Pre-enlistment / Training (00:00:18:00)

- Johnson was born in Greenville, Michigan on May 25th, 1919 (00:00:18:00)
- When Johnson was born, his mother worked as a secretary and his father worked as a carpenter; however, before the Great Depression, his family purchased an eighty-acre farm outside of Greenville (00:00:27:00)
  - Because he did not have any siblings while growing up, Johnson spent a lot of time playing with his dog (00:01:07:00)
  - For the main cash crop of the farm, Johnson’s family grew potatoes, as well as oats and wheat (00:01:28:00)
  - Johnson’s family managed to keep the farm, although it was by the very skinniest of margins; without help from President Roosevelt’s policy, the family was close to losing the farm towards the end of the Depression because they were unable to make the necessary interest payments (00:01:41:00)
- Growing up, Johnson attended a one-room schoolhouse, where there were nine grades and only a single teacher (00:02:14:00)
  - Johnson had to walk to the schoolhouse but he thought nothing of it because it was something he had to do (00:02:24:00)
  - After Johnson finished eighth grade, an arrangement was made whereby he would go live with his grandparents to attend high school (00:02:57:00)
- Johnson graduated from high school in 1938, after which he found a job working for a potato business; immediately after he started high school, Johnson was placed in a program to educate him on being a farmer (00:03:18:00)
  - The business where Johnson worked was very large, at one point the largest in Michigan (00:03:51:00)
  - Eventually, Johnson briefly held another job before joining the Wolverine Shoe and Tanning Company (00:04:01:00)
    - Because Johnson played a lot of baseball and Wolverine had a good baseball team, Johnson suspects the company was looking to hire a baseball player when he got the job (00:04:08:00)
    - When Johnson told his father that Wolverine had offered him a job, his father told him to take it (00:04:29:00)
- Johnson was drafted into the military on June 4th, 1941 (00:05:01:00)
  - After being drafted, Johnson first reported to Fort Custer in Kalamazoo [Battle Creek], Michigan; although the fort had a lot of buildings when Johnson arrived, it was still not too impressive for him (00:05:23:00)
  - Johnson was only at Fort Custer for processing and after which, he was sent to Camp Boyd, Texas, located about an hour outside of Fort Worth (00:05:56:00)
    - Johnson rode a train from Michigan to Texas and although he had never been on that long of a train ride before, he does not remember too much
about the trip, apart from being impressed with the number of men who were riding in the train with him (00:06:16:00)

- When Johnson arrived in Texas, he was given a choice of what he would like to be trained for and he signed up to be a mechanic (00:06:52:00)
- Before going through the mechanic school, Johnson went through the traditional basic training, with all the marching and physical training usually associated with that (00:07:07:00)
  - The marching and physical training was not a problem for Johnson, who, having grown up on a farm, knew how to work and do physically-demanding jobs (00:07:22:00)
  - Discipline was part of the normal procedure and Johnson did not have a problem with it; there were some men who had problems with one thing or another but the discipline helped straighten them out (00:07:44:00)
    - For example, one man had a habit of chewing tobacco and after being warned three times to stop, was ordered to report to the sergeant, where he was forced to dig a hole 8’x8’x6’ and bury the chewing tobacco in the middle of the hole (00:08:06:00)
      - Later, the man told Johnson that originally, he had not placed the tobacco in the middle of the hole, so he had to go back down, place the tobacco exactly in the middle of the hole before filling the hole back in (00:08:31:00)
    - Another man like to sing during the long marches and although the other men liked it, their first sergeant did not, so he ordered the man to shut up; the man did but a couple of minutes later, was singing again (00:08:47:00)
      - The exchange between the sergeant and the singer happened three times and after the third time, the sergeant said that when they returned to the barracks, he and the singer were going to sort out the problem (00:09:14:00)
        - Although the other men wanted to watch the exchange between the two men, they were not allowed to (00:09:33:00)
      - Eventually, the singer came back looking not too worse for wear and the sergeant came back beat to a pulp; the only thing the sergeant said was that both men had learned their lesson (00:09:38:00)
  - During his mechanics training, Johnson’s group included another man from Greenville who was already a full-fledged mechanic and just under the upper age limit for someone to be drafted (00:10:22:00)
    - The training started with the men learning the different parts of the engine and while the others learned, the old mechanic would be in the back on the room sleeping because he knew it all already (00:10:51:00)
    - The mechanic was called to the front of the room and told to explain everything that the instructor had been teaching the other men; without missing a beat, the mechanic drew a perfect generator on the blackboard and labeled all its parts (00:11:10:00)
In the end, the majority of Johnson’s training ended up coming from the mechanic after the men had finished with their normal training for the day or hour (00:11:35:00)
  - The men were training to work with ¾-ton Dodge, six-cylinder truck engines (00:11:48:00)
    - Overall, the mechanic’s training was good and after Johnson and the other men finished, they were transferred to the 36th Infantry Division (00:12:13:00)
      - One of the men who went through the mechanics training with Johnson was assigned to be a carburetion specialist and when Johnson pointed out that there were already mechanics in the division and they would probably not get to work, the other man suggested the two transfer out of the division (00:12:32:00)
    - The two men transferred out of the 36th Infantry and joined the 1st Infantry Division stationed at Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania, which was the staging area for the entire division (00:13:01:00)
  - When Johnson and the other man joined the 1st Infantry, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had yet to happen (00:13:17:00)
    - When the attack did happen, Johnson was sitting in a tent with twelve other men; after hearing about the attack, the men started packing because they thought they would be shipped out the next day (00:13:26:00)
    - At the time, the men were training with wooden guns; there was talk that the country might go to war and the men were still marching around with wooden guns (00:13:43:00)
  - While Johnson was in Texas, he and the other men trained in desert combat and one time, while on an extended exercise, there was a snake in the path Johnson was taking, so he had to go into the section of the soldier next to him (00:14:01:00)
    - There were so many snake bites in the unit that the base hospital was constantly full; eventually, all the men were called in to learn how to properly treat snake bites (00:14:52:00)
  - When the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor happened, Johnson remembers wondering how he was going to fight with a wooden gun (00:15:38:00)

