

Bowmon: Bowman sometime people likes to put an "a" in there. That is incorrect my birth certificate read mon so that's what I've been going by. I was born July 14, 1923 I'm 79 years old.

Interviewer: And what branch of service did you enter into?

Bowmon: Okay when I first came in the service I was 19 years old. I had basic training at Camp Wallace Texas I mean yeah basic training at Camp Wallace Texas. But prior to going I was inducted into the army from Camp Livingston Louisiana. Now when I came in the army I had an option. At the time I was going to be drafted the recruiter said okay Mr. Bowman you have an option you can come in as a draftee under a six month duration. What that is is if you are to walk in today six months from now you will be released from the service. So that's the option I chose now I went to Camp Wallace Texas for my basic training there I had search light training for a grace there was about eight weeks. This is about 30 some hours north west of Galveston Texas. And we would more or less monitor airplanes tell what by the sound of the planes you could tell what type of plane it was. We were mostly monitoring German type Mr. Smith guide wood bump planes so you'd get different sounds because you had a headset and you could pick them up. Okay from there I went to Camp Wallace I mean Camp Stewart Georgia. There we began my what we call an AIT advanced initiative training. We were broken down into teams of two sections one as a tracker and one as a gunner section. So I was on the tracking since I had the search light training and it was much easier for me to pick it up than to cross over and go to gunnery. So that's where I started there but upon completion of that the tracking section was disbanded when we went to Camp Attaberry Indiana. To replace that we received M51 machine guns that is what is a search might trailer with an M51 squad 50 I was in that. So from that leaving from as a jump leaving from the monitoring airplanes to go into machine gunnery where it was it wasn't hard you know because you know I wasn't use to gunnery so therefore I always thought if you leave something maybe something good would come out of it. That's what I did.

Interviewer: I'm gonna go back and back up just a little bit. What were your parents your parents full names and their occupations?

Bowmon: Okay my parents' full name my father's name was Will Gurley Bowman Gurley. My mother's name was Mammie Pearce Bowman. Okay my father worked with timbers he cut timbers for the paper mill in the town where we lived. He would leave on a Monday come back on a Thursday. My mother did domestic work so that is what my family did. Now in my family there was eight of us siblings. I'm the only one that's left out of the eight.

Interviewer: Out of eight siblings how many brothers was there in that group?

Bowmon: In that group just me.

Interviewer: All the rest there were seven girls and you?

Bowmon: Seven girls and me.

Interviewer: What were you in the middle or were you the oldest the youngest?

Bowmon: No I was the seventh child. Now you know in the I don't know how people look at this but you know town in our family they always said that the seventh child is either lucky or unlucky. If you was born with a veil over your face why you could see stuff that nobody else could see. Which you have to

cut that veil up once you reach seven years old. But I didn't have a veil over my face but as a I said me being the seventh child I figured that maybe the man upstairs have something in store for me because I'm still here. And my baby sister she died in 1990 so I went to see her when she was sick prior to passing and I told her I said Ree you've got to stick around because we've got to find out where our roots started at. And then so we can pass it on to our children so they will know where they came from because everybody came from somewhere. So my to go back to my father I never really could get a handle on where his relatives were at but I know they was from Florida there around Tallahassee. I just hear my mother said Black Seminole but that never really dawned on me what she was talking about. And but now she was from Georgia and my parents when I got to see her mother which was my grandmother she was born in South Carolina she was born on the Indian Reservation which was called Cherokee. And she was born in 1864 my father was born November 10, 1880. My mother was born August 31, 1888 which is the same day that my oldest daughter birthday August 31, 1962 and so that way I can always remember those two dates as long as I live.

Interviewer: Some important dates. Before you joined the military you said you were 19 years old what year was it when you joined?

Bowmon: That was in 1942.

Interviewer: Nineteen forty two. What was the highest level of education that you had had to that point?

Bowmon: Well see then where I went to school in Louisiana we didn't have twelve grades we had eleven. So I was a junior when I went into the service.

