's one down.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: Did you receive any others, like the Purple Heart?

Mr. Awalt: I was due, but I never did get it.

Mr. Cox: I was thinking, frostbite.

Mr. Awalt: Yeah, they came out in a magazine, if you were discharged with frostbite, you were eligible for the Purple Heart. I sent off for it, but I never did get it. About two years ago I went out to my mailbox, and there was a little package addressed to me. I didn't know what it was, I hadn't ordered anything. I took it in, and it was two medals from World War II that I had never received. That's been about two years ago. And they were both issued by the Belgian government.

Mr. Cox: Do they have a name?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, there was a name with them, but I don't know what the names are, because they were in French writing.

Mr. Cox: Croix de something or other?

Mr. Awalt: Then, about two weeks after that, I received a letter from the Army Review Board, that I was eligible for the Bronze Star, which I had been issued in 1945! I got a notice two years ago!

Mr. Cox: Did they send it to you?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir, I have it.

Mr. Cox: When you got back to Texas, you were discharged, were there some other activities in your life you would like to tell us about?

Mr. Awalt: I just spent a regular normal life from there on.

Mr. Cox: What was your occupation?

Mr. Awalt: When I first came back, the troops who came back before us had all the good jobs. We had to take what we could find. So I just went from one little job, bettering myself. I went to work for Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. for 9 ½ years as office manager, then went to work for a bookkeeping firm out of Littlefield, Texas. I was an auditor and did tax work and bookkeeping for them. Then I went into business for myself in the auto parts business for sixteen years, then moved down here and was a remodeling contractor for fifteen years, then Veterans' Affairs kept sending me for reevaluation on my frostbite and my hearing loss. They awarded me one hundred percent compensation and with a little note, "No

more employment.” So that ended my work.

Mr. Cox: You haven’t mentioned it – I am going to inquire – if you don’t want to answer it, you don’t have to. But I assume you may have gotten married.

Mr. Awalt: Oh, yes. I have two sons, my wife and two sons. They’re both married, grown into very responsible young men, I’m proud of them. Both self-employed. When they were growing up, I stayed with them every weekend rather than being out on the... playing golf, or something. I stayed with my boys. I now appreciate what I did for them.

Mr. Cox: Were your mother and father still living at the time you came back from the war?

Mr. Awalt: They were, but my father passed away not long after that. I never did talk to them for nineteen months, because I didn’t see a telephone for nineteen months.

Mr. Cox: You didn’t have email?

Mr. Awalt: (Laugh) We didn’t even have a two-way radio!

Mr. Cox: Yeah, I know.

Mr. Awalt: At the front we didn’t have one.

Mr. Cox: Your participation in the war, as horrible as it was, how would you classify it as how it affected your life after you got out of the Army?

Mr. Awalt: Well, when I first came back, I was very nervous. My mother said I talked so fast, she couldn’t understand me. But through the years, you adjust to it. I think I’m pretty normal. (Laugh)

Mr. Cox: How did the service contribute to your life? Was it of benefit? I know it

was loss, but...

Mr. Awalt: Well, I think now that a year or two service is good for all the people. It teaches them a lot of things that they don't learn, in my way of thinking, a lot of things that they don't learn in normal life. I'm a strong disciplinarian, and I do know that you learn discipline in the service – or we did when I was in there. And I can still remember the discipline that I learned in the service.

Mr. Cox: So, could you say that you had a net gain?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, very muchly so.

Mr. Cox: How did it affect your thinking towards other people?

Mr. Awalt: It gives you a positive attitude, and before you criticize someone, you think it out, and you don't just go to criticizing people, because you might be wrong. There might be someone knocking on your door, if you do that.

Mr. Cox: Do you think this deepens your religious convictions in any way?

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir, I do. It deepens your respect for other people. It makes you feel more like you are a big family of people, than being alone, you might say. Because in the service, you are not alone. You have the buddy system in the service, and you work on that. To further that, I was a scoutmaster for about ten years, and I drilled discipline into my troops constantly, and consequently I always had a winning troop at the scoutaramas and camporees, and everything. So I think it basically went back to my service days of learning discipline. Strict discipline. I'm a strong believer in that, and I certainly believe it starts at home.

Mr. Cox: We're rapidly running out of time, but is there a point you would like to cover that we haven't covered?

Mr. Awalt: Well, I'm glad that I went to the service, I'm glad I served my country. I would do it again, if they call me. I wouldn't hesitate a minute to drop everything and go back and do something. They wouldn't take me in the service, but there is something I could do.

Mr. Cox: On behalf of myself, I thank you very much. Because it has accomplished a lot. Fortunately I didn't get caught up in that – wasn't quite old enough. But on the other hand, I think it contributed a lot to our society. And on behalf of the museum here in Fredericksburg, I would like to thank you today for taking the time to give us your thoughts and your history. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Awalt: You're welcome. It's a pleasure working here at the museum, I must say. It is indeed a pleasure working with people that I have met and worked with here at the National Museum of the Pacific War.

Mr. Cox: Okay, so there is a valid point which I hadn't thought up yet. You are doing volunteer work here.

Mr. Awalt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cox: You are going to do the Oral Histories.

Mr. Awalt: Well, I don't know about that. I do so much volunteer work. I belong to two other places also. I am constantly talking to people about giving oral reports. In fact, I talked to one today, and they are bringing me his name, address and phone number tomorrow. I will turn it over to Mr. Cox back

here, and I turned four or five of them in just recently.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, sir, again.

Mr. Awalt: You're welcome.

FINAL

Nancy Cason

May 29, 2007

National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas

Tape number 1821