

Clifton Bumpus

1476 Golf Club Lane, Clarksville, TN

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Interviewer: Mr. Bumpus what branch of the military were you in?

Mr. Bumpus: Army

Inter: What were your parents names and their occupations?

Mr. Bumpus: Norman Bumpus, he was a carpenter.

Interviewer: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Bumpus: No living, I've got one brother dead.

Interviewer: How long did you remain in school sir?

Mr. Bumpus: 7th, 7th grade.

Interviewer: Do you have any recollections of the great depression and how it affected your family?

Mr. Bumpus: I can't hear too good.

Interviewer: Repeated question.

Mr. Bumpus: Yeh, yeh, it was hard times, no work you couldn't find jobs anywhere. On up several years after, I was born in 25 and on up until WWII was rough. You couldn't, I got out of school and started working with the Southern Truss Company. We was working ten hours a day and I was making \$2.00 a day and that was 10 hours on the job. That was with the Southern Truss Company First National Bank down there, you probably don't remember that. Then my better days started when WW, Fort Campbell was built, WWII. I started working, well I had worked before that, I got a job at Acme-Boot and I worked down there. Then I went to Fort Campbell and started working when they first built the sewage disposal plant that was the first job I worked down there, just labor.

Interviewer: Wow that's when they first opened the post?

Mr. Bumpus: When they first opened the post. Sewer disposal plant. We made .40 cents an hour. When I was working for the Southern Truss Company we made .20 cents an hour, ten hours a day. Then I went to .40 cents an hour in the sewer disposal plant. Then when we finished up the sewer disposal plant I went to work for Emmitt and Haylett out of Nashville plumbing and I believe I was a helper, I believe I started at \$1.25 an hour I believe, it was a lot of money.

Interviewer: It seemed like a lot of money at the time. That's quite a pay raise for you.

Mr. Bumpus: I don't know I worked with them, that was we was right up on the water treatment plant. That's where Emmitt and Haylett first started building I mean, let's see what was the name of the contractor there, I can't think of it right now. Any now, Emmitt and Haylett was out of Nashville and they was doing the plumbing on these barracks. Then Nile E Earwood, they was a big contractor, they had a big section up above there at Fort Campbell. Nile E Earwood I didn't work for them but that was some of the companies that was in there, contractors. I worked for Emmitt and Haylett until the job was finished, they finished up this first section, the barracks, they had so many barracks then another contractor they had so many on up above it. Plum on up to the end of that hospital up there. After I left Emmitt and Haylett I worked with them until we finished the job then I went to work for a contractor, a contractor out of Arkansas, Borage Arkansas. And I worked with them, we was pouring concrete starting at the first gate going all the way around Fort Campbell and coming out I guess it was Tennessee, and all the way around and come out at Kentucky just below the Old A's Liquor Store there.

Interviewer: When did you receive your draft notice or did you volunteer?

Mr. Bumpus: No, I was drafted.

Interviewer: You were drafted, about when did you receive your notice?

Mr. Bumpus: Well I worked there and then I went, after we wound up at Fort Campbell, I stayed with this same company and went to, that might give you some more hours I can't think of all of it, Tullahoma, Northern Field Airbase, you know where that it?

Interviewer: Yes sir.

Mr. Bumpus: I went to Northern Field Airbase with this same company and we poured the runway at Northern Field Airbase.

Interviewer: Now, during all this time were you aware of, when did you first become aware of the probability that American might be going to war was it Pearl Harbor, was that the first indication you had that there was a problem or had you been following newspapers before that.

Mr. Bumpus: No, I didn't think about war back then, I was young. Pearl Harbor though when they bombed that I don't what year was that?

Interviewer: It was December 7, 1941. Do you remember how you felt when that happened the first time you heard about that or read about it?

Mr. Bumpus: No, I didn't think anything about going in the Army or nothing like that then. But I was drafted and I don't know what year I was drafted. Do you remember what year I was drafted Ruth? Why don't you let them look at this, then that won't make things so hard. That will tell you when I went in, this will tell you cause he can't remember. I remember more about WWII than I do a lot of this now, I mean the dates and everything on it. Cause over there now you don't forget that too quick.

Interviewer: Okay you went into the service

Mr. Bumpus: After I left Acme, I was in the Acme shoe factory when I went in the service.

Interviewer: And you entered the service November of 1943. From there where did you do your basic training again?

Mr. Bumpus: I went in at Fort Orberthoough, Georgia, and went from there to a staging area in Mississippi, Camp Shelby Mississippi. And I went from Camp Shelby Mississippi to Camp Arca, Texas and that's where I got my medical training in Camp Arca, Texas. Seventeen weeks basic is all I got. Then I left Camp Arca, Texas and went to Pennsylvania. I got nine days at home in route to Pennsylvania at a staging area there we didn't stay there but just a short time. Then I left there and went to Camp Shanks, NY. Then I got on a boat at Camp Shanks. After I got on the boat, we was on ship, convey, for thirteen days and we landed in South Hampton, England. Then we was in a staging area in South Hampton, England until, well I don't know how long we'd been there, not long, a short time. Then we got on a boat out of South Hampton and went across the channel in Normandy Beachhead.

Interviewer: You were there at D-Day?

Mr. Bumpus: No, I was after D-Day. I went in, I guess what they call a replacement. In the medic after D-Day and whenever I went in to Beachhead, Normandy I was with the 2nd Division. They put me in the 2nd division.