Interviewer: The reason I ask that question is because some of the interviews that I've done I've done my grandmother in North Carolina and in the North Carolina school systems they went for ten years. They went up to the tenth grade. I spoke to some people who lived here in Tennessee all their life and they went to twelfth grade. So that's the reason I like I want to see how far your education had progressed before you joined the military. So in 1942 you entered the military and from there or before then did you have any other jobs that you did after high school and before you went into the military or during high school?

Bowmon: Well you know during the you know end of the school year you know you did little odd jobs to make money where you could go to the movie or whatnot. And then I used to work at a paper mill you know and see you know people always looked at me that I was you know seemed to be much older than what I really what they perceived me as. And I don't know why but that's just the way it was. See because I used to go to work at this paper mill you know where they chipped up the wood you know like I was telling you about the wood that my father went and cut.

Interviewer: Right

Bowmon: They'd chip it up then they'd mull it up and then they would run it out into a round paper see. And I used to work at night you know from eleven to seven in the mornings sometimes and then the shift would rotate. And so I imagine that's what you know gave me the incentive to learn as much as I could during that time. And when he died you know it really hurt me because being 9 years old so you and my mother said, she always called me Watson, she said you know she said we never called my father father that was something odd. We always called him Bowman. And she said Watson Bowman

just passed and I said where did he pass you know he just died. So it really you know it was really you know hard for me because he had said what I was going to do as I grew up but then all of that was cut short. So then I had to rely on whatever my mother told me then. So like I always tell my kids and my grandkids always listen at your parents because those are the ones that brought you into the world caused you to be in the world these are the ones that's always going to tell you the right thing.

Interviewer: By the calculation I've got here you were born in 1923.

Bowmon: Correct

Interviewer: Your father past away you said when you were nine that would be 1932.

Bowmon: Correct

Interviewer: Do you have any memories during that time of the great depression and that time period in there when the stock market crashed and everyone was supposed to be out of a job and no money in the country. Do you have any memories of that?

Bowmon: Okay after my father passed well my mother worked like I told you domestic you know work. And then we had what they called the relief you know so you could go and sign and you could get like what they call today welfare. But back then it was relief so you would get food to supplement what you know whatever you grew and what not. So as far as me knowing about the stock market no that was that wasn't in my vocabulary at that time you know. But I knew what it was to have a dollar and I knew that during the time the depression the dollar was something like valued like something like 60 cents. That was the value of the dollar and then it went up you know to about 85 percent. You never had the full value of one dollar of buying power you know because what happened you've got to pay that tax on whatever you buy. So me and my sister we would always write out what we think we needed for the house then I would go down and get the lady to sign it and then I would come back and she and I would go to the you know distribution point and pick it up and come back home. So therefore to supplement that my mother grew a garden and we had like collar green, turnip greens, mustards you know and green beans, butterbeans whatever. So you know we really didn't you know we wasn't in no stage of starvation. So we always had food and my mother always said don't throw away no food. If you take something put it on your plate eat it. Because food is not to be wasted so during that time I used to would have to take like say earn money by taking a man's horse to have it dipped you know. So I'd get 25 cents every time I would take one horse. So then that would be you know my movie money you know for the weekend and what not so therefore like I say that's the way I always thought. So she said you know you've got make some kind of way to survive you know so that's what I took it as you know. And so and like when my mother died, my mother died in 1946, you know and I never will forget it. See my sister I had two sisters at that time living close by. One lived about two miles from where we was at and I ran all the way there. And on the way back she told me to stop and tell the doctor she was sick. So I stopped by and told the doctor by the time I got back it was about you know 7 o'clock. And so she told my she said watch my feet is cold you know and I told my sister which was named After Me I said After Me momma's foot is cold you know so she put a blanket over her feet. She said they feel pretty good you know like that so then she say well what time is it? And so you know so I was kneeling down beside her you know holding here because she said she was chilly you know. And so when I looked back like that to look at the clock it was ten minutes after seven and when I looked back she was gone. You know that has stayed with me a lot of nights you know I can still see her you know. You know how they say your eyes you know water you know but I said well I know she's not going to come back you know

because everybody got to go that same way and that's what I believe. And that's a fact because I haven't met nobody that went and came back to say how it is.

