

Interviewer: State your full name.

Stack: James I use just James D Stack.

Woman in the background: His names Dalton his middle name is Dalton.

Interviewer: Okay and when were you born?

Stack: 1920

Interviewer: 1920 and where were you born?

Stack: In \_\_\_\_\_ and my mother died just shortly after I was born so I was raised in what you would call a foster home. And they were poor \_\_\_\_\_ and I had bullets removed from my brain and that makes me I guess\_\_\_\_\_.

Woman in the background: But where he said he was born that's in Montgomery County not very far from here.

Stack: Do what

Woman in the background: Where you were born that's in Montgomery County.

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: And what branch of the service did you serve in?

Stack: Well I went down in 1939 May the 10<sup>th</sup> and I guess I will always remember that. And they started me training there I was always crazy about trains anyway and the locomotive and well that's where I learned to operate a locomotive with the other man. They started me on as a \_\_\_\_\_ and he well I guess that's mostly my work I really wasn't bothered too much as a soldier.

Interviewer: Okay so were they considered the army?

Stack: Yes

Interviewer: Working on locomotives?

Stack: It was 730 the detachment quartermaster.

Interviewer: Was it some type of engineering or was it just the locomotive?

Stack: Just the locomotive other we had on they called this place Sand Hook and it was just more or less a body of sand out in I could see I could see New York City on there on a clear day.

Interviewer: Is that where you did your training though?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: Was that in New York State?

Stack: No it was in New Jersey.

Interviewer: Okay real quick just about your family you said you weren't raised by your parents. With the foster parents that you did have do you remember what their occupations were?

Stack: Farmers

Interviewer: Farmers?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: And with schooling how long did you remain in school?

Stack: I finished grammar school at Shady Grove School and then they had back in them days they had a couple of years of high school in the country. And so I started over at Fredonia but I didn't stay but one year.

Interviewer: So you just had one year of high school?

Stack: That's what they a boy was interviewing me up at Fort Hancock I told him that I well I didn't go to high school that long. And he says well I'm going to give you on the papers here one year.

Interviewer: Okay do you have any recollection of the great depression?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: How did that affect your family with them being farmers?

Stack: Oh I imagine we were just about as poor as any could be.

Women in background: Had plenty to eat and clothes to wear.

Stack: Yeah this lady that I was telling you about that she had plenty to fee me starting out. I guess I was raised on just plain cow's milk maybe it wasn't even sterilized. I can see a picture of the old country side and the farm house I was raised in. I remember even the bedroom that I slept ice would freeze maybe the just had a dipper back then and a water bucket. Mrs. \_\_\_ when she got up she'd take a bucket of water and maybe a chunk of ice in it you know sit it on the stove she'd had a wood stove and she cooked on a home range so she could get the bucket and ice loose.

Interviewer: Did you work on the farm as you got older a little bit with the family?

Stack: All the when I was teenager I started work. I guess I was maybe working a lot before I was a teenager. I remember share croppers and \_\_\_ Bagwell and I don't know whether these names will mean anything to you or not. And he was the man of a family I knew when I went into the army Mrs. Viola and I think she had about 6 kids and the old house the sharecroppers had to live in they were

something else. I mean for a family that large you think about a little old cabin for kitchen on one end and the other room they sleep in and maybe get all them kids.

Interviewer: Those were all people from around this area though?

Stack: Huh

Interviewer: Were those people from this area though?

Stack: Yes he was Viola was raised over there right about where I was born.

Interviewer: Before your time in the service was that just pretty much most of the work you did just work on the farm or did you have other jobs before you went?

Stack: No you know just corn and tobacco was all we lived on and I remember the \_\_\_\_ a sharecropper house I never will forget Uncle Jim and Aunt Lizzy was both black. And she saw me grow up so she thought about as much of me as I was her own child and she when I got my first furlough it was year and a half. They wouldn't give us a furlough any earlier than that and she when I come in on the furlough and Uncle Jim had already died with cancer and she come peddling out to the road over there in Fredonia she was living there with her daughter Mary her daughter. And she said I've got to she saw me coming up the road and she said I've just got to get out here and see this boy.

Interviewer: And before Pearl Harbor, we'll move into the war a little bit more now, before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threat against America from the Japanese? Were you worried about that very much?

