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DATE

October 6, 2026

DURATION

46m 34s

2 SPEAKERS

Roger Leonard

Sid Delanoy

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01] Roger Leonard**

This is Roger Leonard recording Syd Delanois in upper Red hook, New York. On June 6th, 1996. And okay, now, what I wanted to ask you was we just talked today about your World War Two experiences. And so when did you go in and where did you go from? And what did you do? Well, I, when did you enlist? Well, I.

[00:00:33] Sid Delanoy

Kind of lied just a little bit when I went in I was 16 and and they made me wait till I was 17 before they, they'd sign me in and. I see I went to, I was sworn in on in 139 Whitehall Street, New York City. And I went to Madison Barracks, New York.

[00:01:07] Roger Leonard

You went to.

[00:01:08] Sid Delanoy

Madison Barracks, New York.

[00:01:09] Roger Leonard

Madison.

[00:01:10] Sid Delanoy

Barracks? Yeah, that's where I was assigned to to field artillery, first Infantry Division. And We went, of course, we went on to Carolina maneuvers, Carolina, Louisiana maneuvers. And I met Louise there. Oh, really? Yeah. And Of course.

[00:01:36] Roger Leonard

She from.

[00:01:36] Sid Delanoy

North Carolina. Greensboro. Yeah. And then I went And we come back to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. And of course, Pearl Harbor was bombed and, and and we got on the Queen Mary and the whole division was put on the Queen Mary and went over to England. And. And from England we made the invasion of North Africa. First torch and. Then I was captured in Africa, just outside the tuna, six miles from Tunis, and taken to Italy. And POW Germans took me and. And I escaped there. And.

[00:02:26] Roger Leonard

How did you escape?

[00:02:28] Sid Delanoy

A lot of luck.

[00:02:30] Roger Leonard

Well, go into more detail. Tell me about the prison camp, how you were taken prisoner.

[00:02:34] Sid Delanoy

Well, I was on a recon mission in a reconnaissance, and we got at about 130 in the morning, and we run into an ambush and got captured. And there was a I. 14 of us and ten of us got taken for. The guys got killed. And of course, there's a few officers with us, and they split the officers and enlisted men up, and we were taken into. Well, first, I was flown from Tunis to Palermo, Sicily, and. And then to Naples, and then that was camp 66 in Naples. Then I went to camp 59. They shipped us by rail from camp 66 to 59 in Italy. And that's where I escaped. We had it was more or less a mass break. We we had the American Army can speak every language really. And I don't know for sure what the fellows were that were guarding the Camp there? Yeah. Uniforms don't mean anything because you don't know what the person is. And. Now, one lad, well, he got went through camp one and prison camp and. And one fella talked to one of the guards and they said it was about 1030 at night and he said we'll have a little door in the main gate. A rear main gate will be open.

[00:04:31] Sid Delanoy

And I was well on my way. Me and a buddy of mine and we got out and that was about 100, maybe 100, 150 yards away, both of us. And I don't know where the other. I didn't pay no attention to the other one. I know they started opening up on us with machine gun fire and and I we dove in into some poor guy's tomato patch, and then we got up and took off. From there I headed for the mountain and we got. We couldn't get through the line. The line, you know, the Germans were thick, too thick. And so I come back and went further north and I went with a partisan unit. And I fought with them for about six and a half months. Well, the Yugoslav, Yugoslav, Italian and they were Yugoslav, Italians and British and myself and another fellow, another American in this small partisan unit I was with that was with a bigger partisan unit. We had and of course, we had different missions to do like ambush small convoys blow bridges. We took. A. Lighting station, a big, big power station, and took that over and took a shoe factory over and burnt that down. And. Even, even even robbed a bank.

[00:06:25] Roger Leonard

Oh, really?

[00:06:28] Sid Delanoy

But I was, you know, that was a little. We didn't have any money, so we had to get some money.

[00:06:37] Roger Leonard

This was in Italy.

[00:06:38] Sid Delanoy

This was in northern Italy. Yeah. Yeah. And then then, of course, we met the British Eighth Army, and I fought alongside them for about two weeks. And then he got talking to a British officer and we came back into Foggia, Italy. And then that was the American Air Force. And then they flew us back to North Africa. And then from North Africa, we come back home, the United States come back by ship.