Deployment to Europe / North Africa (00:16:06:00)
- When Johnson and the other soldier joined the 1st Infantry at Indiantown Gap, the division was already getting ready to deploy and when the two men arrived, they were greeted by a pair of majors (00:16:06:00)
  - Both majors were friendly and they took the two men to the headquarters company of 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, where the two were then handed off to the sergeant they would be working under (00:16:41:00)
    - When he was a civilian, the sergeant Johnson and the other man were assigned to had worked as a foreman for a power company, so he had the leadership qualities already built in (00:17:11:00)
    - The sergeant want to know what Johnson and the other soldier’s backgrounds were because their paperwork had not come through yet and when they said they were mechanics, he took them down to the company motor pool (00:17:28:00)
Joining the regiment was not a problem because the sergeant made sure Johnson and the other man were comfortable; when Johnson joined the 36th Infantry, he was a Northerner being sent to a division made up of primarily Southerners (00:17:49:00)

- A lot of the men who were in the 1st Infantry when Johnson arrived were old-time Army and had been together a long time (00:18:31:00)
- When Johnson and the other man arrived, the division was getting ready to deploy to Europe, so Johnson and the other man were immediately given a large amount of semi-secret information (00:18:43:00)
- One night, Johnson received orders that the division would be moving and that night, the division moved to New York, where the men boarded the Queen Mary luxury ocean-liner (00:18:54:00)
  - After the men were aboard the ship, supplies continued to be loaded for several days and at one point, Johnson remembers looking out the port hole, seeing all the supplies being loaded, and thinking that the ship was not going to be able to make the voyage (00:19:15:00)
  - The men were eventually briefed about what they needed to do while aboard the ship and the only major problem they faced was the possibility of a fire (00:19:39:00)
    - Johnson pointed out to the carburetion specialist that they did not mention anything about submarines (00:19:49:00)
    - Once aboard, the men were given life vests and packed into an area four or five men deep (00:20:05:00)
  - Four-and-a-half days after they boarded, the men were told it would be a 4,000 mile voyage and after the ship sailed out of New York and crossed the Atlantic, ended up in Scotland (00:20:15:00)
    - The weather during the journey was good (00:20:54:00)
- When the ship arrived in Scotland, Scottish bagpipers were there to greet the soldiers as they unloaded (00:21:14:00)
  - As they unloaded, the men were a little upset because they had not yet been fed that day; however, as the men were taken to a waiting train, some of the local Scots gave them home-made pot pies (00:21:39:00)
    - Once the men were settled aboard the train, they could eat the pies, which were individually wrapped in four pieces of newspaper and were enough for a full meal (00:21:52:00)
    - As the train left Scotland, it had special orders and went flying through the Scottish and English countryside (00:22:11:00)
  - The train eventually took the men to Tidworth Barracks, which were built on the Salisbury Plain and were primarily home to a British cavalry unit (00:22:27:00)
    - As the men were settling in, a German Me-109 fighter came in low and attack the barracks (00:22:47:00)
    - During the first night, the men turned on the radio and heard Axis Sally welcome the 1st Infantry Division to England; the men had tried hard to keep their movements hidden but to no avail (00:23:15:00)
  - Johnson was eventually given the assignment of driving one of the jeeps and taking care of the jeep for a major (00:23:34:00)
The first time Johnson drove for the major was to Scotland when he drove the major to a meeting planning an invasion of Africa; however, Johnson did not know the meeting was about this (00:23:51:00)

- The meeting was sixty miles away and when Johnson picked up the major, he said they had to make it there in forty-five minutes; although Johnson said it could not be done, a sergeant told him to do it anyway, so Johnson calculated the speed he would need to go in order to make the meeting on time (00:24:06:00)
- All the roads in Scotland were narrow and all the bridges were hump-backed, so going top speed would often cause the jeeps to fly into the air (00:24:27:00)
- Nevertheless, Johnson managed to get to the meeting on time; when the arrived, the major told Johnson that he had been through war but he had never had a ride quite like that (00:25:07:00)
  - Johnson spent three or four months in England before the 1st Infantry shipped out again (00:25:52:00)
    - While in England, Johnson visited Stonehenge, although the information explained to him did not sink in while he was there; looking back, it was a nice trip and Johnson should have enjoyed it but at the time, all he and the other soldiers saw were a bunch of rocks (00:26:35:00)
    - Other than Stonehenge, Johnson and the other men were not allowed to leave their barracks (00:26:59:00)
  - Before the division left England, Johnson and the other drivers received training in how to properly care for their vehicles (00:27:12:00)
- After the men finished testing their vehicles and finished the training, they and their vehicles were loaded back aboard ships, which then left England (00:27:54:00)
  - Once they had left England, Johnson figures the ships must have sailed nearly halfway back to the United States to join another convoy of ships also headed to North Africa (00:28:02:00)
  - When the ships from England joined the other convoy, the combined convoy ran into a large storm; although most of the crew aboard the ship got sick, Johnson himself did not (00:28:16:00)
    - At one point during the storm, Johnson was laying on the deck when the captain of the ship called him over to talk; as the two talked, the captain complained how all his crew, who were supposed to be helping the soldiers, were sick themselves (00:28:39:00)
    - During the storm, the captain and first mate had to work together turning the engine on and off because whenever the ship pitched high enough, the propeller came out of the water and needed to be turned off before going back into the water (00:29:40:00)
  - It seemed like the ships were at sea for about ten days before they meet up with the other group, after which both groups headed for their destination, although none of the soldiers knew where that was (00:30:37:00)
    - Once the ships were about halfway to their destination, the commanders finally told the soldiers where they were going (00:30:51:00)
During the voyage, the men kept thinking about the possibility of an enemy submarine attack (00:30:58:00).

Eventually, the ships sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar and Johnson noticed lights on the Moroccan side of the straits; to Johnson, it seemed crazy to see lights on during the middle of a war (00:31:05:00).

After the ships had sailed through the straits, the men were told exactly where the landings were going to be attempted (00:31:18:00).

