

Tape # 281

Ray Yazzie

Navajo

Interviewer - Michael Husband

September 26, 1969

Side 1

Q. You were in World War II weren't you?

Q. Tell me something about the war, you were in the army?

A. Yeah. I was a medic.....

Q. You were in the Medical Corp?

A. Yeah. 122nd..... that was what I was.

Q. Did you go to Europe?

A. Yeah, we went from France, then we went all the way to Germany. When we was at that.... Paris, what do you call it, that big place over there, that is terrible down there.

Q. You didn't like that?

A. No, boy.....

Q. Why not?

A. No, I mean there were a lot of people over there, during the war, there was a lot going on. We had to stay, you know every time, we had to dig a hole, a fox hole, we stay in there with my buddies, two in each place, we had a little tent right there. Yeah we stay in there, they told us not to smoke, boy everytime I see an airplane, going down.....

Q. Bomb?

A. Yeah, boy.....

Q. How long were you over there?

A. Oh we stay about 15 months, I think it was.....over seas..... The last time we almost got shot too, you know an airplane was coming and we were riding on those, what do you call those, medical.....one that has a red cross on it.

Q. Yeah.

- A. What do you call that?
- Q. Ah.....
- A. Ambulance? We stop and we just hit the ground. They have got machine gun too. In their airplane, boy they are just.....
- Q. But you were never shot though?
- A. No, I was just lucky, all those guys, they were just lucky. We didn't have to stand like this, we just hit the ground, with your belly, that is what they tell us to do. If we stand like this we will get shot. I know three guys you know somebody got him right there.
- Q. You didn't go to the pacific though?
- A. No, I never did. We went to just Europe that is all.
- Q. Did you stay there when the war was over too?
- A. You did, and then we had to stay there another couple of months, then they told us to go back.
- Q. Go back home huh?
- A. Then during that time, while we were in France, boy we were, all that they have got over there is this, what do you call it, Cognac.....?
- Q. Cognac, yeah.....
- A. Black stuff, boy it makes a man.... a lot of guys drink too much of it, you know they have potato wine too, I can't stand that thing. It is pretty bad....
- Q. Pretty bad huh?
- A. Yeah, and those German, right now, I guess they are pretty rich, not too many people now, they have got, some of them got killed during this time, boy!
- Q. Did you know too much about the war before you got over there?
- A. No, I didn't know too much. You know French, I can't speak too much French, but I was with two colored boys you, I don't know where they learn so quick, they talk French. Oh boy! They must be staying around there for a long time. But we didn't learn much from them, got little book but.....and in Germany they had the books too, but you know those German, don't know..... oh they were too smart.
- Q. Were there any other Navajos in your company?

A. No, I was the only Navajo.

Q. Were there other Indians?

A. No.....there were all these other guys, they were white and black, Mexican they were all mixed, right? Polish, all different kind. But we get along all right.

Q. No trouble huh?

A. No, pretty good guys, you know our company commander, he was a pretty good man. Boy! Pretty good. They tell us to do this and we would do it. No trouble.

Q. Well what did you think of that war?

A. Pretty bad.....

Q. Pretty bad huh?

A. Boy I see a lot of dead people, oh boy! Laying on the ground, some of them use the wagon, some kind of wagon, I see big horse, bigger than this one. There were a lot of them over there. End of the war, I see a, from here to where we went one time, looks like that far, you know those Germany have a head like this.....

Q. Helmets?

A. Yeah, it was over, the war was over and you see, they had a little jeep with a machine gun, oh boy! We just follow them. That was the end. You know Eisenhower, I see him too.

Q. You saw him?

A. Yeah, pretty good man.....

Q. Wasn't that war pretty bad? You were a medic and the Navajo doesn't like death, I mean.....doesn't like to be around the dead.

A. No, but I did, it didn't bother me.....

Q. You had to huh?

A. Yeah, I had to put bandage right here or give them what they need, you know those Germans they watch our, they comrades, I don't know, but they aren't they have got their red cross right there but we knew..... they don't shoot medics.