Stack: No I was I was placed from the quarter master core I was already driving a locomotive then picking up in New Jersey they delivered our freight about a seven mile track we had out there. Then when the war started they started building new barracks you know around on the post anyplace they could build them. And I had a job everyday just going out there and picking up the freight and of course delivering it to cars when out back out there. New Jersey had the New Jersey Central they had a freight yard out there so every day they just set up sat out freight off and we got it from there.

Interviewer: Do you recall where you were when the news from Pearl Harbor came out on December 7<sup>th</sup>?

Stack: Yeah I was on furlough I got me just a short furlough a boys I worked with and I was out in Pennsylvania somewhere I don't exactly know. And this old boy I was with his father he got to go home and see his father and he was up in his 90s and living out there by his self and then they shoved me right on in from the quartermaster core they was organizing a railroad operating battalion. And out at Fort Wayne Indiana and I was out there at their camp for a while and they went to moving us to California to get on a ship. And the ships name was \_\_\_\_ France.

Interviewer: Alright

Stack: You know it was big one too it was as long as a football field.

Woman in background: He went from there overseas.

Interviewer: Okay

Stack: And I stayed overseas a little over three years I guess.

Interviewer: Okay

Stack: You want to put down when I got out?

Interviewer: Yeah I'll get to that in just a few questions the date and all of that for you. I'm just going to backtrack a little bit again and did you happen to listen to FDR's speech A Day Which Shall Live in Infamy? Did you get a chance to listen to that like on the radio?

Woman in the background: The President he's talking about.

Interviewer: President Roosevelt his speech did you happen to hear that?

Stack: Franklin D Roosevelt was president then wasn't he?

Interviewer: Yeah

Stack: They announced it yeah I was you might recognize the place on the map Tehran.

Interviewer: Right yeah

Stack: And I don't know how far that was from Russia but it wasn't too far but we was about south where our camp was from the \_\_\_\_ Sea. And I think \_\_\_\_\_ is in Russia.

Interviewer: Okay you said that you were enlisted was it May 10<sup>th</sup>?

Stack: May the 10<sup>th</sup>

Interviewer: 1939?

Stack: 1939

Interviewer: Okay did you go to an induction center where you tested for like skill and IQ levels?

Stack: They would swear them in and everything up there at the hospital grounds up there in Fort Hancock New Jersey. That was the old fort name.

Interviewer: Is that where you did your basic training as well?

Stack: Yeah not very long I guess I was too dumb.

Woman in the background: Or maybe they thought he was smart.

Interviewer: Yeah maybe they rushed you by it they figured you knew everything already.

Stack: I remember a lieutenant our young lieutenant he told me onetime I was talking about you could buy yourself out of the service if you wanted to and had the money. And but he told me he says you stay in the army three years then you will have some sense.

Interviewer: You mentioned just now that you could buy your way out of the army. Did people did you frown upon people who you know how they call them draft dodger or if they did buy themselves out of the military and didn't serve did you look down on that?

Stack: I believe people that I mean soldiers that would buy themselves out or some of them you know some would just walk off and not come back.

Interviewer: Yeah go AWOL or whatever.

Stack: Yeah AWOL and I guess I remember all the places I stopped from here from California I went right under starting out we had to get away from a doctor that we was they loaded all of us and called off our names. And when we got to the officer up there you know where they was \_\_\_\_ us he was just checking them off as they went by. And I know I went under the Golden Gate Bridge out there and we headed for Pearl Harbor. And we didn't get off any of us didn't have any leave there. Boys paddling around out to the ships there and taking the garbage off and he we pulled in there about a half a day. Then we had a special boat to guide us in there to a dock and then the same way when we left that place he went out in front of us and stayed up with us about a half a day. And then went to New Zealand from Pearl Harbor and I don't know whether you remember a map or anything. But New Zealand my best recollection of it is in two pieces I believe it's got an island north of it and one south of it. That's where they let us go ashore there for a while and some of us did anyway and but they was driving cars down there I know it wasn't fueled on I don't know what it was fueled on. But it had a barrel like thing sitting on the rear bumper and it had some kind of heat in there I don't know somebody mentioned burning coal. I don't know how whether they can make a gas by burning coal or not.