- During the landing, Johnson’s jeep was the first to go into the water and as he pulled onto the beach, he was told to turn the jeep sideways; as Johnson turned the jeep, someone shot at him for the first time (00:31:26:00).
  - Johnson looked up and saw that it was a soldier in the French Foreign Legion who had shot at him (00:32:01:00).
  - Once all the other soldiers had landed, Johnson’s unit was sent to Taforaoui airport, which was fifty to six miles inland from the beach (00:32:18:00).
    - B-17 bombers were landing at the airport and the soldiers were told to form a perimeter around the airport because the commanders thought the Germans might drop in some paratroopers (00:32:48:00).
    - The soldiers stayed at Taforaoui for an extended period of time, between fifteen and twenty days (00:33:06:00).
    - The men set up tents at the airport but whenever a bomber would fly in, the tents would be blown over; it upset the soldiers because they had to keep building their tents (00:33:39:00).
  - Although there was a lot of fighting in the nearby city of Oran, Johnson’s unit never became involved in it (00:33:58:00).
  - Johnson and the other soldiers spent several days hanging around the airport before their unit finally moved into a series of different positions (00:34:12:00).
    - Johnson himself was constantly driving because his major was being sent all over the place (00:34:42:00).
  - The roads closer to the beach, where everyone lived, were okay; however, for the most part, the soldiers were operating further into the desert and the roads there amounted to little more than trails (00:35:04:00).
    - Operating in the desert was un-pleasant, thanks to high heat, sand storms, and local insects (00:35:17:00).
- Although the bulk of the 1st Infantry was hit at the Battle of Kasserine Pass, Johnson’s regiment did not; the regiment did fight in the American counter-attack after the battle was over (00:35:34:00).
  - After the counter-attack, a sergeant came in and said he had a job for Johnson; when Johnson asked what the job was, the sergeant asked if Johnson knew anything about German half-tracks (00:35:58:00).
    - Johnson said he knew a little bit about the German engine, so the two men went into a valley, where there was a German half-track sitting in a gully that the retreating Germans had left behind (00:36:11:00).
    - Four or five other soldiers went with Johnson and the sergeant to look over the half-track for any booby-traps and after everything was taken care of, Johnson crawled inside (00:36:25:00).
Once inside, Johnson hit the start button and the half-track’s engine started immediately; Johnson then shifted the half-track into reverse and back it out of the gully (00:36:45:00)
  - As Johnson backed the half-track out, the sergeant was smiling and he kept say, “it works” (00:36:57:00)
In order to drive the half-track, Johnson had to lay on his stomach and look through a periscope (00:37:06:00)
  - Whenever his regiment was actually involved in any fighting, Johnson’s job was to drive around the major to wherever he needed to go; Johnson was not expected to take a rifle and go fight in a foxhole unless he was called upon (00:37:37:00)
  - Johnson and the other men in the battalion headquarters were capable of fighting in the foxholes but their jobs were to drive (00:37:52:00)
  - For the most part, Johnson and the other men did portion of their work at night; Johnson even received special training on how to drive at night (00:38:02:00)
    - However, Johnson was often blind during the day from having driven at night (00:38:16:00)
Johnson also did work during the day, such as driving around an observer who was looking for targets for artillery units to attack (00:38:24:00)
  - At one point, a sergeant came up to Johnson and introduced an artillery observer from the division who wanted someone to drive him into a valley (00:38:41:00)
    - As Johnson and the observer got into the jeep, the observer said he had a few instructions for Johnson; if the observer yelled “go”, Johnson was supposed to jump out and not worry about what happened to the jeep (00:38:57:00)
  - Johnson started driving up the valley and all of a sudden, he heard the observer say “go”; Johnson jumped out of one side of the jeep as the observer jumped out of the other side (00:39:19:00)
  - After he had jumped out, Johnson looked up and saw a flight of six German Me-109s overhead; one of the fighters peeled off, looked around, and returned to the group (00:39:49:00)
  - As Johnson and the observer got the jeep, Johnson asked the observer how he had managed to spot the fighters because Johnson had been looking for enemy fighters as well (00:40:01:00)
    - The observer explained that on the horizon, there would always be a spot indicating that the fighters would be coming (00:40:35:00)
Apart from Kasserine Pass, the only other time Johnson was relatively close to the fighting in North Africa was at Latourine (00:41:15:00)
  - At Latourine, someone made a mistake and the unit’s commander was captured by the Germans (00:41:42:00)
    - When the other unit was captured, Johnson was only seventy-five or one-hundred yards away with the commander’s equipment in his jeep (00:41:49:00)
Johnson returned to the remainder of his unit, organized the commander’s equipment and waited with the others for any news about what happened (00:42:12:00)

- About twenty days later, the men received orders to pick up the commander and some other soldiers who the Germans had previously taken prisoner; all the German ships in the harbor had been sunk and there was no way for the Germans to get the POWs back to Europe (00:42:20:00)
  - The first time Johnson’s unit moved through the valley, they were constantly setting up defensive positions (00:43:28:00)
  - At one point, Johnson went to the top of a mountain where an American unit was positioned; Johnson knew officers in the other unit from being a driver, which was why he was allowed onto the summit (00:43:31:00)
    - From the top of the mountain, Johnson watched as individual American tanks advanced up the valley, only to be quickly knocked out by German fire (00:43:42:00)
      - When Johnson asked what was happening, an nearby officer explained that a German 88mm gun further up the valley and the American tanks could not stand up to the gun’s firepower (00:43:56:00)
    - The next day, there was a new group of tanks that began advancing into the valley and the same thing happened again (00:44:07:00)