Q. Oh, they don't?

A. No..... it is a law and we don't shoot theirs either. We took care of the dead right?

Q. Did you carry a gun?

A. No, they won't let us, but our officers, big ones they are the only ones that carry a big gun. Medics they only wear red cross on their helmets, and we had to do what they tell us too. Some guys they are way behind every time. They make us mind, or otherwise, court martial or something.

Q. You understood what the war was all about though?

A. I don't know, they were still fighting, I don't know. Maybe something wrong with them, I don't know. I never see Hitler, I only see his picture, pretty good man, right? You know Rudy? He said that he likes Hitler.

Q. He does, why?

A. He says that he must be part.....? This country is a pretty good place. That place over there. I don't think so right?

Q. I don't know. Did you meet a lot of other Indian soldier when you were in the United States?

A. You know I was just about, you know..... I see one two or three, one was in the wearing he is an MP. He is from here, Torreon.

Q. Oh really, where did you see him?

A. Down, over seas..... He was watching the place like this one, bigger than this one, highway.....one stand right there, a colored man was standing right there and this guy, he had a big, I don't know what you call it, lol and he wears a uniform and right here he wears an insignia, I don't know, boy he can do like this every time..... Watch the place, highway right? They show him the table and what have you, their duty.

Q. Lot of Indians in the service during the war though?

A. Yeah, a lot of them got killed. Lots of people got killed. One place a guy got bleed to death too, got shot right here.....dead.....

Q. Did the Indians soldiers got along pretty well, though? No trouble with the white soldiers or...?

A. No, they get along all right, we get along with everybody, that is what they told us to do in the first place, get along with the negro or you know, we get along with them. I know some of the Navajo, he was a lieutenant too, he got shot that is what I heard, their governor is dead right Bob? Ho Cee Ho?

- Q. Ho Che Mien?
- A. No good right? No good or what?
- Q. Do you know a lot of guys from here that have gone to Viet Nam?
- A. Yeah, they did, they all come back, but I don't know some of them maybe they didn't go but.....
- Q. What did they think of it?
- A. Oh it is terrible that is what they told me.
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- Q. Did you see the missionaries this week?
- A. Yeah, they want me to interpret for them, but I told them I was waiting for somebody that is what I told them.....
- Q. Oh, they want you to interpret for them? They don't speak Navajo at all?
- A. I don't know, not very much about religion, maybe I will go round on it, I don't know, maybe get mad, I don't know.
- Q. Do they pay you to interpret?
- A. Suppose to be I know, but they say for Jesus or something?
- Q. Oh really? No money? Don't understand all of that huh?
- A. They have a good interpreter, but they say, oh he is busy.....they told me interpret for them here and there, I don't understand the bible pretty good, and so I don't know they told me what this man, what he want and they talk to me and I told them, oh he talks to me.....
- Q. Tell them you talk about history.....
- A. I didn't tell them, but I just told them me and him we went together on the war, we talk about that.....
- Q. That is all right, they don't care. Did you tell the missionaries at Torreon that I might be by to talk to them?
- A. I told them and they said that you are welcome.....
- Q. They will talk to me then?
- A. I don't know why they are kind of slow.... mail right?

Q. They mail all of your letter for you don't they?

A. I don't know, maybe it don't go all of the time. Right?

Q. I don't know, do they give you stamps, or do you buy them?

A. No, I have to buy them.....they have got lots of stamps you know, already made for you know, if they want address for you they address right away, they don't charge nothing for that.

Q. Do you have to buy your clothes?

A. Yeah, they don't give us nothing for free.....we have to take shower every-time we feel like it. Pretty good water too..... I told them I have to build a place and they said, oh, that is all right, this one man is Benson, I don't think that he lives here anymore, he moves go around too much. You know him don't you, Benson?

Q. Yeah. I have heard of him.

A. He is an old man, but I don't get to talk to him, I wish that I could talk to him.

Q. Well you try. Do they make you take a shower at the mission or do they ask you too or.....?

A. Anytime that we feel like it, but I never use it, it is for everybody, but even everybody is busy all of the time.....you know....