Interviewer: I'm not sure I've never heard that before. I'll have to try to find that one out.

Stack: Somebody was telling it.

Interviewer: When you guys did get off on the stops on the way over like when you got off in New Zealand what would you do with your down time or with your time on land?

Stack: Just I was just walking around with a group I'd say of about 20 men. And one old boy I can remember a few things and he asked a New Zealander he was interested in the poor people he asked a fellow where does your poor people live? And this New Zealander said well says I don't know said we don't know hardly want people are and that was about all of that conversation.

Woman in the background: They was all the same I guess?

Stack: No he didn't know maybe. And I thought they was pretty nice a country like that that didn't have any poor people. And you think about one like \_\_\_\_.

Woman in the background: He never went to no he never drank or anything like that he didn't you know go drink or anything like that.

Stack: I think about when Doc was in carrying him the doctor carrying him he was putting down stuff he wanted you to keep. He said you don't drink or dip or smoke.

Interviewer: How good or bad for that matter were the food and the living conditions on the ships that you guys were traveling to your destinations?

Stack: The a big part of the crew we finally later on after we got through the place in New Zealand we went to Bombay India and tied they tied the ship up. And that was a lot of our crew on there but I think it was the food that they I think they put on finally put on American cooks and just took it away from them. I know they served and it was hard to get used to they were serving sheep and they made some kind of stew.

Woman in the background: It wasn't too good food huh?

Stack: No it looked sloppy.

Woman in the background: You know we've been married 39 years and he never did talk about the army any very little and just recently that's all I've heard since. I was amazed you know when he started talking because he hadn't ever talked about it anything. He told me things that I never heard before.

Stack: Later on when you get ready for it I'll talk to you some I know overseas the men didn't have anything to know about me other than just being a southerner say he's out of Tennessee. And I'm sure that they planned on killing me because I was in one train wreck and they did almost kill \_\_\_\_ and several days after he made his last trip with me I had 113 mile run I'd take 8 hours rest at one place \_\_\_\_ Iran before they sent me back. They'd want to give me that much rest if they could of we wasn't too busy.

Interviewer: When you rested there where would you stay exactly?

Stack: Huh

Interviewer: When you rested there in your different stops after you were doing your train where would you be staying would you be staying in barracks over there?

Stack: Yeah they had we was to sleep of course you might just sleep in one it was just empty. I don't guess it was too clean they had a place to take a bath and everything. And but you might have to use one that a guy just got out of going to work.

Interviewer: What were your impressions of the officers your officers and the NCOs in command?

Stack: Some I guess they were pretty good but I know I wasn't as I've already said I was mistreated over there just because I was a southerner. That's all they could have against me because they I don't imagine they had ever been down in here. We had other southern boys over there I know a boy by the name of Jimmy Corn down her at I forget now he was in Georgia.

Interviewer: Was the majority of the people you were around were they mostly from the north then?

Stack: Yeah that's the reason.

Interviewer: And so you feel they looked down on you because you were from the south?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay did you ever get training with like arms like rifles or different weapons things like that? I know you were on the train but I didn't know if they trained you with the weapons as well.

Stack: Yeah Fort Hancock New Jersey we had they would make you stay with a drill say a drill corporal or something like that make you stay on it a week. That's about the limit of what soldier training I had.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to use any of that with combat overseas?

Stack: I used no we carried mostly just a 45 automatic. I carried them some on the train route.

Interviewer: Okay and did you ever use your weapon while you were over there?

Stack: No they the Iranians were more like the just the people you didn't see any that had any fight in them.

Woman in the background: A lot of people that talk to him now they're kindly amazed that he wasn't in no combat.

Stack: Right

Woman in the background: As long as he was there.

Interviewer: Yeah three years you said?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: And that's why it was just kind of surprising to me that you didn't have to get involved in the combat being over there for three years.

Stack: Now the only time I was in any danger of being killed now you think about I hadn't been issued a drivers license for an automobile. I drove a little some of the soldiers while I was up in New Jersey some of the soldiers would let me drive their car. But that train wreck and I didn't know anything just operating that train.

Interviewer: Was the train wreck in Iran when that happened?