Interviewer: With the 23rd Infantry?

Mr. Bumpus: 23rd Infantry. I was attached to them, see I was company A medic and I attached, I was with the 2nd division company B 3rd platoon. I believe that was 23rd infantry regiment, I'm not for sure. When I went I was in company B and I went from Beachhead, Normandy we went on up through France. Seen several battle hills 901 and different hills through there I don't know all that. But I do know I went on up in. We was fighting side by side with the British Army. We was cut out the British cut us out at Saint Myth, Germany I mean France. Var, France the British cut us at Var, France. They call it release gap we had the German all rounded up in this valley and the British come in on our left and when they did they cut us out. Cause the other company, whoever was on the other side I don't know who was on the other side. When we all come in we was in the corner but they took us out. Then we went from there to Brass, France and we stayed at Brass, France that was in I don't know it was in the summer time, I don't know. I know when we was in Normandy and went on up through France blackberries were blooming when we went in then blackberries and you would notice the fruit trees. I wasn't easy to keep up with everything I mean dig fox holes I've dug as many as six or seven fox holes in one day.

Interviewer: Did you ever see the German submarines at Brass?

Mr. Bumpus: At Brass, France? No, I seen everything at Brass around but the river, we was on one side of the river and I believe it was the 38th infantry was on the other side and we come in on the right. Now the airbase, we was right beside the airbase in Breast. Then we went on down to the castle in Breast, France and you could look down in the valley and the railroad station all the big railroad station and everything in Breast, France. And Breast was up on the other hill; we never did get all the way up into

the main town. We was, they had an underground hospital at Breast and we was in the railroad station at Breast. We a lieutenant get killed in Breast, France and I don't know how many men, a lot of them. Then when the war was over another thing that stood out a lot with me was this big castle tower it still has all the guns and everything like it was before we captured it. The Germans didn't bother it and we didn't bother it. Everything that was in that castle stayed in there. I went through it all over it before the war was over in Breast. And that big hospital ship out in the bay we could see it going and just circling around it would go up and come back, go up and come back. That was while we were moving into Breast on this side of the river. We went on into and when we got below this castle down below that railroad yard we went plum on into pretty close to the front, the ocean front there but we never did get out to the front or anything to the ocean when the war was over, when they give up. They give up just drove coming out of there then.

Interviewer: Mr. Bumpus what was your recollection about the way the Germans did they respect the Red Cross you wore as a medic? Did they obey the Geneva Convention as far as not shooting at medics or giving decent treatment to the wounded and medical personnel?

Mr. Bumpus: I went through a lot of it, I had the helmet and medical bag with crosses on it and I was shot at. I was shot at by the Germans but I don't know, I never got hit I got hit with the scrap metal I didn't get hit with the bullet and they could have been shooting at, they was just bullets that hit the ground. I was a little bearer when I first went in and then B company lost a company aid man and they put me from little bearer up to company aid man and after I got to be while I was little bearer that's when they shot at us. That was at Bear, France I know we picked up several of our men that got hit that got on the down inside of the German lines I mean the Germans were right close and they shot at us coming out of there but nobody was hit. Now whether they was just trying to scare us or, but I have been shot at with a Red Cross bag and helmet and everything but I didn't get hit cause I can't say they was shooting at me. I never saw a medic of course I didn't see a lot of medics outside of B company in the 3rd platoon. They could have been shooting at me it didn't make you feel good anytime bullets, artillery hit the ground you was ready to go to a hole.

Interviewer: Mr. Bumpus where were you and what were the circumstances when you were captured?

Mr. Bumpus: Well that's another, when we left Breast, see Paris was an open city, and when we left through Breast after we left Breast we was on they put us on a train and carried us through Breast, France into Belgium then we went in behind and I don't remember the Army was in front of us, I know that 99th was in front of us when we got captured but I don't know what company was hold on the Siegfried line but Patton had gone through the Siegfried line while we was at Breast and captured several pillboxes and had run out of gas, we had eight tanks sitting down in the valley when we went through the obstacles and all on the Siegfried line and got into the pillboxes we was walking and dug in around this pillbox and saved the headquarters and everything in the pillbox. While we was on in this I may be going to slow for ya'll. *Interviewers:* No, your fine. *Mr. Bumpus:* While we was in this pillbox one pillbox was all we was in course there was one over here and another over here and the Siegfried line one but we'd done crashed it and went through, Patton had before we got in there then they moved him, Patton's outfit to the right of us which I guess would have been Northeast or something I don't

know which way they went. While we was in this pillbox we stayed there in a holding position cause I tanks were sitting out there but we couldn't get to them. They had them all zeroed in. There were Patton's people left them and then they moved them and we come in and took their positions and we stayed in these pillboxes up to I believe it was October and we got our first snow in October I believe I'm pretty sure then we moved back they moved us back in this forest I don't know whether it was the Black Forest or what it was but we moved back off the Siegfried line just a short distance behind these pillboxes and the Siegfried line and the engineers built dugout in this forest and covered them with a pine box and there would be a platoon here and a platoon over there and headquarters and the medic and everything and we was in a holding position we just had guards out across the front line there. And they called us in a holding position well while we was in this holding position the Germans wasn't attacking and we wasn't attacking. Lieutenant Crane first lieutenant was the company platoon leader, sergeant Black was the platoon sergeant and Lieutenant Crane asked me to come up to me and asked me would you like to go to Paris, France? I said well anybody would be crazy if they did want to go to Paris.

