

## 540<sup>th</sup> Interview Questions

You are not limited to the questions below, but please use these as a guideline. Some questions may not be applicable, while other questions may prompt you to elaborate or lead you to recall other memories. When supplying your answers, please refer to the section such as Sicily, #1, Naples, #4. Feel free to share whatever you can and mail your answers back to me. Your assistance is greatly appreciated and will aide me in the writing of my history of the great 540<sup>th</sup>!

### General Info

1. Name, rank and serial number?
2. What battalion, company, etc. did you serve with?
3. Were you ever wounded? If so please give details.
4. What medals, campaign ribbons, etc. were you given?
5. Were you ever awarded the CIB?
6. Do you have any memories of other units that the 540<sup>th</sup> were "attached" to or were in direct support of?
7. Did you get any "leave" time, and if so where and for how long?
8. Did you lose any close friends during your tour of duty? How did it affect you?
9. Can you tell me what it was like to build a Bailey bridge, etc?
10. Did you carry any personal item(s) throughout your tour such as amulets, icons, rosaries, photos, letters, lighters, etc.?
11. Did you bring home any souvenirs (besides scars)?
12. Did you get to meet anyone famous such as generals, mayors of towns, journalists, photographers, etc.?

### Training and departure

1. Were you drafted or did you join on your own accord?
2. Where did you receive your training?
3. What was your specialty as an engineer? What special training did you receive?
4. Do you have any special memories of your training experience?
5. When did you leave for Europe and do you remember the name of the ship you sailed on?
6. When did you arrive and where?

### North Africa

1. Did you take part in Operation Torch, the Invasion of North Africa? If so, what are your specific memories of landing on shore? What kind of resistance did you encounter, etc.? Were you sick-sea when you first landed?
2. If you were in North Africa, what things stick in your head? The weather, the food, traveling, the people?
3. What were your functions as an engineer while in North Africa? Repairing roads, working on the railroad, setting up prisoner of war camps, water supply, etc?

4. Do you remember what other units that served with you in North Africa?
5. What were your biggest problems you encountered while there?
6. Do you have any pleasant memories/anecdotes from there?

## Sicily

1. If you were involved in the Invasion of Sicily, how and where did you train for this assault? What did you think of the new DUKWS?
2. If you took part in the Invasion of North Africa, how did this compare?
3. Did you land at Licata or Gela and what was this experience like? What kind of resistance did you encounter?
4. What were your immediate duties upon landing and after?
5. Tell me about your journey northward to Palermo and the coast. What sticks out in your memories? The weather, the troops you served with, the obstacles you encountered? Enemy resistance?
6. Were you directly involved in the building, destruction or repairs of any bridges?
7. Were you involved in road repairs? Did you encounter any mines?
8. What units did you serve with in Sicily?
9. How did the terrain differ from North Africa? How did the weather differ?
10. Were you used as infantry during this campaign? If so, please elaborate.
11. How if any, did the Italian Army differ from the German Army?

## Naples/Foggia

1. Were you involved in the landing of Naples/Foggia?
2. Where and how long did you train for this mission?
3. If you were, how did this differ from your previous landings and training?
4. The port of Naples had undergone terrible destruction. How did things initially appear to you?
5. What was enemy resistance like upon landing and later in the campaign?
6. What was the role of the 540<sup>th</sup> and what were your specific duties during this period?
7. What is most memorable about this campaign?
8. Because of the rampant destruction of Naples, the city was without adequate water supply. Did the 540<sup>th</sup> play any part in reestablishing this?
9. Were supply lines difficult to establish and maintain?
10. How far into Italy did you go?
11. Were you able to talk to any of the native Italians? What were your impressions of the people? How were you treated?

## Anzio and Rome

1. Were you involved in the Anzio campaign?
2. Where and how long did you train for this mission?
3. Did you have any preconceived notions for this campaign, or did you think it would be like Naples or Sicily?
4. What was the initial landing like? History says the initial landing was pretty standard, but later turned into a nightmare. What are your feelings on this?
5. What was it like being limited to a beachhead for most of the campaign? I've heard some pretty amazing stories regarding how the men coped for weeks and months. What did you and your buddies do to keep your moral up?
6. Several men like my father who were members of H&S Company and the motor pool, had to literally dig into the sand to bury their equipment in order to keep the machines shops, etc. running. What were your experiences like on the beachhead?
7. We've all heard the horror stories of Anzio Annie and the incessant shelling of the port. Please relate how this affected you and the members of your company, squad, etc.
8. What were your feelings on the day of the big breakout the first week of June?
9. What was it like to reach Rome? Did the men of your unit have anytime to celebrate?
10. What were your memories of the Eternal City? What if anything left an indelible impression on you?
11. What was mail delivery like during the campaign? How important was getting a letter or a package from home on your well-being?
12. After the breakthrough to Rome, the 540<sup>th</sup> as well as several other units remained in Italy until the preparation for the Invasion of Southern France. What were the final days like in Italy? What was it like in the port cities such as Civitavecchia building piers?
13. What if anything, did you know about the Invasion of Normandy? Many men felt that the Italian Campaign and the capture of Rome were lost in the almost simultaneous landings in Normandy on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Do you have any comments on this?
14. What was your honest assessment of the Fifth Army and of Mark Clark? Did you have any feelings then or now on how things could have been handled differently?