Q. Do they have a laundry there too?

A. Where?

Q. Washing machine and....?

A. Yeah, they have got everything.

Q. Do you have to pay to use that?

A. As long as we go to church the mission pays for it.....

Q. Oh, but you have to go to church though?

A. Yeah.

Q. Every Sunday?

A. Yeah, you know the other side comes in every time too. So we have to go over there to his church too. I don't know this church's name... is Dutch Brethern ever heard of that?

Q. Yeah.

A. Old church....so it is those people in Albuquerque, do they go to church too? They don't like it or what?

Q. Sometimes?

A. What about colored and all of those guys? What about if they don't to they don't have to?

Q. No. You don't have to if you don't want to or do you have to?

A. Oh, they, if you don't go to church, they say, where have you been, or something like that.

Q. Make you mad a little?

A. Yeah. But repent or something. But this Phillip, he doesn't say anything, you know that hogan over there, that is where we go.....

Q. Okay.....

.....

Q. You still have medicine then?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you use them?

A. At sings, sings....they use them....

Q. At sings, sings?

A. Yeah. I just saw that Apache boy right? That is Apache's boy, he told me something and I wish that we could find that boy, just like Woody Pinto, this guys name is Billy Pinto.

Q. Is he Apaches boy?

A. Yeah. His father tell him all this and that.

Q. What do the missionaries think of the medicine then?

A. Oh, they don't like them.

Q. But don't they have dances around here anymore?

A. Where?

Q. Around here? Around Torreon Anywhere?

- A. They used to have Squaw Dances, but pretty soon they are going to have a Yeibeichai dance at Shiprock.
- Q. But not around here?
- A. No.
- Q. Why is that because of the missionaries?
- A. No, they didn't stop it but you know.....
- Q. Not enough people maybe that are interested huh?
- A. No, they are interested in it, but.....
- Q. Not enough people maybe huh?
- A. Yeah. David lives way on the other side, that is too far right?
- Q. Yeah it is pretty far.
- A. Oh, too far.
- Q. Who else around here can we talk to?
- A. Do you think that we could find somebody over there? Oh, over in that house?
- Q. Why don't they have more sheep around here?
- A. Over in Arizona, lots of people have a lot of sheep, but.....
- Q. Not around here. Why not? Why don't they have them here?
- A. Oh, they belongs to this man, Winston.....trader.....
- Q. Oh, the guy at the trading post.
- A. You know he grabs a little bit you know.....
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Makes money.
- Q. Is that where all the the sheep went?
- A. You know Gib and Jerry are good friends, but somebody told me that he has been living in Denver.
- Q. Denver?
- A. Yeah.

- Q. is he an old man now?
- A. Yeah, old man, the one that Henry kill his boy, right?
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Hootch.....Grand, boy he was my buddy, Hootch. Good buddie, me and him, we go together.
- Q. He killed them though?
- A. You know, me and another guy we were hired by Hootch every time. And I guess we work for him, you know in the store and we have to put a lot of stuff in the counter or something, you know, and then Hootch come back around dinner time and then Hootch, I mean Gib, he was pretty good man, but he was always saying his wife was horrible cook, bad.....
- Q. What were he and Henry fighting about?
- A. Oh, another guy bother him, his name was John, he was involved with it, oh he was fighting with that guy, and all of a sudden they start fighting, no good.
- Q. Did Hootch pull a gun on him first?
- A. Yeah. Pistol....revole.....what do you call it?
- Q. Revolver.
- A. You know those German they have small revolvers? Oh about that size, they have seven shells, I don't know they can put it in here if they want or anywhere. Right Bob? Boy they can do a lot of things. What did they say about those Californians? It's a God's country....
- Q. Navajos say that?
- A. Yeah. One guys you know we were in the army, they talk about dates, you know they come from different states, Texas, or anyplace, I told them that I was from New Mexico, and I told them that that is a rich country, rich state and we have a lot of money there, oh by Farms.....and this one guy said, it is only brush, that is what they talk about.....
- Q. Did you go to that Sherman Institute?
- A. No, not me, I just went to Albuquerque.
- Q. Did people like it there?
- A. I went to Indian School in Albuquerque.

Q. Did you like that pretty well?

A. Yeah.

Q. Better than the boarding school at Crownpoint?

A. Yeah, I went to good schools, you know this guy I went to school with from Shiprock, Arizona, oh boy, too many right Bob?