Interviewer: Did anybody ever turn that offer down to your knowledge?

Mr. Bumpus: No. And he said well said you are the oldest man in the company you've been out here I was the youngest one in there I was still in my 20s. He said you are the youngest man in the company and said we are going to send two, we can send two men two of our men out of this company to Paris, France for 72 hours. I said well I hadn't got a whole lot of money I said I'll go he said every things paid, your hotel, every things paid. Said all you do it go for 72 hours do anything you want to do and the truck will pick you up and bring you back. Well I went back to Paris, France for 72 hours from this dugout front we was in. When I got ready, TD was a little sergeant in the raid station and me and him went back together we was the two was the oldest in the company. We got back to Paris and we had a ball. And in the morning we get ready the trucks they told us the trucks would be sitting here if you don't get your gear and get on the trucks we won't wait, they won't wait for you. So this little sergeant TD he said you may not want this I don't know he said you get my bag and pack and bring it down to the truck and said I'll be back. He had found him a girlfriend and he took off.

Interviewer: This is part of history sir.

Mr. Bumpus: I got packed, checked out of the hotel man they fed us like kings just anything we wanted to eat in that hotel was fine.

Interviewer: This hotel I mean was a really nice hotel?

Mr. Bumpus: Yes

Interviewer: With all the food you could ask for?

Mr. Bumpus: Yes, anything you wanted you just order it. For 72 hours. You could look out the window and the Eiffel Tower you could see them you was up high enough you could see all that. And we was free on the street you could go anywhere you want to, we was just free people.

Interviewer: I imagine you didn't sleep a lot I imagine you wanted to maximize your time.

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yes, we lived it up. You could buy drinks or whatever you wanted and the morning when we got ready to leave TD said I'll be right back, he had found him a girlfriend, he said I'll be right back you put my bag my duffle bag and pack on the truck and I'll be right back. I said okay. When we got ready to go he wasn't there and I never seen him no more I don't know what happened. But I wished several times I would have stayed with him. When I got back what I thought would be in the Forest we were sleeping in a pine grove right beside the highway and in this highway that went in where they had these bunkers and all was made out of pine logs, they had made a road the engineers had made a road out of it about five or ten miles and when we moved back that night when I got back and got off of this truck I threwed his bags off and mine too and when I got off that truck lieutenant Crane said you just give me a sleeping bag we didn't even have sleeping bags. I said where are we going to sleep and he said right there under that pine tree. And we had got orders, he had got orders to move back and get beside of that road and sometime in the night we got on the trucks and went from there to Bastion.

Interviewer: Now when you were headed to Bastion was this in support of by this time had the battle of the Bulge started?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yeh, that had happened while I was in that had happened in the 72 hours while I was in Paris. I didn't know a thing about what had happened or nothing. You didn't nobody know nothing see they wouldn't tell you nothing. I said what why are we moving he said we are in core reserve and said they are putting us behind the 99th division right at the Siegfried line was right in front of us and when we got up to Bastion and Alsenborn, Germany I believe was a little town right outside of Bastion. We went out In the open field there and we was supposed to be behind the 99th division and the fox holes and all was there but there wasn't nobody in front of us I mean in that whole when snow and water and we went in at night and hid in the foxholes and there was another town over in front of us and we could see people moving around and everything and we thought well we must be in good shape and officers and everything was in the little town right beside I guess Alsenborn I didn't know a whole lot about that and we stayed in the fox holes that night and the next morning man they throwed everything they had at us didn't they and the ground, the snow was on the ground and the ground was soft about like our 105s and it hit the ground and just throwed dirt everywhere they would go on the ground but they wouldn't go off. There wasn't no explosion and we had them sitting just a short distance from our fox hole so lieutenant Crane pulled us out we stayed in there all day and just before dark he pulled us out into this town and we just went in and that's one of the fronts that they had hit on first and that night we fought all night. I was a medic and I was helping a BAR gunner with his ammunition which was against the rules but it was either live with a cut or live or die then and we the Jeep they had a 75 mm that's on wheels and they had it hooked behind their Jeep or something to pull it and it was set up right above us and they come down that night and lieutenant Crane tried to put me on the Jeep and told me said you've got to have some supplies, he knew what was going on but I didn't. I said aw I've got plenty and he wanted me to get on this Jeep with these two boys on that 75 mm was shooting that 75 mm to go back and all that firing and everything going on I didn't want to take a chance going back. But I might have been better off if I'd have went back with them. Cause we fired I helped this BAR gunner we got this machine gun off of the 50 caliber machine gun off of this tank they had it left when they moved out