Interviewer: This is true. You've made a couple of references so far to religion or religious aspect. Did religion play a big part in your family growing up?

Bowman: That's right.

Interviewer: Some of the interviews again that I've conducted was it a six day work week for you and the seventh day was church? And take a break and then it started again on Monday morning.

Bowman: It was a six day work week you know and then we went to church on Sunday we went to Sunday School and then from Sunday School right into church. So we would get back home around 1:30 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. But then you know if they had like if they had you know say you know how people bring covered plates as they call it. And then everybody just they sit around and then you listen at the people talk you know. And then see and I was brought up as the AA&M church African American National Methodist Church. At that time we had the Baptist church also.

Interviewer: Alright readjust my camera for a minute. In 1941 a year before you joined the army December 7<sup>th</sup> Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. Do you remember where you were when you first heard this?

Bowman: See we didn't have a TV so we had radio. So this was on a Sunday morning as we were getting ready to go to church. So when we got to church that's when the preacher said that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor you know. So really at that time you know we really didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was at. So and so we had prayer you know and everything but it still was you know I never gave it a second thought you know what this why they did what they did. And so until today I have really it come to find out why this took place because you know our leaders you know never told us you know what was taking place. But it was it was just like if an individual has an accident okay it's a known fact the accident is caused by when two individuals fail to yield. And then you know during time of war that's when two individuals disagree you know so in other words and I look at it like this the best thing God did between two individuals it communication. And so when you do not talk to a person you do not know what he knows he doesn't know what you know. So in other words you have to talk to find out what an individual dislikes and what your dislikes are and then you can sit down and maybe you can understand one another. But if you don't talk to one another then you don't get nowhere.

Interviewer: On the following day December 8<sup>th</sup> President Roosevelt at the time gave a speech and asked for the declaration of war for Japan and it was put on the radio. Did you sit around you and your mother and your sisters did you listen to the radio address?

Bowman: Yeah we listened at the radio.

Interviewer: And one made time to listen to the radio address for that?

Bowman: Correct

Interviewer: What was your impression of this when you heard the President give this speech and did it sink in to you at the time that the United States was about to be involved in a full fledged war?

Bowmon: Well yes because see during that time there was you know a war in Europe you know. And see and this and by you know when Japan bombed you know Pearl Harbor that pulled the United States in there.

Interviewer: Right

Bowmon: And so then I could well I don't you know you see it's been so long that when I heard the speech I don't remember all the impregnate information that he said. But yet it still as I grew older then I was in the service then I began to read about what was taking place and like I said the leaders was not talking to one another. And at the same time when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor they were trying to come to a compromise there you know in Washington. And so like you said you know the leaders only put out the information they only want you to know. They are on a need to know basis and so therefore we just said we just said well looks like everything is going to be tightening up. But we had no idea that we was that it was going to be rationing. We didn't have no faint idea that rationing was going to take place. But we well to us it wasn't no big issue because we had been doing this all along you know.

Interviewer: I hear a lot from some of the interviews I do and people like my grandmother in Statesville North Carolina raised out in the country in the middle of nowhere. And my next door neighbor Nancy Robertson her interview that I did she felt the same way. You know the rationing thing it wasn't a big issue because that's just the way they lived at this time. And now that I've started conducting these interviews I seem to you see on TV on the history channel or something they begin to talk about all the rationing that took place. But then when I talk to people well it didn't affect me or my family when I was growing up it didn't affect my neighbors. So I'm trying to get an idea of just you know who really took the brunt of the rationing. It had to have been I'm obviously going to jump to a concluding the majority of it was up in the north they are the ones that suffered with rationing. The rationing deal because the people around here seem to have taken it quite well. When you got ready in 1942 you went to the induction center in Louisiana.

Bowmon: Right

Interviewer: Did you have any specific branch of the army that you wanted to go? Did you want to be a pilot did you want to try to become an infantry man or were you just open for whatever they gave you?

