

**Video Recording Log  
Veteran Charles Dukes**

**1. Name and address of collector of interviewer.**

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**2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed at is appears on the Biographical Data Form:**

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Charles Dukes  
Birth Date: 03/30/1923

**3. Recording format**

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

**4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes):** 105 minutes **Date of recording:** 02/07/2008

**5. Location of recording:** WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

**6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.**

00:00:01	Introduction
00:00:25	Joining military, graduating from high school 1941, Georgetown, IL; worked at Chanute during summer doing construction; Indiana University, joined fraternity for one year
00:01:08	6 fraternity boys tried to join Marines, too skinny
00:02:07	Joined Army, in Reserves for rest of semester, ROTC training
00:03:00	Called to active service 1943, Camp Fannin, TX, 17 weeks basic training with mostly college boys, training for OCS
00:03:35	After training, choice of ASTP engineers or OCS, chose engineers
00:03:55	Shipped to NYC, Fordham University, engineering classes
00:04:20	Before D-Day, all schools closed at once, shipped to TX then Fort Carson, CO, joined Timberwolf division
00:04:45	Commander Terry Allen, night fighting division; General called new recruits "college sillies," training 30 days
00:05:28	Barracks with L Company, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Platoon, 4 <sup>th</sup> Infantry
00:05:36	Rough training, up at 3,000 feet elevation
00:05:50	Became Company after training 187 men

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00:06:10 Gained weight, tough shape  
00:06:17 After D-Day, put on alert, POM requirements (Preparation for Overseas Movement); Camp Kilmer, NJ, August  
00:06:30 There for 6 days, received medical shots  
00:06:35 Sent out motor launches, New York Harbor, at sea 13 days; English Channel, Cherbourg, harbor full of sunken ships  
00:07:10 Anchored in Channel, went over in cargo nets, LCIs; 49-mile forced march, bivouacked in Barneville, France; trained in pillboxes one week  
00:07:45 35-mile forced march, boarded French cattle cars to area outside Brussels: Malines, Belgium, tents  
00:08:20 Snuck out of camp to go see movie in Brussels, "It's a Date"  
00:09:23 Night battle training  
00:09:33 Second night: ran into MLR: designated lead scout, machine gun opened fire, other scout died, hid in ditch all night, 26 casualties in company; said if the Lord got him through he would say "Good Morning" for the rest of his life, wrote book on subject  
00:12:12 Attached to First Canadian Army, job to rescue British Unicorn Division, fought night and day and did not sleep, continuous battle; jumped in with Canadians after their tanks came in, Nijmegen and Arnhem  
00:13:10 Second day in battle, 2 American soldiers killed when German soldiers feigned surrender, learned to kill the enemy no matter what  
00:13:40 Reached Maas River (variant spelling of Meuse, in Holland) November 6<sup>th</sup>, could not go any farther  
00:13:52 Most were killed or wounded  
00:14:00 Last day there, near village, one house still standing, fox hole near yard, Dutch girl came outside and thanked him, said it was first time she could sleep in 4 years  
00:15:36 Liege, Belgium, there for 7-day rest, stayed 2 hours, taken to Aachen, Germany in trucks, replaced 1<sup>st</sup> Division, went to Siegfried Line, broke through in 3 days  
00:16:05 Trench foot, all kinds of problems, let one or two men go back at a time for medical help, but shorthanded  
00:16:19 187 men in Company, but had 263 replacements during 200 days in combat; infantry takes a beating, suffered 78% of casualties in War  
00:16:59 Had trench foot, could not take shoes off  
00:17:10 Kept going into center of Germany  
00:17:15 Last battle on Thanksgiving, going down reverse hill, roving fire; Forward Observer hit, did not call last grid coordinate, last barrage got hit by American artillery; ran to objective, pinned down by machine gun fire, trying to get to German foxholes, lost his head, German infantry and tanks  
00:20:27 American soldiers systematically taken by Germans, ended up in factory basement  
00:20:40 78 casualties that day, 41 men left in Company, not getting replacements