of tank position they left a 50 caliber machine gun and three or four big belts of ammunition. So we set that thing up in the street and the Germans was coming down the street and I'd feed the belt and he'd pull the trigger and we was laying them down there tanks it set several buildings on fire and we could see up the street and we was shooting up the street. We run out of ammunition, everybody was out of ammunition so I don't know whether we killed enough that they didn't move down on us or what but the next morning day light me and the one that was operating the machine gun BAR gunny we was down in a basement and he went out to check and see what was going on. And we hadn't slept not all night and he said we're surrounded. They are coming in from everywhere so he whenever we got out I had a P38 German handgun that I carried in my medical bag which was strictly against the law, there wasn't no laws out there then and I he said you take that gun out of your medical bag and do something with it, we are going to have to give up. And I there was some old mattresses in the basement where we was at and I throwed them under that mattress and me and the BAR gunner went out on the street and they was coming up the side street where we was at and that's when I got captured. This little old German about I don't know I guess he was a German he was short. And he was right up in my face and I just had my hands down and he had something like a 45 just pointing it up back and forth in front of my face like that and the BAR gunner told him he wants you to put your hands on top of your head and I put my hands up and he said alright and marched us on up the hill. Lieutenant got hit in a house they carried me in a house and the lieutenant they had throwed a grenade in the house he was in there and knocked one of his eyes out really butchered him up but they wouldn't let me do much I bandaged him up and they took me on down the street and put me in a basement and before they put me in the basement that day that was first thing in the morning they had us all in I guess it was the headquarters or something cause there was several German that talked to us and all in there and I remember that this one German he was dressed different from the others they had me in a room and the was talking to everybody and he was sitting down beside of the wall and I asked then well what do you think this war's going to do I didn't know what was happening, he didn't either. But he said well said before that though I was talking to him, he was speaking he could speak as good a English as I could or better, I said how did you learn to speak English American English like you do? He said I was going to school over there when the war started. He said I went to two or three different colleges in this country and when I got back over here they put me in the Army.

Interviewer: What type of uniform was he dressed in? What type of uniform was he dressed in sir?

Mr. Bumpus: He had a darker you know the gray the regular Germans used but he was in a darker green or something I don't know what he was that's the only one I ever seen like that. But he could speak good English. And I asked him I said what do you think the wars going to do and he said well they tell us we are going to eat Christmas dinner in Paris and that was the 18th of December.

Interviewer: Do you remember how you were transported back to the POW camp?

Mr. Bumpus: Yeh.

Interviewer: How did that happen?

Mr. Bumpus: We walked for about five or four or five days they'd out us up at night but we marched back for four or five days then they out us on a train I guess with them box cars and carried us across Rhine River. I figured it was Rhine River I don't know we was going into Hammelburg, Germany sallied 13C and that's the only river the Rhine was the river that I think it could have been.

Interviewer: Do you remember when you were on the train was the train ever attacked by any aircraft or anything like that?

Mr. Bumpus: No, they put us on that train late one evening and the box car and we moved at night when we got into a mountain section, Hammelburg was in a mountain section and we down in the valley the train pulled into the station and we got off the train and that was all I didn't see nothing in that boxcar from where they put us on until we got off.

Interviewer: How cold was it in that boxcar and did you have blankets or proper winter clothing or anything?

Mr. Bumpus: Well when we got captured they took we had we was dressed we had five buckle harvicks over our combat boots and we had tank overalls like tankers wore and ODs under that and we had that OD jacket and then a field jacket over that. And an overcoat and whenever we got captured they left us with a we could get our five buckle harvicks or shoes so I kept my shoes they took all of our clothes except one set of ODs and either your five buckle harvicks or shoes and I kept my shoes whenever they got through I had my underwear, overcoat and a shirt OD shirt they left your shirt and pants OD shirt and pants. And I had my overcoat I kept it cause I figured I'd be warm. A lot of them kept their field jacket cause it would be lighter to march in but if I hadn't kept my overcoat I would have froze to death.

Interviewer: Do you remember what happened when you arrived at the POW camp?

Mr. Bumpus: Remember what.

Interviewer: What did the Germans do when you first arrived at the POW camp?

Mr. Bumpus: When we got into this station they count you every time you turned around and they lined you up outside the boxcar and we had some artillery behind us and there was some black soldiers in this artillery, I don't know what outfit it was but they had captured them with us and these Germans whenever we got off of that train there was a lot it charcoal, they had been hauling charcoal just throwed it in the box car and some of these prisoners like me I didn't get in there I was in another one but there was some of them they were just as black riding in that boxcar as a lump of charcoal. Charcoal they would rub it, the white they was in with the black, and when they come off they found one or two of them black people and it just tore them up them Germans they didn't know what the heck cause that charcoal you couldn't tell a white from a black and they'd dig in that snow and rub their face and if he was black under that charcoal they would put him out to the side. Then they'd get another one we like to froze by the time standing out there before we even got away from the train.

Interviewer: Now they separated the black soldiers from the white soldiers?

Mr. Bumpus: Yeh, we never did see them no more.

Interviewer: You never saw them again? Had no idea what happened to them.

Mr. Bumpus: Don't know what happened to them, that was the last time I seen them. But I do know before we got captured we had a black artillery platoon company behind us. If I'm talking too much.

Interviewers: No, not at all. *Mr. Bumpus:* That's just what I can remember now but that was kindly a funny thing there cause we never seen them no more and we always wondered what they done with them black people. They didn't go to their camp at all.

Interviewer: Can you describe the German soldiers in the POW camp?

Mr. Bumpus: They was older soldiers. I know the one that was over our barracks in the daytime now that was the one that come inside of the camp and all he was he had one eye out his head was all shot up had been all shot up I guess early in the war and one of his arms was booggerd up. That was about the only one I really they was good they was alright, they didn't give you no trouble.

Interviewer: Did you receive mail in the camp on a regular basis?

Mr. Bumpus: No, no mail.

Interviewer: No Red Cross packages?

Mr. Bumpus: No. No Red Cross packages no nothing. We got three a canteen and a half of parched barley coffee for breakfast. We got a eighth of a loaf, I mean for lunch that was for breakfast. We got three or four Irish potatoes about like that for lunch. And we got an eighth of a loaf of bread for supper. That's a German bread about that long and they made cut it in eight pieces.