[00:07:12] Roger Leonard

How much time did all of this take from the time you were taken prisoner till the time you got back?

[00:07:17] Sid Delanoy

Well, let's see, I was taken in the early part of, well, the 29th day in November 1942. And I got back to American lines in. July. Nine. July the 1st 19.

[00:07:45] Roger Leonard

1844 also was a long time.

[00:07:50] Sid Delanoy

Quite a while. Quite a while. And then we got back into. Then they flew us back, as I told you, and. We landed in Algiers, and then from Algiers we went by train from Algiers to Oran. And I was a prison chaser there until they found out that I was a P.O.W.. I was the next POW, and then they they wouldn't let me do that no more. Then when I come home, I got married. We got married. My wife and I, and I was reassigned in Washington, D.C. presidential guards and ceremonial detachments. Presidential guards. I was with them from September 44th until July 17th. 45.

[00:09:10] Sid Delanoy

Then I got my discharge, and I came out and we had our Alice Jo, our youngest, our oldest daughter, and I went back in the. National guard, 156th Field Artillery. Before the Korean War. I was with them, and I came out, and then I went back. And I went in. Let's see. State guard. New York state guard. I was ten years of the state guard. And I come out of that, and I went in the 16th Special Forces another National Guard and Reserve unit. And and after after the Vietnam War, I came out of that.

[00:10:09] Roger Leonard

What what was the story about your family hearing that you had been killed? Yeah, I got.

[00:10:18] Sid Delanoy

I got killed March 19th, 1943, according to the military.

[00:10:22] Roger Leonard

How how did that happen?

[00:10:25] Sid Delanoy

I don't know, not really. I can't tell you. I got my death certificate here. I can't really tell you. I don't know, I feel that somebody was reissued my regular clothes and And he got shot up bad. And that's the only identification I had with my serial number on somebody else. I mean, that's what I think. I don't know.

[00:10:51] Roger Leonard

So then your family was notified that you were.

[00:10:54] Sid Delanoy

They was notified that I was missing. And I guess possibly dead. And they got other notification from the Catholic priest Father Carroll. I don't know what year 43, possibly that I was alive and. In northern Italy somewhere.

[00:11:30] Roger Leonard

So how much time was it that your family was in this terrible state wondering what happened to you?

[00:11:37] Sid Delanoy

Well I imagine from the time well, from the time he made the invasion until I got home.

[00:11:46] Roger Leonard

Which was how long?

[00:11:47] Sid Delanoy

Oh, well, almost two years.

[00:11:49] Roger Leonard

Two years? Yeah. Two years. They didn't know.

[00:11:51] Sid Delanoy

Not really.

[00:11:53] Roger Leonard

Well, you were dead or alive.

[00:11:54] Sid Delanoy

Not really. No, because everything was you know, blacked out from. A matter of fact, after we sailed from from England to make the make the invasion of Africa, which was made November 8th, 1942. What? Everything was blacked out and. Sometime in September. I don't know when, because we couldn't write after that.

[00:12:30] Roger Leonard

How long were you in Africa before you were captured?

[00:12:40] Sid Delanoy

Well from the eighth to the 29th.

[00:12:45] Roger Leonard

And that was in 42, 42nd November. Yeah.

[00:12:50] Sid Delanoy

Yeah. And it wasn't until later, well, after I come home that I found out what the life of a recon trooper then was. Three minutes. And it was a fourth mission I was on. And oh, we did. We didn't make it. Of course, I was luckier than some. I mean, four guys didn't didn't make it at all. And but that's you know, that's that's the way it was.

[00:13:25] Roger Leonard

What was what was life like in the prison camp?