- At different times, German soldiers went through the American lines, advanced four or five miles into the American rear area, placed notes on the American communications, and retreated back without being caught (00:44:25:00)
  - Everything time this happened, Johnson would think about how poorly trained he and the other American soldiers were, to let the Germans through their lines without doing anything (00:44:42:00)
  - However, as the fighting continued, Johnson and the other soldiers slowly learned what they needed to, such as where to hide, what to look for, etc. (00:44:54:00)
    - At one point, Johnson’s unit was on the backside of a hill that they had already attacked and been repealed from three times; as the men were looking for spots to dig in, Johnson saw a black line running down the side of the hill (00:45:06:00)
      - Johnson yelled for the others to stop and for a sergeant to come over; the sergeant came over and after Johnson pointed to the line, the sergeant called someone from headquarters (00:45:29:00)
      - Someone else eventually came up, hooked another line to the black line and all the soldiers back away; some pulled the line and there was a massive explosion, caused by a series of mines hooked to the original line (00:45:58:00)
        - At the onset of the fighting, there was so much that the soldiers did not know how to do; nevertheless, they caught on pretty fast as to what things needed to be done (00:46:21:00)
- During the fighting, the Americans did not have any air support because the German fighters maintained air superiority (00:46:33:00)
One day, a German Ju-88 dive-bomber flew over the American position with a 500-lbs bomb but was hit in the left engine (00:46:46:00)
  - The bombers pilot rolled the plane over and dropped the bomb, which headed towards where Johnson was; however, at the last moment, the bomb veered to the side and ended up hitting the area where the unit’s medics and ambulance were stationed (00:47:01:00)
- On the whole, Johnson and the other soldier’s experiences in North Africa were not very good (00:47:42:00)
  - However, towards the end of the campaign, Johnson’s unit managed to capture over 50,000 German soldiers; when the soldiers surrendered, all 50,000 were located on a single hillside (00:47:45:00)
- After the campaign was over, Johnson’s unit moved back to Oran, where the men were issued new uniforms; because the soldiers never had time to clean themselves, Johnson figures by then, the uniforms were about ready to rot off the soldiers (00:48:04:00)
  - During the campaign, apart from not being able to clean themselves, the men’s health was relatively good (00:48:27:00)
  - Johnson remembers sending a letter home asking for a red bandana to tie over his forehead; without the bandana, within hours, his forehead was like mud from the combination of sweat and sandstorms (00:48:35:00)
    - One day, the men were caught in a sandstorm and although it was a clear day, once the storm started, it was like night; the men could not even tell if someone was standing beside them (00:48:56:00)
- At one point during the campaign, a half-track was brought to the unit and Johnson, being a mechanic, was given the job of driving it (00:49:13:00)
  - Apart from driving the half-track, during the sandstorms, it was a job in and of itself keeping the bogies of the half-track free of sand and able to operate at all times (00:49:25:00)
  - Along with carrying soldiers, Johnson also used his half-track to carry around mines and booby-traps, as well as shovels and anything else the soldiers needed to dig in with (00:49:56:00)
  - The half-track was driven using a large steering wheel and whenever he drove, Johnson had to make sure his thumbs were not gripping the steering wheel; if the steering wheel started to spin and his thumbs were gripping the wheel, then they could be broken easily (00:50:20:00)
    - Driving the half-track was difficult because the machine was clunky and Johnson always needed to apply a certain amount of pressure to do anything (00:50:31:00)
- Once back in Oran, Johnson and some of the other men went for a drink and there were girls from the United States in the bar where they went (00:51:18:00)
  - The men immediately wanted to talk with the girls because they had not heard anything from home except for letters (00:51:28:00)
  - The first thing the girl told Johnson when he tried to talk with her was that he stunk (00:51:37:00)
- The Bedouin tribesmen that the men would encounter would often steal different things from them; the tribesmen would beg, borrow, and steal to get what they needed from the soldiers (00:52:13:00)
At one point, Johnson’s unit was setting up a defensive position in the Atlas Mountains and as the men worked, they planned on teaching the local population how to use the modern weapons (00:52:31:00)

- Although the locals did have firearms, when they came to talk with the soldiers, one rifle only had one round left and another only had three rounds left (00:53:21:00)
- The soldiers taught the locals exactly what they had been taught during training, but the locals did not care so much about that (00:53:35:00)
- After the training, the soldiers took the locals on a hill to see how they could shoot and from the three-hundred yards away, each local hit a rock a foot-and-a-half across several times (00:53:52:00)

Another time, the men were told to work with a different group of people named Goumers [Goums], who liked using knives in combat (00:54:08:00)

- The tribesmen had no problem laying in the desert for an entire day to bring back information; although the soldiers were told where the tribesmen would be stationed, they could not find them (00:54:24:00)
- Following one of the tribesmen’s missions, Johnson and the other soldiers, who at the time were having trouble keeping enough water around to drink, were sent to work with them (00:54:52:00)
  - As Johnson was working with one of the tribesmen, someone grabbed his canteen, which was a no-no; Johnson had a gun in his hand so he swung around to see who it was (00:55:04:00)
    - As Johnson swung around, a French officer who was translating between the tribesmen and the soldiers waved for him to stop (00:55:18:00)
  - Johnson continued working and eventually, the person who had taken his canteen brought it back; however, when he took a drink from the canteen, he found that the person had filled it with wine (00:55:31:00)
    - The wine quenched the soldiers’ thirst; instead of taking a drink once every ten minutes, they were taking a drink once every hour (00:55:56:00)

At one point, while still in the Atlas Mountains, Johnson was given a jeep to go pick up a major (00:56:25:00)

- Once Johnson picked up the major, they drove over forty miles into no-man’s-land (00:56:41:00)
  - Before leaving, the major had the jeep specially out-fitted for the mission, so there were extra hand grenades and a machine guns, as well as both men’s rifles (00:56:52:00)
  - As the jeep started up a hillside, the major told him to stop; Johnson did and the two men started walk towards the top of the hill (00:57:04:00)
- As they continued up the hillside, the two men ran into an alcove with running water, where the major said that both he and Johnson were going to take a bath (00:57:12:00)
After crawling into the alcove, Johnson and the major stripped down, and lowered themselves into separate holes, to the point the water came up to their necks (00:57:36:00)

Johnson and the major only stayed in the holes for three minutes before climbing out and as they crawled out of the alcove, Johnson noticed black spots running through the water; when Johnson asked what the spots were, the major said they were lice and explained that the whole area used the alcove to clean themselves (00:58:24:00)