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- 00:21:00 Moved out, forced to walk 10 days behind German lines, picking up soldiers from the Battle of the Bulge, strafed by Americans, got in columns of 4 and staggered so Americans would know they were not Germans
- 00:21:37 Slept in barn, out in field, in snow
- 00:21:53 Crossed Rhine River, taken to Lindberg, Germany, got help on wounded legs; medic sat on him and pulled shrapnel out of legs, no infections, there until 19<sup>th</sup>
- 00:22:48 Told going to get hot shower, took off uniform, kept on shoes, taken into room with cold showers, taken into another room to get dressed, other clothes that did not fit, found out later was clothes from concentration camps, his clothes used to infiltrate his division
- 00:24:05 Loaded into boxcars and sent to South Germany, no food or water, strafed by Americans, 70 men in one car
- 00:24:30 Pulled into area at 10pm, doors opened, tried to get out and fell, feet frozen and didn't know it
- 00:24:46 Boxcar
- 00:25:20 Man choked to death on swollen tongue after trying to lick water off frozen metal
- 00:25:40 Exited car, carried 12 dead from off of his car; some could not walk, dragged them through snow
- 00:26:11 Bonfire, other Allied soldiers, British and Australian, had hot tea and sandwich, first food given in 6 days, had bread in pocket from camp
- 00:26:46 German guard singing Silent Night, realized it was Christmas
- 00:27:06 Felt someone touch his shoulder, but no one was there, inspiration
- 00:27:33 Marched over to building, stood outside all night, went inside at daybreak, straw on floor, each man had one blanket, slept 3 men together, there 5-6 days, one meal a day
- 00:28:20 Shipped to labor camp in Rhundorff, Germany, (Near Czechoslovakia), room for 40 men, only 36 showed up; barracks with 20 on each side, table at center for food, one blanket, straw and wood chips mattress, Russians left lice and bugs, had long hair and beard, had to learn to live with lice
- 00:29:55 Forced to work every day, walk through woods 8 km into Hoyerswerda, Germany, cleaning up bombed roads, garbage dump
- 00:30:18 Trying to salvage string and newspaper to tie to body
- 00:30:31 Digging a trench at a school used as a hospital, water and sewer lines
- 00:31:00 Working on farm thrashing wheat, got lunch kuchen (white bread)
- 00:31:18 Lived off of bowl of soup and boiled potatoes and black bread, had to pick up wheat, take it to baker, pick it up; taste of bread changed, found out baker was putting sawdust into bread; everyone got equal amounts, no stealing
- 00:32:55 Cutting 9-meter logs for tank traps, Hitler Youth came in, tattoos and symbols for regular SS and Hitler Youth, singing German songs, bullying a POW
- 00:34:16 Building tank traps was illegal, manual labor
- 00:34:25 German soldiers treatment of Americans: first 3-4 weeks young wounded German was mean; later, older men from WWI, had police dogs that would bite ankles, they carried whips, got whipped once

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- 00:36:15 During manual labor, dug out a rabbit and killed it, tried to cook it but ate it mostly raw
- 00:37:05 Older men nicer
- 00:37:10 SS soldiers, shell-shocked man from 28<sup>th</sup> Division, confrontation with SS, said comments about German soldiers in English, soldier understood and attacked him with bayonet, 4 broken teeth, knocked unconscious
- 00:39:45 French Creole soldiers on parole duty could go 50 miles away, would run escaped prisoners to American lines; would steal clothes whenever possible, shake-downs every 2 weeks
- 00:41:15 Staged fight so man could escape, he was caught 3 days later
- 00:42:40 Officer would threaten to shoot his nose off, had to learn some German to know what they wanted
- 00:43:25 One morning road full of civilians with wagons and cows, had to lay low because Germans would see it was a prison camp and set it on fire
- 00:44:25 One night, guards had disappeared and left only 6, remaining said they would make a deal: if the Americans promised not to shoot them they would take them to American lines; no choice: everyone scared of Russians, who were killing everything in sight; rigged up cart with 2 injured men, went cross-country because roads were cramped
- 00:45:45 New jets strafing, had never seen a jet before
- 00:45:55 Russians came into town they were hiding in, took German guards and shot them and left, Americans holed up because surrounded by Germans, German civilians not nice, there 6-7 days
- 00:47:00 Headed back West to Russians, only one meal a day
- 00:47:16 Hitchhiked to Sagan, Poland, tried to get out
- 00:47:25 Tried to go back West alone, digging up rutabaga in garden, 3 Russian tanks came up and motioned for him to come over, he grabbed onto side of tank and it took off going West
- 00:48:14 Germans opened up with Screaming Mimi's, one hit tank, he hit his head, unconscious
- 00:48:48 Woke up, other prisoners standing over him, medic; headed to Odessa, went East, ran into some British soldiers who said war was over, so headed West on trucks and trains
- 00:49:50 Ended up in Berlin, had to prove to Russians he was American without uniforms
- 00:50:45 Going to "repatriot you," on truck with women and children, headed to Buchenwald, Germany, had been prison camp; all kinds of Americans there, would go at night to try to get to American lines, Russians would bring back
- 00:51:40 Saw Russians loading Americans, Displaced Persons, Germans into boxcars headed for Siberia; decided to run for it; Russians busy raping German women; cut through fence, across mine field into forest, got caught
- 00:53:12 Escaped again through same hole, traveled by night 3 nights, hiding during the day, 4<sup>th</sup> day came upon valley crammed with people, Wittenberg, Germany, hundreds of people trying to cross river, temporary Bailey bridge