[00:13:31] Sid Delanoy

Kind of rough. Well again. In camp 66. I kind of told a story. I told him I was a medic and they let me. They put me in a dispensary where I at least got one meal a day. I worked with a British doctor there, and I just knew enough that that I could pass as a medic. And of course, we were carrying guys out. With dysentery dead. I don't know how many a day. And They gave me some leeway for being a medic. I, you know, they. They told us when. If they thought or if we thought that we were going to get captured to get rid of certain equipment that we had. For instance, I had I had a fighting knife and I had a trench knife and some of the stuff that they just didn't want you to be caught with at that time, and which I did. I got rid of just about all the, you know, that type of cutlery I had because it was. Well, I would venture to say that we were called like a bunch of sneaky people that, you know, you went there and got. You done a job that. As quiet as you could. Gunfire wasn't the thing to do.

[00:15:36] Roger Leonard

Yeah.

[00:15:38] Sid Delanoy

Not then. Not the missions that we had. That's the only thing that kind of bothers me now.

[00:15:52] Roger Leonard

Yeah, I know.

[00:15:56] Sid Delanoy

Because I don't think. If you live to be a hundred. You really forget those experiences? I don't think so. I don't I don't really I told I my old commanding officer, he I used to see him quite often. Oh. And past. Ten, 12 years. And we had quite some conversations. And We talked about that a little bit. And that's one thing you don't forget. You know, the movies and the television, that's, that's one thing. You actually do it. That's something else. It's another thing altogether. You don't.

[00:17:09] Roger Leonard

It's reality.

[00:17:11] Sid Delanoy

Yeah, it sure is. Yeah. No, when you when you look at somebody. Oh, you you got to get close to a man.

[00:17:24] Roger Leonard

That's right.

[00:17:31] Sid Delanoy

It's, you know. I got my teacher all these things, what to do and how to do it. And it's easy to say, all right, this is how you do it. And then you do it and you do it, and then you really do it. And then when you come home, after everything's all over, they say, forget it. It just just don't forget that quick. Oh, I see what he's 4044 and it's 196 now. Yeah, quite a few years. You know, you don't forget it. No, no, that's that's the only that's the only thing. That's the only thing. And of course, as I told you before, that I got to me up there in the VA with that That shrink again. And he told me I had to get talking about it because I wouldn't I wouldn't say anything before. And of course, as long as you keep busy, you're all right. But the minute you know, you get laid up and tied up by then and you get to thinking and then then that's that's no good. That's no good. And then everything comes back. And you start remembering too damn much stuff. And that is the trouble. And there is much you can do about it.

[00:19:16] Roger Leonard

Now, when you escaped from the prison camp was a day or night. Night time.

[00:19:23] Sid Delanoy

Yeah.

[00:19:25] Roger Leonard

But I got out with you.

[00:19:29] Sid Delanoy

I can't really say. I don't know for sure. I don't know for sure. There was over there was over 3000 in camp in the camp that I was in. I don't know how many got out of that thing before they started shooting. I don't know. I have no idea. I didn't turn around and look.

[00:19:55] Roger Leonard

How did you eat? How did you survive?

[00:19:59] Sid Delanoy

Off of land.

[00:20:00] Roger Leonard

How did you do that?

[00:20:02] Sid Delanoy

Well We took a lot of grapes. We took those and And and of course, the farmers there, they would dig potatoes, and we'd go through the fields at night and pick up the little potatoes and Do you have any weapon or anything with you? Not then. No. I didn't get any weapons until I went with the partisans. They didn't have nothing. Well, you had to travel quite a ways before you got with partisans. Oh, yeah. We went through, I don't know. In all, I guess a good 50 miles or better. Yeah. So it took a while. Yeah, it took a while. And you had to keep from being caught in the meantime. Yeah, yeah. And how you did it. Well, I was lucky. I think a couple of us were lucky because I got civilian clothes when I was in the partisans. I had civilian clothes. I had a German uniform. How did you get that? Okay. And I had an Italian uniform. I could get along all right with the Italian uniform because I could speak Italian. The German uniform, I didn't I couldn't speak nothing. You could speak Italian? Yeah. Where did you learn that? Over there. And enough to be understood. Oh, yes. Oh, well, I looked enough like an Italian, and I could speak well enough that I could get by in Italian. But as a German, as long as they kept my mouth shut, it was all right.