Invasion of Sicily / England (00:59:43:00)
- As the men stayed in Oran, the 1st Infantry was a whole was getting ready for another invasion (00:59:43:00)
  - However, unlike the invasion of North Africa, the commanders told the men where they would be invading (00:59:48:00)
  - Eventually, the men were loaded onto boats, sailed across the Mediterranean Sea and landed at Gela, Sicily; during the landing, Johnson was the first soldier to go ashore in Gela (00:59:53:00)
    - During the landing, Johnson was driving a jeep for a couple of officers, although he does not remember who the officers were (01:00:16:00)
  - After he landed, Johnson went up to an abandoned enemy shore battery, whose nameplate read “Fisher”, which indicated that the battery had been built in the United States (01:00:26:00)
  - After all the troops had landed, they began to move in-land and ran into a five-acre watermelon patch; there was not a watermelon left in the patch by the time the soldiers finished moving through it (01:00:48:00)
- Eventually, headquarters company had set up about three or four miles in-land from the beach and at one point, a soldier came up and requested permission from the company commander to go get some of his relatives, who lived on a nearby hill; the commander said okay, which caught Johnson off-guard (01:01:25:00)
- Rumors were constantly passing between the soldiers that German paratroopers were going to eventually land at their position (01:02:10:00)
  - One night, the American ships began launching flares above Johnson’s position because there were paratroops in the air; however, Johnson was not sure the paratroopers were Germans (01:02:19:00)
  - One of the paratroopers landed in the company’s position, so Johnson advanced with his gun drawn towards the paratrooper, who turned out to be an American paratrooper, not a German (01:02:33:00)
  - Johnson helped the paratrooper out of his parachute and the paratrooper told Johnson to keep the parachute, which was made of silk, in his foxhole; Johnson kept the parachute and after the war, had a silk scarf made out of it (01:02:44:00)
- As the soldiers continued moving in-land, they eventually became involved in a heavy firefight with the Germans (01:03:23:00)
  - Prior to the firefight, Johnson was called back and ordered to carry an important message from the company back to the beach (01:03:35:00)
  - When Johnson arrived at the beach, the first officer’s vehicle he saw belong to General Theodore Roosevelt Jr.; however, Gen. Roosevelt stopped Johnson
before he could say anything, said that General George Patton was coming onto
the beach, and Johnson was to give the message to him (01:03:50:00)
  - Although the orders did not enthuse Johnson, he reported to Gen. Patton
    that German tanks would be breaking through the American lines;
    although Johnson never saw any more of Patton, none of the books written
    about the early part of the Sicily invasion mention that Patton and the
    officers knew the German tanks were going to break through the
    American lines (01:04:14:00)
  - After making his report to Gen. Patton, Johnson returned to headquarters
    company and when he told the other men what had happened with Gen. Patton, all
    the other men laughed (01:05:38:00)
  - Prior to the invasion, Johnson remembers hearing Gen. Patton apologize to Johnson’s
    division for slapping one of the soldiers in the division (01:06:42:00)
    - Most of the men did not care one way or another because the soldier the general
      had slapped ended up making the invasion anyway (01:06:57:00)
  - While the division was in Africa, Gen. Roosevelt, who was the assistant division
    commander, would visit Johnson’s company with maps to inform the men about what the
    current situation was (01:07:37:00)
    - For the most part, the soldiers did not know anything, except that the enemy was
      out there somewhere (01:07:56:00)
    - Like Gen. Roosevelt, the 1st Infantry Division’s commander, General Terry Allen,
      was a “soldier’s general”; Gen. Allen was a fighting general and as far as he was
      concerned, the soldiers did not have to worry too much about spit and polish
      (01:08:20:00)
      - Nevertheless, Gen. Allen got the job done and the soldiers respected him
        for that (01:08:32:00)
    - The general who followed Gen. Allen as the division commander, General
      Clarence R. Huebner, did place more of an emphasis on the spit and polish
      aspect of the soldiers’ lives (01:08:38:00)
  - Once the soldiers had successfully moved away from the beaches, they began moving
    into the mountains (01:09:06:00)
    - However, moving into the mountains turned out to be very bad for the Johnson
      and the other drivers because they were unable to successfully navigate their
      vehicles; ultimately, pack mules were brought in to carry the ammunition up the
      other soldiers (01:09:11:00)
      - However, some of the mules would not listen to the soldiers, so the
        soldiers had to find soldiers who knew how to work with mules
        (01:09:22:00)
      - At some points, the “roads” leading into the mountains were only a little
        over a foot wide; nevertheless, the mules were sure-footed enough to
        successfully navigate the roads (01:09:31:00)
    - From Johnson’s perspective, the fighting eventually devolved into a fight between
      the various artillery units (01:09:45:00)
      - For the most part, the shells that the enemy would fire at the soldiers was
        just as bad as the shrapnel that came from the explosions (01:09:56:00)
Whenever the soldiers would build protection, a shell would come in and knock it all down; the soldiers could not dig in, so they were forced to build their protection above ground (01:10:06:00)
- Johnson’s company eventually ended up in the town of Troina, which was located near the middle of the island, on the west side of Mt. Etna (01:10:24:00)
- Back when Johnson’s company was in Africa, right after the company had first set up, they were attacked by enemy aircraft and ended up losing their colonel, a lieutenant, and another soldier (01:10:54:00)
  - As the fighting continued, both in Africa and in Sicily, the company was constantly being hit by enemy aircraft, as well as by enemy artillery, which was very good (01:11:11:00)
  - However, the American artillery often proved to be just as good as the German artillery (01:11:21:00)
    - One time, Johnson was out with a group that became cut off from the company and unable to make it back (01:11:53:00)
    - The major leading the group called on artillery to help and eventually, the soldiers were able to make a break for the American lines (01:12:04:00)
    - After the soldiers made it back, the colonel was called into headquarters and reprimanded for the amount of artillery used to assist the soldiers (01:12:37:00)
      - The colonel replied that it took eighteen years to make a man and only eighteen seconds to make a round of ammunition; once the colonel said that, the commanding officer dismissed him (01:12:53:00)
  - Once in Sicily, Johnson’s battalion did suffer a high number of casualties among the officers, although the casualties were mostly confined to the officers in “A”, “B”, and “C” companies (01:13:39:00)
    - The majority of the officer casualties resulted from the fact that officers often led their forces from the front (01:13:51:00)
      - From the first time Johnson and the other men joined the 1st Infantry, they were exposed to the division’s motto: “No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great-Duty First” (01:14:10:00)
    - Although the majority of the officers in the unit were good, there were a few who were questionable and almost got Johnson killed on several different occasions (01:14:23:00)
      - However, by the time those incidents occurred, Johnson had enough experience to know, that although he should not question the officers, they were doing something wrong (01:14:34:00)
      - One time, Johnson would tell that his group, carrying supplies to “A” Company, was headed in the wrong direction; the group eventually managed to sort itself out and made it to “A” Company just before dawn, although the “A” Company commander was furious that they had no shown up earlier (01:14:47:00)
        - When Johnson group made it back to headquarters company, Johnson’s commander called him into his office
and told him to get the officer who had led the group into the commander’s office (01:15:28:00)
- Once in the office, the officer admitted that the group had made a mistake; when the commander asked who corrected the mistake, the officer said Johnson had (01:15:48:00)
- Following the incident, Johnson began receiving more information about where he would be going with the different groups (01:16:01:00)
  - Another time, while the battalion was in central France, the same officer who had led the bumbled group to re-supply “A” Company was leading a recon with a 14-ton vehicle (01:16:11:00)
    - Johnson could not understand why the officer had chosen to use a 14-ton vehicle for the recon, when a jeep would have worked much better (01:16:34:00)
    - At one point, Johnson was preparing to move the vehicle through an opening when an enemy round passed in-front of the vehicle (01:16:45:00)
    - Johnson asked the officer if the officer still wanted to do the recon and the officer told Johnson to turn the vehicle around and get out of there (01:17:05:00)