Bowmon: Well see when I first went in you know they give you this what they called aptitude test. Okay so on this test my average score go average out about something like 111. And so there was the army, navy and an airfare recruiter there and so the guy said oh god you made real good why don't' you go in the air force? I said well you know what I said I look at it like this I'm just going to be truthful to you. I said if you go in the air force you're up there in the sky and if you're in the navy you're going down below the water. But I said in the army both feet is on the ground. I can handle that but I said I have no control with it up in the air or with it up in the ocean. And so I told him I said well I look at it like this if God had intended for me to fly he would have gave me a pair of wings. You know so I don't see know wings where I can fly with if I was supposed to be you know in the water he would have gave me fins like a fish.

Interviewer: When we've already covered some of the locations that you went to. You left Louisiana you went to Texas, Georgia and then you were off to Indiana.

Bowmon: Right Camp Attaberry Indiana.

Interviewer: All of these places were these all within a one year time span in the year of 1942 or did you did it take you over a year? Or what was your time period between 1942 when you entered until you went to Camp Attaberry?

Bowmon: Okay when I went to it was about you see you've got like I say you've got eight weeks Camp Wallace Texas. You've got another eight weeks at Camp Stewart Georgia from there it was up to Camp Attaberry. And then we stayed there maybe two months but you know what now you know what I'm going to tell you you've probably never heard this before. You see at the time the army was operating with two armies. You ever heard that before?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bowmon: Okay so therefore we was there at Camp Attaberry and then they told us you've got to get off the post we don't want you here. Okay so beings that we was antiaircraft okay so there wasn't too many places that we could go. So they said okay we will send you to Fort Shoe Illinois. That's about 26 miles south of Chicago. So we was there three weeks and they said you've got to get out. Now we were in the army but yet still we was more or less like a stepchild. So we went to Canossa Wisconsin set up in our tents you know and that's where we stayed there until the early part of 1943. And from there we went to Camp Shanks New York and then we boarded a British ship and went to England. Landed at Liverpool our very first weapons and all went right along with us.

Interviewer: When you left say form Indiana and you finally made your arrival in Wisconsin during this time did you participate in any large scale maneuvers?

Bowmon: No

Interviewer: Or was it just about the time you get set up it's time for you to pack up and leave again?

Bowmon: Now what when we was at camp at Canossa Wisconsin it was we would have training you know like planes you now flying and they had you know a cable and they had a sleeve. So that's when we was getting training on firing on those type targets. Then we had what was known as water blowing targets that we battled. Then they arranged where we could go and at like you know it looked like a tank on a track.

Interviewer: Right

Bowmon: And so we got that's what we did there for about six months. And so then after that we packed up and that's when we went to Camp Shanks New York and from there we went to Liverpool England.

Interviewer: What was the moral of the soldiers that were in your unit what was their moral and were the officers and NCOs that you had appointed and above you what were the feelings for did you feel that they were competent in their abilities?

Bowmon: You know the moral factor you know was great because see you know because during that time you know the army was segregated. So the officers we had was white and so some resented being sent to black units you know in our you know you just have you know you have what is known as we always called it the sixth sense you know. That you can feel how a person feels about you as to the way

he treats you the way he talks to you and what not. Because if you don't talk to a person as he's a human being are you trying to degrade him you know? But the NCOS you know there was like holding the squeeze if they would take up for the enlisted men then they would be harassed by the officers. And some of them would get reduced or whatnot or transferred out so and you know and so therefore it really was but that still did not discourage nobody. You know so you know so we knew what the training we had we knew what we were supposed to do and that's what we did you know so we really enjoyed it you know. And so really during that time you had draftees in the army and so me being 19 years old I learned a whole lot by just listening to those guys talk. And see I listened and see the average age in the unit I was in you know what the average age was?

Interviewer: No

Bowmon: Twenty six 26 and here I am 19 years old with all of these 26 year old guys. But you had to still it was an education for me you know.

Interviewer: Did you you enlisted of course then you were a private when did you receive your first promotion?