[00:21:59] Sid Delanoy

And if I got caught I'd been all she wrote. So, in other words, you get the German uniform on and you're mixing with the Germans and you just keep your mouth shut. Sometimes it got to be a little on the hairy side sometimes. I would imagine sometimes. Yeah, it it was different. It was a little different than what anybody would would believe. I think that's one reason why very few of the fellows ever said much when they come home, because people. Wouldn't want to believe what happened anyway. It's almost like a fairy tale. Behind the lines. It was a special. Like a fairy tale. You just couldn't believe it. Like we There was what? Maybe I don't know when this one group that I was a partisan that was together and that one section of mountains I don't know, a manpower wise, I suppose they're around about 500, maybe, maybe a thousand. And we had just about two complete German divisions tied up. You know, it's just something that you wouldn't believe. And they had an artillery unit that fired on us and they, they were just shooting, and nobody got hurt. Nobody got hurt. Just just one of them, you know, they, they just there's only one way they could get us. And that was with paratroopers. And I think by the time the paratroopers got on the ground, they'd all been annihilated.

[00:23:58] Sid Delanoy

Right. Yeah. And another thing that it's, you know, you hear about the different little conflicts that they got. Now, another thing, when he was with the partisans, There was no such a thing as a prisoner. We couldn't. We couldn't take any. And that different. They were Yugoslavs. We had. In the partisans there was Yugoslavs Italians some British and a couple of Americans, a few Americans. The British were British soldiers were either escaped or we had in one particular unit I was with they had dropped some paratroopers, British paratroopers in there was one captain and and a sergeant major and British sergeant major in in the particular unit that I was with. They were they were British. How did you find each other? When? How did the partisans find each other? How did they contact each other? How did you hook up with them? Oh, I That's a long story. I'll tell you. I talked to an Italian padroni over there, and he sent me to a priest and a priest, and I got drinking his communion wine, and he sent me to another priest. And that priest got me in contact with this Italian that was in the partisans. And then he got me in contact with this British officer. And. I went with a partisan. It was a roundabout way of getting there. It took about. It took about a month and then. Then you had to prove yourself.

[00:26:25] Sid Delanoy

And of course, it was always a worry. Imagined in the partisans that you'd get somebody from, you know, the wrong side in there. And that's why they would almost make you prove yourself. And we had a young. Well, I say young. 17 I guess. 18 young lady with an Italian boy who wanted to come on a partisan. This was later on, and we. Said possibly yes. And we. He had a mission. The mission was given to him and he had to go to this fascist house, which they were Italian, and he had to do away with whoever came to the door that night, which he did. And of course. He turned out to be a good man, you know. But it's pretty rough to do. It's not easy. That life was a different life, a different life. And they talk about smoking. You know, we, you know, they drop weed, get dropped from the who was in the British sector. And they drop us, of course, ten guns, which was a British made gun, a 38 caliber and socks And every every pair of socks. There would be a hand grenade in a in a pair of socks. And then they dropped a player cigarettes. That was the name of the British cigarettes that they used to drop to us. And just before the just before they made the big push, they dropped the uniforms. Before that, they didn't drop us any uniforms, British uniforms.

[00:28:38] Sid Delanoy

So when I went when they when I went back, I had a British battle jacket, a pair of Italian pants, military pants, German boots. An American hat. And a German rifle. You are an international soldier. Yeah, I guess she was. Yeah. But that You know. We got in a pretty good scrap one time, and we lost some fellas, and. The Germans got the worst of it. It was everything. Of course, everything we done was element of surprise. But in that. In that scrap, it lasted longer than we had anticipated. And six of the fellas that was in the partisans got killed. They were all British. And All of them had civilian clothes on, and they were treated like spies. That was pretty rough. And we I'd say in the neighborhood of 175, 200 men, that German that was lost in that thing. Yeah. It's a gory situation. Yeah, and there's no way to make it anything else? No, it isn't, it isn't, it isn't. And I often think about lots of things. I guess you know me, but, you know, a lot of people talk that there should be peace throughout the world. But. Sorry to say this. If there isn't some kind of a war or a conflict, we'll have to many, the population will get too big. And that's a fact. Of course, the Lord can give you some pretty quick disasters pretty fast.