- Once their unit was stationed at Troina in Sicily, Johnson and the other soldiers were sent to sleep on a hillside; Johnson did not realize it at the time but the “hillside” he and the men were sleeping on was the backside of Mt. Etna (01:17:45:00)
  - As Johnson settled in, he heard rumble but initially passed it off as just more incoming enemy artillery (01:17:56:00)
  - However, nothing happened and Johnson heard another rumble; again, nothing happened, except that the top of Etna began to smoke (01:18:06:00)
  - Although the Americans had a large amount of enemy soldiers trapped on the island, from what Johnson has read on the campaign, mistakes were made that allowed a good portion of those soldiers to escape (01:18:26:00)

- Sicily was not an easy fight for Johnson and the other soldiers; from what Johnson can remember, his unit’s companies took around 30 to 40 percent casualties (01:19:08:00)
- Once the men were at Troina, they were told that they were being shipped back to England; however, there was a time lapse between when the soldiers left Sicily and arrived in England where they were stuck at sea (01:19:37:00)
  - The soldiers returned to England aboard ships and to Johnson, it seemed like the soldiers were at sea for a long time (01:20:59:00)
- Once back in England, one of the assignments the men were ordered to do was construct a series of barbed-wire beach obstacles in case the Germans ever decided to attack England (01:21:20:00)
  - However, most of the soldiers realized the work was just something to keep them busy (01:21:28:00)
- The soldiers ended up spending quite a long time in England and they ended up staying in the homes of civilian English families (01:21:36:00)
  - The English were constantly asking if the soldiers knew where the soldiers would be going next but the soldiers never knew for sure (01:21:48:00)
Johnson himself ended up celebrating Christmas with the family whom he was staying with (01:22:07:00)
- The woman who owned the house where he was staying had been preparing for Christmas for six months ahead of time (01:22:13:00)
- One thing Johnson noticed as that regardless of what social standing they had before the war, all the English were brought to the same level (01:23:00:00)
- Johnson’s unit did not do too much while it was stationed in England and there was a lot of wasted time (01:23:21:00)
- Johnson made it into London once and another time, he was at the beach and watched as a cripple airplane flew overhead (01:23:32:00)
- Johnson and the other soldiers did see the massive damage that the German V-1 and V-2 rockets caused; London itself was almost flattened from the rockets when Johnson went to visit the city (01:24:01:00)
  - Later in the war, Johnson’s unit was so close to the launch point for the rockets that they were mistakenly attacked by American aircraft who were trying to attack the launch point (01:24:28:00)
  - Another time, Johnson was stationed near Frankfurt when he saw something rise up from the ground; Johnson told his commander about it, who then sent the information up the chain of command (01:24:53:00)
    - About a week later, Johnson got a notice back that he had witnessed a V-2 rocket launch (01:25:13:00)
  - While in England, Johnson and the other soldiers saw incoming V-1s and V-2s; however, they saw more of the V-1 than the V-2 (01:25:30:00)