Bowmon: Okay now before we get to that we have to go to you know to England and then to France. Okay

Interviewer: I was going to try to go to the series of that. I wanted to find out if you were promoted before you left to go to Europe or if you stayed at the private level until you got there.

Bowmon: When I came back okay you want to know when I did the first promotion. I came back in the army I got discharged like I say on that six months after the war ended. And then I met a guy from Pennsylvania he said he wrote me a letter he said Bowmon let's re-enlist and go back overseas. So during that time I had saw like you know like they had a sign we want you but see they had another sign here be a paratrooper wear the badge of courage. And that's what I wanted to do so I wrote to him and I said no man I'm thinking about going in the air force so that's what I did. I went in the airborne in 1947. And so prior to that when I came back in now I got discharged as a private I went all the way through from 1941 I mean 1942 21<sup>st</sup> of July to the 21<sup>st</sup> of November all the way through as a private. Now during that time you know you just would think that you would have got promoted to PFC no I got promoted to PFC when I came back when I re-enlisted and came back in the service. The guys said you mean they didn't promote you I said no he said well I'm promoting you to PFC. You're going back in the service as a PFC and that was in 1947.

Interviewer: So you said let's go ahead and go back with the leaving New York you arrived at Liverpool England you said in early when 1943?

Bowmon: Forty three.

Interviewer: Forty three all of your equipment gun vehicle all of your gear was with you at the time. When you arrived in Liverpool were you given temporary living quarters or were you given permanent quarters to stay there?

Bowmon: Well I'm trying to think I think we were I think we were put up in barracks I'm not for sure but I think we were put in barracks. I don't know might have been yes we were I think we were put in



barracks. And we had a motor pool there we put our vehicles and our weapons and the gunneries that we had.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in Liverpool?

Bowmon: Until D plus three.

Interviewer: D plus three?

Bowmon: Yeah

Interviewer: During your time in Liverpool did you or your unit ever take part in the training for the D-Day invasion and your areas that you needed to work on? Or were you just kind of stuck in the back somewhere?

Bowmon: No we was not stuck in the back somewhere we were there to defend Liverpool from the German Sputniks. And from the you know the Germans were just raising havoc straight so when we got there all of that ceased you know because you know when they say they've for antiaircraft there the planes they started flying at night before they was flying in the daytime. But when we got there no planes flew over our area during daylight hours and see now they would send us Sputniks over. And I remember one guy named Clyde Thomas you know and he said he used to call me Bo and he said Bo what is that I said Clyde that's incoming mail that's the mail carrier and I said if you ever hear that motor cut off you can just count about eight seconds and then you will hear the explosion. Because that's what's going to happen and but like I said once we got there but see everywhere I was at there was no planes flying over but further A Battery they got a bronze star for defending the town that they was in. Because that's where the Germans was really hacking havoc but see over Liverpool they didn't come over that way. So we went to so D-Day was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June we were on Normandy Beach set up with antiaircraft guns to protect the ships coming in where they could unload not be harassed by the Germans. There were aircraft coming over the straight and there wasn't none no way they didn't make it. If they came over that's where they stayed because when you've got you know four of those guns to a platoon your 50 caliber machine gun you know putting out 250 rounds per minute that's quite a bit of ammunition going up there. So and then and the we had the sister batteries down the line there just there was no way they could make it through that. So we were there and then the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> they made the jump into there. See they was you know the wind blew them drifted them down beyond their drop zone so it would take them something like 72 hours for them to regroup before they could get started. And then when they got started then St. Lo the Battle of St. Lo a lot of people lost their lives there because see there was hedgerows and the Germans had dug in trenches there and it was hard to get them out of there. And so I imagine that must have lasted about two months trying to get the Germans on the run out of St. Lo.

Interviewer: What when you had your first experience with combat and had actual fire on you or fire on someone else what type of feeling did you have?