[00:31:28] Sid Delanoy

But. I just wonder sometimes if for some of these conflicts aren't. You know, don't come out from the man upstairs. I don't know. I think it's something we do to ourselves. Well, that's the same way with the damn gun laws that they have. Have they? Oh, everybody's hollering about the guns. It's not the guns. It's the man's got Ahold of it. Well, let's get back to this then. What happened next was that what was the after you got back what it was in July? Well, I got 44. Yeah. Well I went back to the then I, then I went up to. And we got into Oran and we stayed in Oran for a while and I got on a ship, I can't remember the name of the ship. And we come back to the States and back to the States in 44 and 44, and they sent me back to States in 1944. After you got back to your unit? Yeah. No, no, no, they didn't send me back to my unit. No, they sent us back to see the next P.O.W.. They wouldn't send me back to my unit. I was sent to a staging area where there was other wounded personnel and that. And they shipped us back home. Him. But before that, when I was in Oran, I went down and. I was contacted by the OSS. As the order to go behind the lines again, and I was offered to go back behind the lines.

[00:33:20] Sid Delanoy

Dropped back behind the lines in Yugoslavia, and he offered me a. Commission. I was first going to take it, and I thought about. Getting home and hoping my girlfriend was waiting for me to get married, get married and I come home and then I. And so they gave me a letter. I have a letter here yet that I could go see somebody in Washington, D.C. to. And I said in the letter, you know that I like action and all that, but and that's why we got married. And then we went on our honeymoon. And then, of course, I had to go back, and then I was reassigned. Yeah. So you got married during the war? During the war? I was married, yeah. I got married during the war. 44, 1944. Yeah. August 15th. August 15th, 1944. I bet you were happy to get home. Yeah, I got back the eighth, and we was married on the 15th. And then when did they send you to Washington? 15 days. Give me a 15 day furlough, and I went. I was reassigned to Washington, D.C.. And what did you do there? You were a presidential guard, and then we. Yeah. And then we'd done ceremony work in art and cemetery. So, presidential guard, does that mean you guarded FDR? Fdr? Yeah. Under what circumstances? Well, we was we was white House guards.

[00:34:59] Sid Delanoy

We was in the grounds and on the white House and on all the entrances and on top of the white House there was two machine gun posts and, and, and the white House lawn. There was two machine gun posts. And of course there was walking guards, you know, and what was your spot? You was changed all the time. Oh, so you rotated rotation all the time to see any of the to see the president? No, no I didn't no, no, I didn't get to see him nor nor Mrs. Roosevelt. And of course, we were there when you know, he died and we was there for the funeral. So you were part of the funeral procession. Procession? Yeah. And I have pictures of And And of course, we guarded Truman and I was, you know, discharged. How long was that? Well, he died, he died in May. And I was there until July. Oh, until July. Yeah. So you must have had to go through the white House to get to the roof. Well, yeah, but the entrances was a little different. Like, you'd go more or less on the outside. They wouldn't let you go through the stairway. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. It was above the one machine gun nest was above the pool area. And the other machine gun nest was on the other wing. And then the two in on the lawn was.

[00:36:47] Sid Delanoy

About Maybe 50 yards north of the white House on each side. Oh. Go ahead. That was a lot better duty than what you'd have had. Much, much better. Except it got awful cold there. I didn't. I didn't think we'd get that cold in Washington. I didn't realize that it got real cold, especially up there, because it was only a duty. There was. It was all spit and polish. No two ways about that. We had a double issue of uniforms. They had to be new uniforms every time you went on, you know, clean uniforms every time you went on post. In the summertime and in the wintertime too. But the summertime was worse because they had khakis and they had to be had to look right up to snuff all the time and what they call the pinks. Or was that. No. We had no, they was khaki. Gabardine, the Air Force pinks. Yeah. They And of course, we had odds with war odds in the winter. What's that? Odd colored uniform they had you know, pants and blouse. And of course, he wore a helmet liner and a necktie and a shirt. They had white leggings. And he had a little boot. Everything went all leather then was brown. It wasn't black like it is today. It was all brown and But it was, it was a good experience, of course, to get the, the.

