America Is My Home

Christiansen: I also had an experience with the German prisoners of war because I was born and raised in Germany myself. One in particular I talked to, I told him I had been born and raised in Germany, and he wanted to know what I was doing in the American army—fighting against us [laughs]. And I told him, “Because America is my home.”

Thank God You Were Taken Prisoner by the Americans

Christiansen: Another experience I had, I was delegated to escort German prisoners who had been wounded back to the evacuation hospital. And I would stand on the back of the ambulance with a revolver—I don’t know what for, because those boys were not about to desert! I remember one occasion I was escorting a group back to the evacuation hospital, and when we arrived at the hospital another German prisoner came over and talked to the man that I had been talking to, and this fella didn’t know that I could understand German. He said this to the man I had been talking to: “Well you can thank God you were taken prisoner by the Americans. The French soldiers are [German curse word].” So that pleased me, because that told me the prisoners were treated humanely by the Americans. The French, I suppose they had more cause to hate them more than the U.S. [laughs]

I Only Wish My Leg Was Alright

Christiansen: I served in the Argonne operating at an emergency field hospital. And our unit carried a fellow—we had two doctors in our unit—and they were operating on him, and the armistice was signed. And they told him that the armistice had been signed, and he said “Well I’m glad. I only wish my leg was alright.” But the poor fella died when we operated on him [last five words are somewhat unclear].

If You Will Give Me Your Father’s Name and Address

Christiansen: I remember one German prisoner; he was from the same district that I came from [in Germany]. And he told me that “If you give me your father’s name and address, I will write and will tell him that you are alright.” But I didn’t dare to do that.

Whoever Invented Mustard Gas, I Hope You Burn in Hell

Christiansen: You see, I was in a medical unit and I was not involved [with combat]. I saw the effects of mustard gas by helping to take care of men who had been gassed, and that is the most terrible thing you can imagine. The poor fellas, they just vomit, the damnedest, bleeding stuff you can imagine. Whoever invented mustard gas, I hope you burn in Hell.