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00:54:09 Exchanging Russian for Allied prisoners, found 3 American officers by bridge, gave him crackers, first food in 3 days, fainted

00:54:40 Next morning crossed river with other Allied prisoners to Halle, Germany

00:55:00 Examined by medic, weighed 109 pounds, passed out

00:55:29 Reims, France, hospital: woke up next morning, canopy over his body to kill lice, 2 French nurses shaved his body, nurse with him at all times

00:56:20 Got uniform, went to Camp Lucky Strike

00:56:30 Got over to American camp 20 days after War had ended, one of last Americans documented to come back from Russian control

00:56:50 Did not have time for him at camp, interrogating him because he did not get Red Cross box that all POW were supposed to have gotten, only allowed one letter a month, parents did not get them until war ended, for 6 months he had no idea what was going on in the war or the world

00:57:57 Going to head man "bitching like mad" 7 days, got \$50 cash and ticket to England, 7 days delayed route for fun

00:58:27 Landed in Bournemouth, South England

00:58:35 40 cents/night at Red Cross Club, roamed London, spent time with 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division

00:59:03 Covert Gardens, dance, last night there, passed out, having trouble with stomach and head

00:59:20 Woke up in hospital, had missed plane, went out window and roamed London having fun, AWOL

00:59:50 Had learned how to ride trains without paying

01:00:15 Court-martialed, charged 42 days AWOL, spent 8 days in guard house

01:00:40 Rescinded sentence because he was battle fatigued, sent home immediately with guard, shipped out of Wales on 7-tonner

01:01:13 Getting picked up for AWOL, avoiding guards, Red Cross clubs, Columbia Club

01:01:41 Making friends with night clerk to get free bed, arrive at 1 a.m.

01:02:18 Sleeping in parks, abandoned buildings

01:02:30 East London, tea room, Queen Mother going to be there, Queen thanked him

01:03:59 Changing of the Guard

01:04:06 Carrying weapons: 32 Beretta, German Blackjack, rough life on the streets, lots of roaming soldiers that would mug you, living like an animal

01:04:44 Parents had not heard from him, thought he was dead or missing, never wrote home saying he was alive, parents heard him interviewed on BBC

01:05:10 Meeting girls, they wanted to go to America, had to be careful, would tell them he was shipping out, they would send him letters to his address in America

01:05:30 Dad opened one letter and wrote to the girl, asked her how his son was, she wrote back and said he was thin, nervous, wanted to get back into civilization before coming home to America

01:06:18 Tribunal at Litchfield, worked in the kitchen

01:06:49 Wounds, white phosphorous burns, infections, hands would swell from GI soap

01:07:05 Garbage detail

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01:07:17 Tribunal, rescinded, battle fatigued, had “psycho” stamped in red letters on file  
01:07:40 Thought he was dangerous, brought in guard with machine gun to transport him to Barry, South Wales, transported in chains  
01:08:05 Barry, South Wales, James R. Turner  
01:08:10 All Air Force ex-POWs, 13 men, slept on deck of gun turret, no beds, played Hearts all the time  
01:09:03 Put below deck, 11 days, told to sweep down fore and aft, all men were bitter, counted to 3 and threw brooms off the ship; Colonel said they would be court-martialed  
01:10:19 First men off the ship  
01:10:25 Slated to go to hospital, Fort Miles Standish, had guard at door whole time  
01:10:51 Second day, 3-day pass to go with girl he had dated in NY  
01:12:20 Back at hospital, to Chicago, IL, to Danville, IL, 90 days leave, roamed around, problems with stomach  
01:12:47 Supposed to go back to San Louis Obispo where combat division was getting ready to go to Japan  
01:13:00 Supposed to report to Fort Sam Houston in November, having problems, getting in trouble with liquor, got into fight and used Judo, nearly killed someone with bare hands  
01:13:48 Fort Sam Houston, hospital, prostate problems, given Penicillin  
01:14:20 Discharge: had to have points to get discharged, Air Force boys coming in had more points, going through the line 3-4 days, threatened to go AWOL if not discharged before Christmas, got out December 15<sup>th</sup>, given \$75 for train, train through Saint Louis, MO to Danville, IL  
01:15:00 Went back to college, January 1946, army said he was psychologically unfit for full course load, at school part-time, 9 hours  
01:16:57 Elected president of fraternity, most were GIs  
01:17:33 Could not get attached to people until met wife, knew each other for 21 days, decided to get married  
01:17:50 Messed up in the head and did not realize it, now called PTSD  
01:18:00 Wife, book he wrote  
01:18:15 Later asked to speak at schools about WWII  
01:18:38 Slacked off on speaking because kids today not as interested as they used to be  
01:19:20 VA found a man who had been in mental hospital for years, did not realize he had been a POW, no record or medals, DD214 military document, called and ask if he would pin medal  
01:20:06 Wanted to know if he could do anything, guy had never talked about POW, gave family his book  
01:21:15 Helping others when they read his book, other VA hospitals use it for training  
01:21:48 “Good Morning, but the Nightmares Never End”  
01:22:00 Writing book, nightmares, Ray Elliott helped get it published  
01:22:45 Ave Maria story in book, inspired by