[00:38:45] Sid Delanoy

Oh, you had to go through Secret Service examination, and then they come up to your hometown or wherever you were from and, and made a check on you and make sure that you know you were okay and what have you before they put you in, before they let you do that, because there was some fellow that was that went over there. And then they were, you know, they were they couldn't do the duty. They wouldn't let them do it. I don't know why, but the only bad part was they froze your rank. Whatever you were, they froze it. You couldn't get couldn't get anything. It was frozen. If you come back as a whatever, whether you was a a buck sergeant, a corporal a private staff sergeant. It didn't make no difference. That was it. That's what you stayed right there. You couldn't get anything. They they wouldn't they wouldn't give you anything. And of course, as I say, everything was, you know, I had an inspection. Like every time you went on duty, there'd be an inspection. And the fellow that was going on duty to relieve you there'd be a regular inspection. You had an inspection of your, your pieces that, you know, your whether it was a sidearm or a, or a rifle bayonet your clothing, everything was inspected even in the middle of the night. Whatever time you went on that, that was it.

[00:40:27] Sid Delanoy

You had to stand underneath lights to make sure that everything was all right. You had to look just the way they wanted you to or you had a problem. And so you got to it. And you. Yeah, but we had Well, everything was double. We had two overcoats, two blouses, four pair of slacks. That's odd slacks. And we had You know, it was 6 or 8 sets of suntans. It was a double issue. Whatever anybody else had, we had double the issue. Everything was double everything. Everything was double except the weapons. But all the clothing and that was. Everything was doubled. So you could keep up, keep everything up to snuff. Everything. Everything was double. And a and a. If you. Well, they preferred overseas personnel. If you had been overseas, they made you. Down there, made. You wear your ribbons, made you. Why did they prefer overseas? I don't know. I suppose because they figured that, you know, it was showing the public that had combat personnel for extra combat personnel on the line, because it was from we was from both theaters. They were from the European theater and Pacific Theater, both. And There was quite a few men involved in that thing. And. I don't really know how many, but there was quite a few involved into it. And do you keep in touch with any of those people? No more.

[00:42:39] Sid Delanoy

No, I did one fellow there for quite a while, and now, now I don't I don't, I don't see him anymore. The rest of them are. Well, they got discharged. They lived all over the country, though. I never, I never followed through with any of them, you know. So you never really got discharged. You stayed in the service then? Well, I got, I got, I got my discharge from from from the regular army. I never got my discharge from the National Guard Reserve or, or the state Guard. I never got any discharge from them. And did you serve? You mentioned the other periods that you served in, but did you ever go overseas? No, I didn't. Didn't have to go back. No, I was in, but I never sent me back over. I was I was supposed to go to Vietnam. In special forces. But I don't know what happened. I didn't have to go. That's a good thing. In 60. 64. I think it was 64. 65. Going to ship some of us over. One fellow did go. One fellow did go. He done Johnny Van Wagoner. He done three tours of duty duty there in Vietnam. And of course he was sent. He went, he went from the Special Forces unit there to use with. He went regular. He got into a different unit and then he went. That's how he went over. He didn't go over to the Special Forces personnel.

[00:44:37] Sid Delanoy

Did you ever go back and visit any of these sites, like some World War Two veterans did? Never, never. Never was able to. Did you ever want to? I'd like to. Went back to Italy and don't care to. Don't care much about going to Africa. Wouldn't mind. Went to England again. That'd be. But that's the only two places I wouldn't mind going to see. But I. I don't think I'd care to go to Africa and Sicily. Don't treat me too much. A couple of places in Italy. I'd like to go way in the northern part where I was. Yugoslavia is altogether different now than what it was then. So some of these people who were in the special. Group that you were in from Yugoslavia, were they the Serbs or the. You know, I don't know. I, I thought that Yugoslav was Yugoslav. I didn't know that there was a difference between them, how much they hated each other. I didn't know that. I didn't know nothing about that. The only thing I know that I got acquainted pretty well with one Yugoslav, and his name was Janko John, and. I don't know what he was. I don't know what what what what he was. I know the only thing I do know. I know one thing he could fight. I know that. Yeah, yeah, we were Of course Tito was the main man we was with there. Held them together. Okay.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