Invasion of Normandy / End of the War (01:26:21:00)
- As it became closer to the invasion of Normandy, Johnson began driving around more at night with his jeep (01:26:21:00)
  - One night, Johnson had to drive an officer, newly-arrived from the United States; the officer fell asleep and when he woke up, in his mind, Johnson was driving the jeep on the wrong side of the road (01:26:35:00)
    - The officer grabbed the wheel but Johnson stopped him and reprimanded him; Johnson was the driver of the jeep, he knew what he was doing, and they were on the right side of the road for England (01:26:49:00)
    - Later, Johnson had to dodge something in the road but the officer did not believe him and ordered Johnson to back the jeep up to prove there was something in the road to dodge (01:27:11:00)
      - Johnson backed the jeep up fifty yards and in the middle of the road was a large hole (01:27:21:00)
  - After the experience with the newly-arrived officer, whenever he was assigned to drive around an officer, Johnson would ask if the officer was new and if the officer understood that Johnson would be doing the driving (01:27:42:00)
  - Johnson drove so much at night that he was eventually able to drive upwards of 70MPH, using the shadows and the feel of the jeep on the road (01:27:58:00)
  - During the night, the headlights were “blacked out”, covered in canvas with only a tiny slit allowing light through; however, the slits were not meant to help the driver but to make him visible to anyone else on the road (01:28:27:00)
- When someone saw the slits on the headlights, they knew they were about twenty feet away from the other vehicle (01:28:41:00)
- Once it became time to begin the actually preparation for the Normandy invasion, Johnson's unit moved to around Plymouth (01:29:03:00)
  - Recently, Johnson has read that there were around two million soldiers stationed around Plymouth prior to the invasion, including not just American soldiers but also British soldiers and soldiers from the other Allied nations (01:29:12:00)
  - Once in Plymouth, Johnson was assigned to drive a half-track, which was much harder to hide from the enemy than a jeep (01:29:25:00)
    - Nevertheless, the soldiers were moved into a secluded area and told to wait for information (01:29:33:00)
  - As the men waited, the English countryside was covered with vehicles, ranging from tanks to trucks (01:29:58:00)
- Eventually, loaded on a Landing Craft-Tank (an LCT); apart from Johnson and a sergeant, the other things on the LCT were a large stack on dynamite towards the back of the ship, an L-10 Bulldozer, Johnson’s half-track, a small medical group, and three soldiers who operated the bulldozer (01:30:07:00)
  - The LCT went out once, on June 5th, but returned to the port soon after due to inclement weather on the English Channel, with waves averaging around six to seven feet (01:31:08:00)
    - Luckily, the LCT was a larger ship, which meant Johnson and the other soldiers did not receive the buffeting from the wind that the smaller landing craft received (01:31:29:00)
  - Prior to the landing, wherever Johnson looked around the LCT, he would see ships (01:31:51:00)
  - Johnson and the other men found out where they would be going just before they boarded the LCT; the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, was there and he told the men information about where they were going to be invading (01:32:26:00)
    - Nevertheless, the period after the LCT had returned to port for the inclement weather was a little confusing; the men did not know what was happening when all of a sudden, the LCT started moving (01:32:57:00)
- The LCT eventually moved out, got into its assigned position before new orders were given; at 5:30, a bullhorn attached to the lead ship ordered Johnson’s LCT to move in, which it did (01:33:25:00)
  - The LCT had moved fifty to one hundred feet towards the shore when the bullhorn came on again and ordered the LCT to come back; the LCT had hit a mine, which blew the entire from end of the ship off and made it impossible for the ship to go forward (01:34:26:00)
  - As the ship was trying to move back, it was hit by all sorts of enemy fire, everything from shore batteries and machine guns to mortars and direct fire from German soldiers (01:34:56:00)
  - The ship began listing to one side and eventually caught fire; once the ship was on fire, Johnson grabbed a nearby fire extinguisher, climbed up, and had just about completely put the fire out when the extinguisher ran out (01:35:15:00)
The fire came back and hit Johnson in his face before someone else threw up another extinguisher, which Johnson grabbed and used to put out the remainder of the fire (01:35:38:00)
- Once the fire was out, Johnson, who was confused as to why the LCT was not moving, climbed up higher on the ship and saw that the captain of the ship had lost a leg and had been knocked out (01:36:03:00)
- Johnson took charge of the situation and talked through the speaking tube to the engine room to get the LCT to go back (01:36:16:00)
- Eventually, the LCT ended up in front of a destroyer, which promptly yelled at the LCT to get out of the way; Johnson managed to maneuver the LCT to the side of the destroyer and was close enough so that when the destroyer launched a broadside, the heat from the guns was strong enough to almost burn Johnson and the other men on the LCT (01:36:44:00)
- The LCT drifted as wave after wave of ships passed them to go in for the invasion; eventually, an ammunition ship after the back end of the fleet stopped and allowed the men on the LCT to board (01:37:18:00)
  - The soldiers medical detachment survived but Johnson does not know what happened to the three other soldiers who were also on the ship; Johnson’s sergeant also survived and he recommended Johnson receive the Silver Star (01:37:45:00)
- Eventually, the LCT was assigned a new captain and was sent back in to complete the landing (01:38:10:00)
  - The landing attempt was awkward for the LCT because thanks to the damage from the mine, every time the LCT would go forward, the ship would take on water (01:38:31:00)
  - However, the new captain knew how to properly handle this problem and was able to successfully land the ship (01:38:38:00)
- As the LCT moved to land on Omaha Beach, Johnson and the other soldiers saw the remnants that remained of the first twenty minutes of the invasion (01:38:59:00)
- After the LCT had landed, the sergeant disembarked first and took command of the off-loading of the ship (01:39:14:00)
  - Once off the LCT, Johnson and the other soldiers had no trouble getting off the beach; once the ship was unloaded, Johnson and the sergeant were able to make their way to where the headquarters company had set up their position, four miles from the beach (01:39:18:00)
  - By the time the LCT finally managed to land, it was getting to be later in the morning (01:39:37:00)
- As the LCT was trying to fall back, that was when Johnson and the other soldiers heard the naval bombardment that was supposed to loosen up the German defenses (01:41:10:00)
- Although Johnson himself was not fired upon as he exited the beach, there was still gunfire happening off to his right (01:41:46:00)
- After Johnson and the sergeant re-joined the headquarters company, they dug in and waited for something to happen, although nothing ever did; Johnson attributes part of this
to the fact the company was not meant to be a fighting unit, whereas the other companies in the battalion did take heavy casualties (01:42:19:00)

- To Johnson, it seemed like the entire battalion was in the same place for an extended period of time, which Johnson equated to the battalion licking its wounds from the fighting (01:42:52:00)
- Once the entire unit was back together and had organized their artillery, they began to move out, although Johnson cannot remember where to (01:43:07:00)

- As the battalion continued advancing inland, they eventually entered the hedgerows (bocage) that divided up the land; once the soldiers were in the bocage, Johnson had very little in the way of assignments because it was difficult for Johnson to drive his halftrack in the thick hedgerows (01:44:11:00)
  - For the most part, any work that was done was done during the night and on some nights, Johnson would carry supplies to the front with his halftrack (01:44:22:00)
    - One time, Johnson’s ammunition carrier was supposed to be full of ammunition but was instead full of whiskey for the soldiers (01:44:45:00)
    - Johnson ended up getting inspected by a general during the trip; when the general asked what was in the ammunition carrier, Johnson lied and said ammunition (01:44:59:00)
      - Inspections on the front were not uncommon; several times, the soldiers had to line up for an inspection while under enemy fire (01:45:37:00)

- By the time of the Normandy invasion, Johnson’s headquarters company had experience almost a 100% turnover in officers, either from casualties or officers transferring out of the unit; this meant that during Normandy, there was a large portion of new officers in the unit (01:46:06:00)
  - However, Johnson and the other enlisted personnel never really got close to the officers; both groups did their jobs and Johnson himself spent most of his time with a sergeant who he worked well with (01:46:19:00)