Interviewer: You said it was barley Coffee?

Mr. Bumpus: Parched barley coffee. Brown it that's what they called it parched barley coffee. An eighth of a canteen half full and we'd get three or four maybe four Irish potatoes for dinner with the peeling on them.

Interviewer: Did it taste anything like coffee at all?

Mr. Bumpus: No. For supper we got that eighth of a loaf of bread. That was the menu for from the 18th of December to the 7th of April. No, we had no blankets our beds were bunks and a plywood half inch plywood barrack. We had a war morning heater like they used to use out here at Fort Campbell out here them old big round heater. We got one water bucket them ole sink buckets one water bucket of coal, charcoal, one time in the entire time we was in there.

Interviewer: How were you treated?

Mr. Bumpus: Far as no food no water no bath I didn't get no mistreating some of the others may have.

Interviewer: Were you only there with other Americans or were their British?

Mr. Bumpus: No we had we had they wasn't in our barracks I didn't have any in my barracks but some of them had the Polls they had the British they had the I did have one that saved my life was a Australian. He ole Austria I liked to died, that's getting a little further along in the story but, they was going to give us. Let me go like I was going. Let's see let's see what was we talking about? The heat, heat two buckets of charcoal that's all we had all winter we had one blanket tore half in two and my overcoat some of them had their field jacket and that one blanket that was all heat I mean sleeping in a straw mattress shavings in a burlap bag for your mattress and bunk beds with straps across your bed bottom. That was no baths we got one bath. The water was outside you had one spicket sticking up and you had a trench for your bathroom with a pole on it, you'd go out there if you ever eat enough if you got enough to go that pole across there and water just one spicket in the corner of the barracks I mean the compound. Let's see there was I believe there was four barracks in barbwire outside and then there would be another one below that. They didn't put too many of us together. And no bath I got one bath and that was in March but what had happened there Patton's son-in-law was in the same prison we was in but the officers had different quarters than we did and he was a coronel I believe a coronel and Patton had sent in a two company of tanks and one company of infantry to liberate us that was on about I guess the first of March middle of March or something and they got in fine and when they liberated the officers they had the two company tanks and the infantry two company infantry I believe and when they come in they liberated all of the officers and left us in prison. They didn't care they just wanted Patton's son-in-law. And when they started out the Germans had got work and they brought all that bunch back in and put them in the camp with us, all they liberated and all that had got out of there. Patton's son-in-law, they had so many they moved us we was up on a hill and they moved us back down in the valley and put the officers and everything they'd captured then they'd made that break through where we was sleeping. And moved us back down in some empty ones, I don't know what they done with the empty ones but that's where they moved us. And on the way back down they give us a bath and they had this big about the size of that den or whatever but all around the wall they had a spicket, just one spicket sticking out with a nozzle on the end of it and we willed our clothes off outside of that, the snow there was still some on the ground it was melting we pulled out clothes off outside and then went inside of this building to these spickets I don't know I guess it was a shower for the Germans might have been I don't what it was for but they was gonna give us a bath. And we went in there and got under that thing all them spickets around there and they slammed the doors see and we thought then well this is it this is the gas chamber and everybody was just hit at the same time.

Interviewer: So you had already heard about the gas chamber?

Mr. Bumpus: Yeh, we knew all about that stuff.

Interviewer: When did you first hear rumors about gas chambers?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh we had heard that coming up through the lines and before we went over there about how they gassed them and everything in England and then on the front line we had heard all that stuff too. And when we went in this thing and we all gathered round no lights no nothing and all at once they turned that water on full force and it just hit everybody at the same time. Man you talking about ice water and they didn't leave it on just a minute then they shut it off.

Interviewer: Were you so shocked did you have soap or anything?

Mr. Bumpus: No soap, no towels or anything.

Interviewer: Just water?

Mr. Bumpus: Just that cold water. Just punishing us they were having a ball out there. They brought us back out and our clothes laying there in the snow. You had to pick them up and put them back on, same ones you'd been wearing for four months.

Interviewer: Well when they came in and got Patton's son-in-law how did that make you feel, what do you think of General Patton.

Well we really didn't know nothing about it until they had done gone out and captured them and brought them back in. Then the ones that was captured they brought them back into the prison then we found out what had happened them. Patton's son-in-law they brought him down under the hill before we got liberated and he was in the same barrack I was in. And after we went through that shower like that we well all the time that was going on the only time we could see anybody that could speak English was these inspectors I guess for the Red Cross whatever they was, they come around and we'd just got a back see and that was the first one we'd had. And these from Geneva I guess that's where they come from I don't know but they could talk to us speak English. They was all dressed up in suits. We got to talk to some of them, I did. Then they moved us out of there down in these other barracks that's when they brought Patton's son-in-law down in the barracks but I never did know what happened to him.

Interviewer: Before we continue on to the next phase, the German guards that you had were they at all brutal to the prisoners' or did they

Mr. Bumpus: Not in the one I was in now I don't know that one compound I was in they never did bother us at all. This one ole German he was the one taking care of us. But there was several medics in there with me. I don't know whether that had anything to do with it or not. But we did get to keep our medic just this little ole thing right here.

Interviewer: Geneva Convention cards.

