

Joining the 69th Division of the 5th Ranger Battalion

I went in as a private. I was assigned to the 69th division in Camp Shelby, Mississippi. A notice on the bulletin board said that they wanted volunteers for a very dangerous mission, where the loss of life would be high. And, if you had any more - if you wanted more information, ask the first sergeant. So when I was 18, it sounded intriguing to me. So I asked the first sergeant, "what the hell is all this about?" He said "I don't have the slightest idea." He said, "go to battalion." So I went to battalion, and they didn't know what the dangerous mission was. I went to regiment, they didn't know. But I got to division headquarters, and they immediately started talking about the rangers. Which were American commandos, and we trained with the British commandos.

So, I am now in ranger training. Of the 69th division, maybe 100 people said they were interested. It got down to about 8 or 9. And at the end, you had to go through a final interview. And I was outside, and here was the tent, and I was the first guy, and I heard the guy said "Neighborgall, come in." I came in, and I sat down, and here's the meanest guy I ever saw in my life. It was the ranger major. He says "Neighborgall, we don't trust anybody, put your hands on the table. I put my hands on the table, he pulled a knife out and stuck the knife right between my hands. I was petrified, but I never lost eye contact. He said, "Neighborgall, you're in." [Laughs].

So, I said "thank you sir," and then I went outside and I thought, "I wonder what happens with other people." So I was told there were ten people there in line. So when I heard that knife - the next guy went in - when I heard that knife go in the table, phew!, out the door. He didn't want anything to do with this guy, with this [outbreak]. And it ended up that three of us passed, out of ten. So three out of - the 69th division was made up of like 25,000, so we were very much on the elite side. And then we went to ranger training.