Bowmon: Well my first experience we see because after like I said we left St. Lo we you know followed long behind the infantry units but we wasn't up with the infantry units. See we were guarding field artillery see they took us off the beach and said okay you will give antiaircraft support to the field artillery. And so my first encounter was that like I say I was a machine gunner on the M51 which is the one I was telling you about when we had the search light training. And one guy I was sitting on the



tongue of this M51 trailer and all at once we heard something to poof, his head left him. Now we was as close as from here to you and I you would think that that would really you know blow your mind. But I don't know we just said where did that round come from until this day nobody has ever told us where that round came from. And then about say a thousand yards from us there was a group of artillery guns but they didn't see nothing we didn't see nothing so we don't know where it came from. So from that day on alright it is payback time so then we moved from there took another position then we had one long frontward. I imagine he said he was going to try to see if he could get through but he didn't make it.

Interviewer: In your times on the gun I'm sure you rotated a shift to keep the guns manned and you had some free time. What did you typically do during down time that you might have had did you play cards were there did you do sports did you use that time to reflect and write what did you do?

Bowman: Well see you know from the time D-Day you didn't have time to be doing no sports. Okay so then you would be moving on and then you would stop and then you would set up. You know your position and so they would sit there until the infantry could move and then the field artillery would move. So we were just like that so we would write letters back home you know. And you know and I really that's when I found out of all those guys that was drafted that you know how fortunate I was to be able to read and write. And I used to write letters for those guys some of them and like I told my wife I never told nobody that before you know. Because I said you know I was fortunate that could have been me you know so like I saw so when a person is handicapped that way well I wouldn't call it handicapped didn't have the privilege of going to school but I did. So you can imagine you know how you would feel if you was in his position you know.

Interviewer: Right, I'm sorry go ahead please.

Bowman: So as we moved along then we became you know we had the Germans on the run and so then we changed patches you know third armor patch. So you know who that was don't you?

Interviewer: Yes sir.

Bowman: That's right then when we knew that then our mission changed. See they said that was the tank battalion being assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> army and we would have to give them you know air would have to have support. Now this was during the time what they call the Battle of the Bulge it was hot and heavy in that area. The 101<sup>st</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> army was surrounded there in Belgium so Roman had his troops there. Now Roman and General Patton went to school right up here at West Point together. And so Patton said well we've got to go break that circle at the Alco or else those two would be lost. You know you would figure that we would move at night, broad day light and they said Patton said I want you to get up with the 761<sup>st</sup> was the arrowhead. So that meant that we had to be they switched from the antiaircraft trailers the halftracks and that's wherever we was at. So we would ride on that halftrack be looking at the sky, never had nothing to come over. And so he said I want you to move here and when we come down I don't want nothing alive left, and that's right there wasn't nothing left. And so if you ever get a chance to go to Belgium there's a tank I think an A61 sitting right in the as you get into Belgium belongs to the A Company 61<sup>st</sup> infantry I mean 61<sup>st</sup> tank battalion. And that's where it's at and now like say if you go out here on Fort Campbell I don't think you'd ever read nothing where they have over there where they was surrounded and who broke them through. Broke through that circle of the Germans SS troop because they was marked up they would have wound up just like the 7<sup>th</sup> division in Korea losing their colors and when a unit lose their colors they cannot come back to the states as a unit.

Interviewer: When you were with the field artillery unit and I know when I was in the army the lifestyles in the field and definitely a far cry from a combat zone but the life styles that you led in the field were completely different. I would sleep on the ground I ate MREs where we knew the field artillery guys they had trucks they had hot meals. What were the and when you were out in your area with the field artillery defending them did you guys have the benefits of hot meals and cots and tents? Or was it all on the ground, c-rations and the whole nine yards?

Bowmon: Well see we didn't have no tents we didn't have no cot but we had what they called 10 in 1. Okay that's ten rations in one box you know so that took care of ten men. So we would you know we would take the covers from the truck and make a lean to if you so you had sleeping bags and air mattresses that's right that's what you had.

Interviewer: Now many men made up I should have asked you this earlier, how many men made up a gun crew for the type of gun crews you were on?