Mr. Bumpus: That was the picture that was stuck on ole the little one you can't see it that went all the way through Germany. That was the only thing they didn't take that was the only thing we had left. I had a watch, a French watch, and they took it. They took everything that rings if you had rings they took rings and everything off of you.

Interviewer: Did they ever punish prisoners in the camps?

Mr. Bumpus: Not that I know of. Of course we didn't have a whole lot to be punished for you couldn't get out. Ice that think around the wall and fences.

Interviewer: So there was no way to escape?

Mr. Bumpus: No way to get out of that place. Up on top of a mountain too.

Interviewer: How did you acquire the things you needed in camp?

Mr. Bumpus: You didn't tell nobody wasn't nobody to talk to. You didn't get nothing. You just got what they give you and that's it. No, you didn't, it wasn't nothing.

Interviewer: Would it be fair to say that was the longest three and a half months of your life?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yes, what are you talking about. It's unbelievable, and I don't know I liked to died and there was a lot of us did die but after I come out of this cold shower and of course I was young then I was younger and I had a overcoat on and I had kept my combat boots just regular shoes, combat shoes but I was younger that is the only thing I think that helped me more than anything. But after I took that shower and we got down under the hill at this other camp I blacked out for three days. And we had this ole guy from Austria and he had been there for several years, a long time, I don't know how long they'd been fighting but he had him one room he could speak German and all that stuff and he had him one room on the end of the barracks and he was kindly the overseer when I got sick for three days didn't eat nothing didn't drink nothing and my throat had swelled up just I had tonsillitis a lot back when I was younger and it just swelled up and I couldn't breathe. And this old Russian doctor carried me over to a little old window and wanted me to throw my head back and I done whatever he wanted me to do. And he took a rusty ice pick and jabbed both sides of I guess my tonsils or something in there and I spit up a teacup full of old blood and corruption and shit like that and I got better. No medicine no nothing but old Mac he carried me back in his room he had two cots and he put me on one of them cots and he had been there so long he knew how to get he had rice and evaporated milk and he'd fix me milk and feed me all that rice and I think that's one thing that saved me. Of course I was young and I seen them carry a lot of them out of there that wasn't young and they didn't make it. They had a coffin made like that and little at one end and big at the other. They would use it for everyone that died and carry them out and bury them.

Interviewer: How many POWs would you estimate died in the camp while you were there?

Mr. Bumpus: Well I seen several now that was just in the one barrack that I was in. There was about three other than that, that was about all we lost out of that one, all that I know of. I know there's one fellow, I don't know what his name was but he was an older man. And he had a pretty Sonic ring, I wasn't in the Sonic organization but he had a pretty ring and I got close to him and all and he still had that ring on when they carried him out of there. I have often wondered what happened to his ring when they got him out you know they didn't leave it on there.

Interviewer: Overall were you aware of the situation from the guards did they appear worried, did they appear to know the end was coming for Germany? Did they ever talk to the prisoners?

Mr. Bumpus: Nothing, you didn't talk to no guard. No radios we had one religious service and he was from England soldier. That's the only service we had. I've got my little testament they gave you when

you went in the Army they did leave you with that. And that one service was the only service we had while we was in there.

Interviewer: I have to ask this question. In the 1960s there was a television show about a POW camp did you ever see that at all did you ever watch that Hogan's Heroes?

Mr. Bumpus: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Because I was just wondering I think it was stylized, it was a comedy TV show I was just wondering based on what you were telling us it was nothing, nothing at all like that.

Mr. Bumpus: I don't think I've ever seen a POW movie since they come out. What I'm telling you is my true facts. What went on at other, I know there's bound to have been early part of the war was worse than what we was in. See then the war if they hadn't have made that one break when they captured us if they had of made that they would have had a chance. But after they lost that that was all they had cause they had pulled the tanks, the one that attacked us was the SS Troopers in tanks and when we was marching back for two days we was marching beside of the SS Troopers coming in, they had pulled them out of Russia.

Interviewer: Now you said they were tiger tanks.

Mr. Bumpus: Then old SS Troopers special German.

Interviewer: What did you think the first time you saw a tiger tank compared to our Sherman's.

Mr. Bumpus: Well we went through Germany, France with our tanks riding them and everything else. Now our tanks was a whole lot better. Now their tanks was like the 88 artillery was fast and pretty accurate they could shoot at you with an 88 and before you could get in your fox hole it had done hit. You could hear it when they went off they just went to whistling and the next thing they had done hit the ground. But our artillery and tanks were so much better than the Germans the way I see it now, I guess they feel the same way about their self. They wasn't nothing to sneeze at they was good fighting equipment.

Interviewer: How did you feel about the German soldiers did you feel the same way about the German soldiers?

Mr. Bumpus: Fighting?

Interviewer: The men the German soldiers did you feel do you think they were good soldiers?

Mr. Bumpus: Well, I didn't think so. I think they had some soldiers German soldiers now we captured a lot of them and I couldn't speak German but we had a lieutenant that could and he would ask them questions and everything and while we was at Breast he had a bunch of them that give up course Breast, France was a pocket when we went in there they knew they couldn't go nowhere cause there was the ocean on one side and we was on the other. But they had when we captured a bunch of them and they was always wanting hotcakes, pancakes and coffee and they would just give up to come in, wanted

something to eat. And when we got captured in the prison camp and all this old German that was over us there of course there was several different ones but this one we seemed like we got along with him better than anybody. But he got the bread he got a full loaf of bread and that was for a week I think that loaf of bread he got was his rations. They was hurting for food and no ammunition I know one night, they'd get you out in the middle of the night and try to count, they couldn't count and they'd go on up to about ten then they'd forget and have to go back and planes was going over bombing Berlin. We was close to, my mind I had a little light stroke and I have to think a little bit sometimes. It was on the right of our camp this big German town and they was going between that town and where we was at going into Berlin bombing. And these when they had us out there one night counting us, to keep you from sleeping I guess, but they wanted to know if these planes they were just going over to Berlin they wanted to know if we ran out of planes ole Wiser.