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01:24:18 Aachen, Germany, going door-to-door to find snipers, accidentally shot elderly woman, shot at poster of Hitler

01:26:04 Picture of Hitler in belt when captured, buried it and German pistol in coal

01:27:00 Several men were wounded, would fall down, Germans would shoot them; friend had shrapnel in neck, had to walk with shoulders up; he had to walk with shrapnel in his legs, getting over the pain

01:28:02 Helping each other, no stealing like you'd think

01:28:16 Kept crust of bread under pillow for breakfast, tin cup for water, got cup of ersatz coffee made out of soybeans

01:28:40 Wife would leave crust of bread on plate at night, habit he got into of keeping it

01:28:55 Habits evolved that wife put up with: would get jumpy at night, load 12-gauge shotgun and patrol perimeter of house late at night

01:29:34 Would go down to river with rifle and pistol, build fire and sit there until late in the night, huddled, listening to sounds of forest

01:30:19 Got to the point when he could go out at night

01:30:27 Describing night patrol and watch, looking at one side of an object

01:31:00 Night was hell, fights, Purple Heart

01:31:26 Got medals in 1988 at Chanute for all POWs, 4,500 people, POW ranked at top of service medals

01:31:55 Had to get proof he was POW, had to prove Purple Heart

01:32:27 Combat Badge: had to have 30 days continuous combat and recommendation from commander, still fighting at Siegfried Line with 7 of division, given pin

01:33:14 Some replacements would only last 1-2 days

01:33:25 Lost lots of people, drives you crazy

01:34:00 Did not think about War much until later when wrote book, all came back

01:34:23 Tailoring to audience

01:34:40 Book: all out

01:34:50 Lucky, others in division, POW camp, Scribe, publication about POWs, casualties

01:35:38 Reunions of combat division, no one there he knew

01:35:56 POW National, State Commander, Legion, VFW, member of organizations

01:36:18 Only POW in town, people looked at him funny

01:36:30 Some men ashamed to have been prisoner

01:36:50 One man told him he was knocked down and hit in the head with a rifle

01:37:12 Talking to young German soldier, soldier called him aside and told him he was born and raised in America, helped save his life

01:37:48 Looking for Timberwolf uniforms, Battle of the Bulge planned, infiltrated his unit, think Germans were ordered to take POWs for the uniforms

01:38:28 Did not retake hill until next day,

01:39:00 Strategic hill, had to take it

01:39:18 Learned his Division Commander kept Germans on guard all the time, in Vietnam strategy was to take and pull back, mistake, have to hold it

01:39:45 Have to kill enemy and capture ground

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**Veteran Charles Dukes**

- 01:39:55 Saved a lot of American soldiers, could pick up wounded after captured ground, American medics would also go behind German lines
- 01:40:05 Americans did not take German snipers prisoner, would kill them
- 01:40:45 Wrap-up
- 01:41:18 136,000 Americans taken as POW; 135,000 Germans taken at Tobruk, North Africa alone; 90,000 American Air Force shot down, Corregidor: 10,000, Battle of the Bulge: 20,000
- 01:41:47 Whole company: 40-50 taken POW, mostly patrol, on offensive all the time, Germans on retreat, would have to leave wounded on battlefield
- 01:42:26 Wrap-up, photos of patches, badges, medals awarded for service, Chapter Commander volunteer vest