

Charles H. Jennings  
Veteran

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New York State Military Museum  
Interviewers

Interviewed on March 5, 2007  
in Niskayuna, NY

**Q:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

**CJ:** Charles H. Jennings, I was born October 1st, 1923 in Lodi New York

**Q:** What was your education prior to entering service?

**CJ:** High school, High School graduation.

**Q:** Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**CJ:** I think I was in Lodi, I don't remember my reaction to it.

**Q:** Did you enlist, or where you drafted?

**CJ:** I was drafted.

**Q:** You were drafted into the Army?

**CJ:** Yes into the Army.

**Q:** Do you remember where you went for your basic training?

**CJ:** Camp Livingston Louisiana. I had two basics, first because I had glasses so I went in as limited service. Then I went a year or two later for the Infantry and did basic training over again.

**Q:** Both your basic trainings were in Louisiana?

**CJ:** Yes.

**Q:** Did you receive any specialized training?

**CJ:** Yes, first time I went in we were guarding Japanese internees in Louisiana. One day the Sargent Major said "Jennings, this might interest you." It was the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). So they sent me away to college. However they closed the program after 12 months and that got me a first class ticket to the infantry, and that is why I had another basic training.

**Q:** Where did you go after Camp Livingston?

**CJ:** To Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia, for the Army (ASTP).

**Q:** Was that for officer candidate school?

**CJ:** It was college. After a year and a half the whole program folded, and everybody was sent to the Infantry.

**Q:** Were you assigned to an infantry unit?

**CJ:** First I was in the 304th to guard Japanese prisoners of war.

**Q:** You were guarding Japanese prisoners or being trained to guard them?

**CJ:** We were guarding Japanese prisoners in Louisiana.

**Q:** How big was the prisoner camp?

**CJ:** Quite large, but I left that and was sent to Drexel.

**Q:** Where did u go after you left Drexel?

**CJ:** Back to Louisiana, to the infantry. I went overseas with the 84th infantry division.

**Q:** How did you go overseas, by transport?

**CJ:** We had an extensive convoy, and went into combat in Germany. We went up through France and Belgium into Germany.

**Q:** Was that in late 1944?

**CJ:** In 1943. Might have been earlier. We heard combat in Germany. First in Belgium and then in Germany.

**Q:** Were you involved in the battle of The Bulge at all?

**CJ:** No it was just before.

**Q:** How did you feel the first time you were in combat?

**CJ:** I was real scared.

**Q:** The first time you were in combat you were in Belgium?

**CJ:** Yes Belgium and then up through Germany. In Germany I came into contact with an artillery shell soon after I got there. It clobbered me it fractured both legs and filled me with shrapnel.

**Q:** How long were you in the hospital?

**CJ:** Maybe two or three months. In those days you didn't get in and out fast.

**Q:** Where was the hospital?

**CJ:** I was sent back to England, I ended up about 20 or 30 miles from London. I was there for weeks and weeks. One day the Chaplin was coming through and it turned out to be my home town minister from Lodi.

**Q:** Did you get to go into London on the weekends at all?

**CJ:** I went into London a couple of times when I could walk.

**Q:** How long was it until you were able to walk again?

**CJ:** Probably a couple of months, because they didn't have the treatment they have now.

**Q:** How would you judge the care you receive at the time?

**CJ:** It was very different then, I thought it was pretty good. Both legs were in a cast.

**Q:** Do you still have shrapnel in them today?

**CJ:** Yes quite a bit in both legs.

**Q:** Was it an American hospital?

**CJ:** It was an Army hospital in a little town called Buford in England. That's where the Chaplin came through. He was quite surprised to see me. When it got so I could walk he would take me with him on little trips and so forth.

**Q:** Was he much older than you?

**CJ:** Yes, he was because he was already out of college and was a minister.

**Q:** Did you have any close friends while you were in the service?

**CJ:** I can't think of any.

**Q:** How long were you in the hospital in England?

**CJ:** I think about three months or so.

**Q:** Then were you sent back to the states?

**CJ:** No I was sent back to my unit the 84th infantry division in Germany. At that point the war in Germany was ending. They began shipping us out to Japan, but I stayed in Germany and came back with my outfit.

**Q:** When did you come back was it in 46 or was it still 45?

**CJ:** 46 I think.

**Q:** What kind of duties did you do in Germany while you were there?

**CJ:** First I was an enlisted man in the Infantry. When I came back to Germany I was given the position of company clerk.

**Q:** Did you have a background in typing?

**CJ:** Yes I did.

**Q:** When did you come back to the States?

**CJ:** I think it was 46.

**Q:** Then you were discharged around that time?

**CJ:** I would assume around that time. We were discharged at Fort Dix in New Jersey.

**Q:** How did you get back home, did you take a train?

**CJ:** Yes, I took a train.

**Q:** Did you write a lot to your parents at the time?

**CJ:** Oh, I think regularly.

**Q:** Did you have any brothers that served?

**CJ:** I had an older brother that was the first to be drafted into the Army. I had a younger brother in the Marines.

**Q:** Did your brothers survive?

**CJ:** They both survived, but my brother in the Marines saw more active duty in the Pacific.

**Q:** After you were discharged did you use the GI Bill?

**CJ:** Yes I went and finished college and then I went to college.

**Q:** Did you ever make use of the 52-20 club?

**CJ:** No I didn't. I didn't need to I had been wounded.

**Q:** Did you join any veteran's organizations?

**CJ:** Yes I joined the American legion, the VFW, and the DAV.

**Q:** Were you active in any of them?

**CJ:** I was quite active in the VFW years ago.

**Q:** Did you have any friends you stayed in contact with?

**CJ:** Yes, I had friends from law school I stayed in contact with.

**Q:** So you were a Lawyer?

**CJ:** Yes I still maintain my license.

**Q:** Would you have gone on to college without the GI bill?

**CJ:** I was in college when I was drafted but times were pretty hard then.

**Q:** How do you think your time in the service have an effect on your life?

**CJ:** It allowed me to finish college and then to law school.

**Q:** Did your legs ever bother you?

**CJ:** Not early on but they do now. About five years ago they suddenly caused me to be unable to walk.

**Q:** Are there any stories you remember that you wanted to add?

**CJ:** In Germany they put us up in homes, we would take over a street and sleep in the houses. Until very recently I was in contact with a family from that community.

**Q:** You kept contact with them all the way from the war until very recently? Why did you stop?

**CJ:** I think maybe someone Died.