Interviewer: I want to get some of this stuff while we're talking on camera I want to get the POW tag and a few other things.

Mr. Bumpus: Let me quit talking and let you go.

Interviewer: No, no I just want to make sure we get some of this on camera here. This is pretty neat stuff.

Interviewer: Do you remember when you were liberated?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Can you describe that?

Mr. Bumpus: 14th Armor used to be out of Fort Campbell they come through there mobilized. Seventh of April, we that war was it was the Germans knew it was over, we thought it was just about over. But they come through there mobilized. They run a half track up side the fence tore it down turned all of us loose. Germans they had done left but we didn't know.

Interviewer: All the Germans had already left?

Mr. Bumpus: Yeh, they left out that morning I guess.

Interviewer: Did they say anything to you when they left? Did they just leave? They didn't lock the gates or anything when they left.

Mr. Bumpus: No didn't find nobody around there when the American's come through. They was mobilized soldiers and foot soldiers were riding the trucks.

Interviewer: Did the 14th Armor did those guys feed you right away.

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yeh, well they didn't have nothing but what they had on their half track, half truck tore the fence down. They throwed a carton of K-rations off they didn't have too much I guess they were rations for themselves they throwed off.

Interviewer: So they didn't stay around very long.

Mr. Bumpus: No, they didn't even slow down, just kept going. Everything was mobilized.

Interviewer: So what did you do after that?

Mr. Bumpus: We just went anywhere we wanted to for about two days.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

Mr. Bumpus: We went into a little town out of Hamelburg, I don't know what the name of the town was. We went in one night and we was there about two days after that. Whoever does that kind of work they moved in. We got they brought them old amphibious ducks and all we had two or three little ole rivers to cross going out and they put us on them ducks and carried us back, I don't remember the town, but they had set up in this town and there was a hotel there, no beds, just stripped. But they carried us back and run us through delouse pulled all of our cloths off burned them up threwed them on a fire, burned them up, give us new clothes run us through a shower, deloused us, and we put them clothes on and went back and the next morning they brought planes in and we got on a plane and they carried us by plane back to Lehar, France. They had a prisoner of war set up, tent city set up there. And they flew us back to this Lehar, France and we got off the plane and they marched us up on the hill to this place we was gonna stay at. We recuperated and got our clothes and everything. And put a little meat on our bones.

Interviewer: I bet it felt good to be back having a regular meal and a new set of cloths.

Mr. Bumpus: Well see we was about somebody asked me about how much you weighted when you come out of there. And I couldn't tell him I said the only thing, the closest I could get to you is how much does a sack of bones weigh? About 5 foot 9 inches tall. That's about as close as I could get to it. The officers and all back there they would ask me questions. Of course they weighted us and all that stuff. But we lost a lot of weight. You know put you on three or four little Irish potatoes a day and a little loaf of bread and a cup of parched barley you didn't gain a whole lot of weight.

Interviewer: I'm sure. Do you remember getting back home?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh yeh I never did get where I didn't remember nothing. There wasn't nothing good about it to remember but we stayed in this Lucky Stripe Camp, I was in this Lucky Stripe and they had a camel and Phillip bars and just different sections. We got on a boat to Lehar and went back to a port in England, I don't know which one it was now, wasn't South Hampton, but Liverpool I believe went back to Liverpool and picked up the convoy on a ship it was the SS Argentina they picked us up I mean we picked up part of the crew there part of the ones that got on board the ship. Then we come back from there to the states. It was 13 days going over and we come back in 6.

Interviewer: A lot faster coming back?

Mr. Bumpus: It was a whole lot faster coming back then it was going.

Interviewer: What were the conditions like for you on ship on the way back?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh it was fine.

Interviewer: They treated you good.

Mr. Bumpus: We had a bed and

Interviewer: I imagine it kind of helped that you didn't have to zigzag avoiding submarines that time.

Mr. Bumpus: when we went over there wasn't many hours that you didn't have a submarine attack. The def chargers I guess go off and then siren would come on and be circling them old T-boats would be going around. Thirteen days in that convoy going over until we got to Liverpool, I left camp Shanks.

Interviewer: Did you have any brother in the service?

Mr. Bumpus: No, I had one go in after WWII. He didn't go overseas he was just in the Army.

Interviewer: Did you remember the soldiers you were in the prison camp with did you ever have an occasion to write each other or talk about any of that to those men again. Did you ever see any of your fellow inmates at the camp?