## Invasion of Southern France/Ardennes/Alsace

1. How long and where did you train for the Invasion of Southern France?
2. How was the trip from Italy to the coast of southern France the second week of August 1944?
3. The 540<sup>th</sup> hit the beaches with the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, what were your memories of the landing?
4. Initial plans were for many of the units to land at Green and Red Beaches, however due to heavy fortifications of Red Beach, plans were altered. Do you have any recall of these events?
5. Teller mines took their toll in the initial landing. Do you have any recall of these events?
6. What role did the 540<sup>th</sup> play in the securing of the beachhead and maintaining supply lines?
7. In the beginning of September many groups were released from beach control and placed under the direct support of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army. What are your memories of the drive north through France?
8. It was at this time that the 540<sup>th</sup> played a huge role in restoring bridges throughout this area including such cities as Lyon. What do you remember and how close to enemy lines was the 540<sup>th</sup> at this time?
9. What other role did you and the 540<sup>th</sup> play at this juncture in time? Did you have any part in operating water points, restoring rail lines, etc.?
10. In late September under secret memorandum, the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> bn was ordered to begin training for the Rhine river crossing. Did you take part in this training exercise with the 85<sup>th</sup> and 1553<sup>rd</sup> engineering units? If so please tell me as much as you can.
11. In mid October Lt General Alexander Patch, 7th Army commander and other high-ranking officials, including Colonel Marvin, visited the organization. Do you have any recollections of this?
12. Along with other duties in October & November, the 540<sup>th</sup> played a vital role in the repair and re-establishment of hospitals. Do you have any thing to contribute in regards to this?
13. In early December of 1944, experiments with anti-mine barriers on the Moselle River were completed. Did you remember anything regarding this venture?
14. The trek north through France was a long affair. What were your experiences with the enemy during this time frame?
15. On the evening of December 18, your unit was placed on alert in case the Germans tried to re-cross the Rhine and on the 19<sup>th</sup> the organization was attached to VI Corps. During this period treadway and Bailey bridge training was begun, while work continued on road repair, bridge construction, mine removal etc. What are your recollections of late December?
16. By noon on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945, reports reached HQ that the entire 1<sup>st</sup> bn had been surrounded by enemy patrols & tanks and were to act as front line infantry. Were you part of this action and what can you tell me about this?
17. Of course this period is better known as the Ardennes/Alsace Campaign or the Battle of the Bulge. Can you tell me about the ensuing battle, your perceptions of the winter German offensive?
18. No one who lived through this period ever forgets the horrible conditions of that particular winter. What has stayed in your mind after all these years? Did you suffer from anything such as trench foot, etc?

## The move toward Germany and the Rhine River crossing

1. By early Feb 45, the regiment had completed three defensive sectors; the Maginot, Haguenau and Vosges. Do you remember anything from this period including the placement of some 280,000 yards of barbed & concertina wire, the laying of thousands of anti-tank mines, roads blocks, the digging of machine gun placements, etc.?
2. In mid February the 540<sup>th</sup> went under reorganization and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion became the 2832<sup>nd</sup>, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> became of the 2833<sup>rd</sup>. What do you remember about the reorganization of your unit?
3. The 2832<sup>nd</sup> began operation of a rock quarry north of Lutzelbourg, along with widening of a class 70-bridge, and construction of a rifle range for VI Corps. Were you part of this operation?
4. On March 1, the 540<sup>th</sup> was released from VI Corps and once again reverted to 7<sup>th</sup> Army control. From March 1 through March 15<sup>th</sup>, both battalions began drawing and servicing river crossing equipment, etc., and also began training with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Div. Do you recall this?
5. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, the 540<sup>th</sup> began ferrying troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Inf Div across the Rhine. The 2832<sup>nd</sup> and 2833<sup>rd</sup> also took part in heavy ponton raft construction and also began construction of a heavy ponton bridge in conjunction with the 85<sup>th</sup> Heavy Ponton Bn at Worms. Please tell me everything you remember about those days and the crossing of the mighty Rhine.
6. From H-Hour until the end of D+4, thirty-nine men were wounded. What can you tell me about the occurring casualties?
7. On April 4, Col George Marvin was relieved of command of the 540<sup>th</sup> and Colonel Manning took over. Do you remember this at all?
8. Throughout the month of April your unit maintained approaches to the heavy ponton bridge at Mannheim, conducted road reconnaissance, continued constructing class 40 & 70 bridges, etc. Can you supply any details of this month in Germany?
9. What were German defenses like in April and May? What did you encounter?
10. What did you think about the German cities, countryside and the German people?
11. What do you remember about the surrender of Germany?
12. Tell me how you spent your last months after the cessation of hostilities. What were the responsibilities of your unit? How far into Germany did you go?
13. When did you get to return home? What were your feelings? Do you remember the ship you sailed on and what were your first memories of returning to the states?