Bowmon: Okay on the you know the M7 carries which is a 40 millimeter you had two tractors a load and fire and the you had two ammo barrows so that gave you two tractors that's two load and fires three and two ammo barrows that's five right? Okay then on the halftrack you had about the same amount you know but see you didn't have no trackers but you had you know an ammo bearer so your ammunition was in 50 caliber machine gun boxes. And so therefore you got two guys over here and two guys back here you know in other words one guy over here and one there. So that means you've got four machine guns you've got four guys they have to make sure when one box is empty there's another one put in there.

Interviewer: You've got one waiting to go.

Bowmon: Right and so in essence you had a total of about your section consist of about 12 men. That's including you know the cheaper section and you know your telephone operator and what not. Of course you've got to have that telephone operator when you lay that line land line you've got to have communication with the gun with the other section that's on your left or your right. And so you actually had about 12 men to a section and we didn't have no you see now you might get what they call in Vietnam R&R you could go to town ever once every three or four months you know. And Patton said the way to keep a soldier happy let him go to town let him get that load out and let him come back then he's ready to do battle. And that's right that was a fact because if you keep a guy right there steady over and over daily you burn him out. But he's got to go somewhere to have an outlet.

Interviewer: Right when you were out and doing your missions and you got attached to 3<sup>rd</sup> army and you became the spearhead of this deal that was moving through to Bastogne. Were you said of course you didn't see any enemy aircraft that came over except for one lone plane were you at all did you have any other experiences or engagements with ground troops or anything of that nature?

Bowmon: No we never was engaged with no ground troops. But only one time you know they gave us the wrong co-ordinance and you know we went to our carrier and we was ahead of the infantry. So in other words like the infantry was here we was up here. That was and you talk about that order came as CSMO and when you get that everybody is just like what that's close station march order. So you know so you wonder where you're going and we was heading back the way we just came so then what we figured out we was too far up. But we was fortunate enough that there wasn't no fire fights there you now at that time.

Interviewer: Overall with what you heard and things that were told to you were you impressed with the German army? With their level of combat ability were you impressed with that or did you have any feelings one way or another towards that?

Bowmon: Okay after the war ended okay all of the machinery I mean the guns and all was taken away the only thing that was left there was the trucks. Okay we was up in the Belgium you know forest the Germans was cutting wood and we was hauling it down to railhead. So you know that's a way you know you could talk to the Germans and one German spoke real good English. He said you know what if ya'll had not destroyed our ammo ducts we would still be fighting today. Because see he said that's what happened that's why the war was cut short. We didn't have no fuel to fight but you know the area that I was in like I said I didn't see too many German aircraft. But I saw one you know you can just imagine those telephone poles out there I mean those light poles.

Interviewer: Right

Bowmon: We was sitting out there I mean it really scared us because I was sitting up in the there on the gun it was my turn to be on watch up in the gun. Your turret and all at once didn't hear nothing and all at once zoom there's a plane passed by us and the guy waved at us German soldier. He was that low that's why we couldn't hear him couldn't hear he was in one of those Mr. Smith 282.

Interviewer: When you were on your tour in Europe during this time were you ever wounded anyway maybe I mean even to consider vehicle accident breaking your foot even like that nothing?

Bowmon: No

Interviewer: Was there anybody around you that was shot or had some type of accident?

Bowmon: The only one we had had that accident was that guy I told you had that his head was shot off of his body. That's the only guy I can remember we losing out of our section you know.

Interviewer: And the end of the war and the drawing after everything was done you said you were helping the Germans they were cutting wood you were taking to a railhead.

Bowmon: Right

Interviewer: At that time or any time before then did you have any sense or any idea what the big picture was for the U.S. and the allies that were taking place in WWII? Did you have a sense of the big picture of things with the Germany first and then the Japan Theatre second?

Bowmon: Yeah okay now we had you know once the Germans surrendered okay then they said we was going to get ready to go to South Pacific and fight the Japanese. But when they came around they said clean up your weapons grease them down because we're going to turn them in well we knew right then we wasn't going nowhere. So like I said it was you know it was really an experience and it was educational you know. So like I say I'm here. Here I survived WWII, Korea and Vietnam so like I said the man upstairs maybe not just ready for me. So you know I'm blessed to be here.

Tape ended