Mr. Bumpus: Well my first sergeant I mean my platoon sergeant he was up at Lexington, Kentucky, sergeant Leat. His daddy and one or two brother run Leat Furniture stores up there and I went up there and visited him. But I think he's dead now and my lieutenant William H Crane he was a missionary, his family was missionaries and sergeant Leat said he went back to Africa and dies after he got to Africa. They was missionaries people was missionaries in Africa and he said he died after he got back to Africa. I used to get a card from him, my lieutenant. I had one more good buddy and I never have got in touch with him up in Indian Creek, Kentucky Star Route was his address but I never have been able to get in touch with him. But he was a company runner platoon runner he had the radio, field radio and everything. And me and him got close cause the medic and the runner, first sergeant, platoon sergeant was always pretty close together. But I never have that was Clayton aw you got so much of that stuff it gets mixed up, I know all of it.

Interviewer: Did you ever get a chance to see Paris again?

Mr. Bumpus: Paris, never did get back every time I went through there but I got 72 hours and TD I never did see him again I guess he stayed.

Interviewer: Did you ever go back to Europe after the war?

Mr. Bumpus: Never did get to go back. I'd like to have went back. I went in on a, I landed at Omaha Beachhead had already been made but we went in on a little ole from England and we didn't have a whole lot fire when we went in that morning the captain of the ship he said that staved the deck we could see they staved the deck from where they went over the morning and we went over that evening

and we didn't get no fire but the bank at Omaha the bluff was just about like that. We went out boats there was ships and boats all over that channel.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you what did that look like did you look back towards the channel and you saw that whole panorama how did that feel looking at that. Did you think here we come we're going to win this thing?

Mr. Bumpus: I don't know how I did feel. I know see the waves in the channel what do they call that LST boats landing crafts that the fronts fall down, it come in they was coming from the back end and they would circle around that ship and it looked like he'd go down to the bottom of the channel and then come back up and they told us said now we can't pick you up if you fall overboard, course we had a life jacket on, and we threw our duffle bags all our equipment in that boat then we went out on this metal latter all the way around the ship and we'd jump off on the boat and I watched that thing go all the way down and by that time it'd be six foot down. I don't know if you miss it you just out in the water so I got that thing and watched it about two or three times and got what I was going to do and that water it come up to the rope and just slide roll over in it I hit about middle ways of that boat. After he got loaded and everything he cut into the back and the land and all and the beach you couldn't get all the way to the land when they threw that door out he didn't wait for anybody you had to go and you grabbed your gear and went, well somebody's gear when you went out you cleaned it out and I happened to see the land I was watching pretty close and whenever the water come back out man I went out the front of that thing and I waded water up to my waist when it came back in but I went on up to the bank. Then the bluff was just straight at your head but they chopped in that bluff, the Germans had made a walkway all the way at the top of that thing that's the way we went up and got on top of that bluff.

Interviewer: Did you think about what that must have been like a few days before when those guys they had to go up there with those machine guns going?

Mr. Bumpus: Oh out there with them shooting at you every minute. No. I don't know everything that beach was still full of everything out there whenever we went in. Bodies and all. But I was taking care of number one and I never got as sick I never got as seasick and I had been on water all my life and I never got as seasick in my life as I did on that little ole landing craft going in. But just as soon as I hit that beach I was alright, it left.

Interviewer: Can I ask you one more thing?

Mr. Bumpus: Anything, that's what I'm here for. I've missed a lot of it I know but I've tried to give you everything I've been through.

Interviewer: I just wanted to know when you were first captured the Germans you were speaking to, you mentioned the one that spoke English did they ever interrogate you did they ever ask you

Mr. Bumpus: I don't know where this guy went to I never seen him no more, they kept me in that one little building that night and the next morning they carried me down to the church and all of my crew all

of my platoon and everything had gone and they had a church full that I didn't know. They had 99th division and everything in the church and they carried me down and I was a loner then all of my company and everything had already gone. I don't know why they put me in this basement of that house. I know we had something in the Red Cross and all they was supposed to turn you a loose if you was in a battle or something and let you go back to your soldier. Your own help your own wounded and all they didn't do it on that deal.

Interviewer: Did they ask you any questions about what unit you were from?

Mr. Bumpus: They knew more about us than we knew about ourselves. They'd ask but see we didn't have no nothing no bars, no stripes no nothing on the front line. But they knew what outfit and everything. Of Course you could tell them there wasn't nothing else you could do but tell them. But there was a 77, 89 and I don't know how many different others that was in there but when they got us on back, they run us in a big building went upstairs in this big room and we all had to go in through a door and this one guy he would ask you all the questions. And you'd go up you'd go through a line and the ones on this line they wanted to know what company you was in and what's your rank and all that stuff. Then when you left that you come back down to the door that you come in and there was another guy sitting there he searched you for watches ring everything that you had left on you. But we didn't have anything they'd done stripped everything. Took us out of there and when we went on up and marched in to some little ole town, I don't know what it was and Christmas day they was still marching us and they march us through a town down one street and up the other. And these ole German women would hold these cakes and pies out the window and we hadn't had nothing to eat in about six days. But marching us through them old towns like that just made them Germans feel good. Like they was winning the war or something.

Interviewer: Mr. Bumpus form the bottom of my heart thank you for your serve to our country.

Mr. Bumpus: Well it's nothing nobody didn't do I didn't volunteer but I did everything I could after I got there. I knew I had to go everybody else was going and I was young but I wish I'd have had more training than I got seventeen weeks basic then I got nine days at home went from here to Pennsylvania to New York and from New York to England.

Interviewer: Well if it weren't for you and your buddies though we wouldn't be sitting here doing this.

Mr. Bumpus: We was fighting for our country then. Soldiers they was fighting. I don't know how they do now. Looks like that place they in now I wouldn't want to be over there.