- During the Allied breakout from the town of St Lô, Johnson remembers that the 1st Infantry was a follow-up unit to another division (01:46:52:00)
  - Johnson remembers that prior to the actual attack, aircraft from the Air Force flew overhead for about four hours; the 1st Infantry was stationed two-and-a-half miles away from the front lines and as each wave of aircraft flew overhead, their bombs fell a little closer to the soldiers (01:47:07:00)
    - The bombs from the last wave were so close that some fell on American lines and one ended up killing a high-ranking American General, Lesley McNair (01:47:53:00)
  - Once the bombings were over and the division stationed in front of the 1st Infantry managed to break out, Johnson’s unit took off and continued advancing to the point that the vehicles ran out of gas (01:48:42:00)
    - Once they had run out of gas, all the vehicles were lined up along the side of the road, which worried Johnson (01:49:09:00)
    - Eventually, gasoline was brought up for the vehicles and Johnson put between forty and fifty gallons of gasoline into the half-track’s three fuel tanks (01:49:29:00)
After they had re-fueled, the vehicles took off again and covered another twenty to thirty miles; the system of advance far away from their previous position continued for the next couple of weeks (01:49:45:00)

Later, when reading about the breakout, Johnson discovered at both Gen. Patton and Gen. Eisenhower liked the effort put forth by the 1st Infantry during the breakout (01:50:01:00)

As the division advanced through the French countryside, Johnson did not see too much in the way of French civilians; it was still too hot for them to be out in the open (01:50:51:00)

- The Allied advance was stalled once they reached the Siegfried Line, German defensive line; although the soldiers skirted the line, they still encountered several days of heavy fighting at the end of the line (01:51:16:00)

- Prior to the Siegfried Line, the 1st Infantry was in the reserve when the 26th Infantry Division attacked the German city of Aachen (01:51:46:00)
  - Johnson remembers watching as the entire city was destroyed by direct fire from 155mm howitzers (01:51:56:00)
  - During the 26th Infantry’s attack, Johnson had a foxhole dug on a hill outside the city and one night, after he came back from working, the sergeant yelled for Johnson to come over to his foxhole (01:52:13:00)
    - When Johnson asked why, the sergeant told Johnson he had a visit in his foxhole and to check it in the morning; in the morning, Johnson found a dud 190mm round in the bottom of his foxhole (01:52:23:00)
    - Even through Johnson’s unit was supposedly in reserve, stuff was still getting close to them (01:52:44:00)

- Johnson remembers going through the town of Düren, the first German city the soldiers went through; while going through Düren, Johnson remembers looking at the buildings and seeing some of the German civilians with guns in their hands (01:52:49:00)
  - Johnson normally carried his own weapon stung across his chest but when he saw the civilians with their guns, he put the gun in his hand; prior to entering the town, the soldiers had been told that the civilians might not be friendly (01:53:02:00)

- After leaving Aachen, Johnson’s unit was sent to the town of Schmidt, which was located in the Hürtgen Forest (01:53:49:00)
  - The fighting in the forest took a heavy toll on the American forces and the forest itself, which was huge, was ripped to pieces; the soldiers had a bet going that if anyone could find a tree that had not been hit, he got fifty cents (01:54:35:00)
    - At one point, the Americans had roughly 10,000 soldiers in the hospital for frozen feet (01:55:03:00)
    - The Germans were using airburst artillery rounds, so any place the Americans stayed had to have protection from those rounds (01:55:39:00)
    - After he came home, Johnson read that the Americans did not gain a thing while fighting in the forest but ended up losing a substantial number of soldiers (01:55:54:00)

- From what he can remember, Johnson and the other soldiers never really received any time “off” from the fighting (01:56:27:00)
The soldiers did receive a short rest period after fighting in the Hürtgen Forest; Johnson pulled his half-track into the company’s new position, unloaded and went into town (01:56:38:00)

However, while Johnson was in town, someone said that an alert had gone up for all the soldiers to return to their units; by the time Johnson returned to the company area, someone had already partially loaded his half-track (01:57:12:00)
  - However, the person who had started to load the half-track did not know how to do it properly, so Johnson had to unload everything and re-load it properly (01:57:20:00)

The soldiers were on a forty-eight hour alert and sure enough, the orders eventually came through for them to pull out (01:57:28:00)

However, as the regiment was moving out, vehicles were coming from the other direction, which clogged the road; Johnson’s colonel and an officer in-charge of the other vehicles shouted at each other in the middle of the road as to which vehicles had the right-of-way on the road (01:57:42:00)

- Once the entire 1st Infantry had moved into position along the northern part of the bulge in the Ardennes forest, Johnson remembers that a special artillery unit from the corps-level was sent to the division (01:58:30:00)
  - The addition of the special artillery unit gave the division an impressive amount of artillery, everything from corps-level, through division- and regimental-level, to mortars at the company level (01:58:43:00)
  - When the Germans finally did attack, the fighting was terrible; although German forces did create a smaller bulge in the American lines, they never managed to break through, at least where the 1st Infantry was positioned (01:58:47:00)
    - During the fighting, it seemed as though the American artillery was firing as fast a machine guns (01:59:16:00)
  - During the fighting, the Germans attempted to dress some of their soldiers in American uniforms and have them cross the American lines; however, the soldiers in Johnson’s unit were able to see through the ruse (01:59:34:00)

- As far as Johnson can remember, once the fighting in the Ardennes died down, the 1st Infantry stayed in its position (02:00:34:00)

- Throughout the entire war, Johnson and the other soldiers never really slept in buildings that much; for the most part, buildings were avoided because they were often being hit by enemy fire (02:01:31:00)
  - The soldiers did a lot of night fighting and would have to fight whether it was raining or snowing; according to their old commander, the enemy did not like to fight at night, so that was when the soldiers would fight them (02:01:47:00)
    - At one point, Johnson was taking supplies to the front in the winter while wearing all white and managed to sneak up on a group of soldiers; it ended with a carbine barrel being stuck in Johnson’s stomach (02:02:22:00)