Q. Yeah.....

A. This guy fight with Woody.

Q. Oh, Woody Pinto.

A. You know he used to go hunting down at Grants? He bring back the deer meat. For the Indian to eat. Boy I eat some of that, that is pretty good. You know it taste all right. You know one teacher was an Indian, Hopi.

Q. Where at the boarding school?

A. Yeah, at Crownpoint, one time, looks like, I thought that that was his wife, but it was not his wife, she had been there all that time, it was a Hopi girl, boy she was pretty too. This Padilla hit him and grab him right away, fight.

Q. Oh Padilla was a teacher there?

A. No, he was a disciplinarian, boys advisor.

Q. Pretty mean?

A. Pretty mean, another guy too, I've told you that before Bob, this guy was a Spanish too, he is from Farmington, this guy ran away and then he.....

Q. Hit him huh?

A. Just like a strap.....

Q. He has a strap?

A. A strap, oh boy, about that long, I about ran away one time, they bring me back and then they boys line up just like prisoners and then they give them this whip and whip all you want this guy, boy oh boy, me and this one guy ran away, boy we cry, we were little kids.

Q. Were all the Indian schools like that around here?

A. It was long time ago. Now a days they don't do that.

- Q. But were all of the schools like that?
- A. All at Crownpoint were, because these two gentlemen they weren't very good sports, then they were Spanish, and white....
- Q. Didn't like Indians huh?
- A. Yeah, I don't know. They make money, but you know, they get paid for watching the boys and girls. Even the, I told you about the doctor too? Doctor..
- Q. Yeah....
- A. Oh, he is no good too, he don't know what he is doing, his wife was mean, she slap the girls, you know if they are mean, you know, they come late or sometime if the boys steal somethings from the corn field or barn, they stealing things from there, they have to carry it all after noon, Saturday afternoon carry that thing around, wear dress.....boys.
- Q. Pretty bad.....
- A. And the girls wear the pants. Boy they sure make us work.
- Q. How many times did you run away?
- A. Oh, about two times, from Crownpoint.
- Q. How far did you get? Not very far?
- A. Sometimes me and another guy run away, we went right straight home and we stay there one night and try not to go on the road, go anywhere we want, boy we just, look like we are straight, we don't go on the road.
- Q. What did your parents think of the school? Did they care if you ran away?
- A. You know policemen around that time, they only ride horse, there was a Navajo too, and sometimes that superintendent he had a small car, I don't know what kind or model and he come and get us, put us in, boy when we got to Crownpoint to the post office, that is where the superintendent stays, boy he got the big whip....what do you call it? Like a gourd, boy! You don't run away no more. I told him that I will be a good boy, that is what I told him. That time they didn't give us enough feed too.
- Q. Really?
- A. No, we just about half way starve.
- Q. Pretty bad huh?
- A. Guys run away they had to put chains on them.

- Q. They did that to kids, put chains on them?
- A. I know a lot of guys, they make us drill too, but they stopped doing this all of the time. Boy they make us work, work, work! One time I work for the superintendent right? Me and another guy, we scrubbed the house inside and scrub the bathroom, outside we clean, everything, that time they didn't use wood, they use coal. This superintendent's wife, she was the matron too....for boys, he got a whip about that long.....for nothing! We work all that day, he only give us 25 cents.
- Q. Not too good huh?
- A. Oh terrible! Lots of guys get mad too.
- Q. When they ran away from the school did their mothers and fathers make them go back?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What did the mother and father think of this school?
- A. Oh, pretty bad, but they couldn't do anything. Yeah, we can't do anything I don't know why. Maybe afraid or something. That time, not good hospital too, pretty bad. Only one doctor and one nurse. But they told us to work in there, we had to help care of the dead people oh, sometimes we can hardly stand up! I know I work with a lot of people right there. Old hospital at Crwonpoint. Now it is a good hospital, right?
- Q. Yeah.....
- A. Have you been there?
- Q. No, I haven't but I have heard of it. It is better than it was.
- A. Albuquerque, is the best hospital right? How about Gallup Bob?
- Q. I don't know, I don't know anything about that hospital.

END OF TAPE