Stack: Yeah I guess the railroad they had I don't know who built it I had heard several things that the Germans maybe helped build it down through \_\_\_\_\_ there. And that's where we unload from the ship but the reason I know that they had me picked out for to kill but the wreck just wasn't that bad. I don't know how come the fireman and another was firing the \_\_\_ with oil they were good engines. I was qualified to run diesel electric and.

Interviewer: Who well was it planned the train wreck was that planned thing or was it just a coincidence that happened?

Stack: That's where I think.

Interviewer: You think it was planned?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay who do you think planned that?

Stack: Well I imagine the one of the engineers over there did and maybe the station mate.

Interviewer: Are you talking about other Americans?

Stack: Yeah

Interviewer: Oh wow so there was that much resentment.

Stack: If they had a long enough interview on the wreck they had an interview I had to go and old major and if had had long enough to just investigate all into it he might have got something out of it. But as much as I've thought of it since I've been home well I've got a different view of it.

Interviewer: Right

Stack: It tore the on the fireman side it do any damage on the right side where the engineer sits you know.

Interviewer: Right

Stack: But that fireman he come across the deck of the engine to me and he had on two windows sliding windows you know and it broke the glass enough that he got them on his head some way. And he shot his self in two or three days after that.

Interviewer: Wow

Stack: He shot his self in the leg and the captain called me in on that. He wanted to know if he seemed depressed or anything. I told him no depressed we had to run we had to take engines over there without a headlight. And I don't know who stole the lights but they couldn't have lost out somebody had to be taking them out.

Interviewer: Were you close to him your fireman?

Stack: Huh

Interviewer: Were you close to him the man you worked with on the engine were you good friends with him?

Stack: Yeah oh yeah six foot he sat about six or eight foot over on his side you know on the left. And he had a if he could if he had had a headlight he was hauling box cars that the reason I say that anybody that was pulling a train would have had sense enough to pull his train in clear of the main track if he had

any sense at all. But he left three or four boxcars out on the main track. I didn't have nowhere else to go and another thing he done the station master that was going to hook sometimes he'd hook they had kind of a thing that they hooked them up on you know just bent over I don't know whether it was mostly wood. And then tie that old ticket that I was supposed to get and all he had wrote on it is you are clear such and such a station. And I remember a station every once in a while but he was the one that was supposed to know whether that track was clear from his station to the next one that you was going to. They left them out there and he flagged me with his light to come on through you know. And that's what I did I thought everything was clear out of his station.

Interviewer: Right

Stack: And that's the reason I know somebody was planning to kill me.

Interviewer: Wow I can't believe that.

Stack: But I got by without a scratch.

Interviewer: Your friend the fireman that was with you you said he ended up shooting himself in the leg. Did he survive that or did he end up dying from that?

Stack: I assume no.

Interviewer: Oh you never talked to him after that?

Stack: I imagine they flew him back home because the captain that's about all he asked me is was he depressed or anything.

Interviewer: Right

Woman in the background: But he was a good friend of yours?

Stack: Yeah I didn't I don't remember his name or anything. I wish I had.

Woman in the background: But he treated you alright?

Stack: Huh

Woman in the background: He treated you well.

Stack: Oh yeah had a boy firing for me some that was out of Kentucky over here and he says I'd like to keep firing for you said you just seem more like folks.

Interviewer: How often were you on the train tracks making your runs?

Stack: I was I guess most of them you get on them about eight hours 113 miles.

Interviewer: Okay so you had eight hours on the track and then how long was your rest time before you had another run?

Stack: It was eight hours rest.

Interviewer: Okay so you went eight hours on eight hours off?

Stack: But if they had to move something and they were in kind of a rush to get everything through they called you sooner.

Interviewer: When you did have your eight hours off did you get like hot food were the conditions with that I know you said with the bathrooms and that you had to share a lot. But how were the food conditions after you made your run?

Stack: We'd try to clean up the best we could and as quick as we could we didn't know when we would be called. And we just get in the bunk.

Interviewer: Okay so you pretty much slept on your downtime.

Stack: Yeah

Woman in the background: But the food was pretty good wasn't it?

Stack: Oh yes it was pretty good as good as any army food.

Interviewer: Right so I guess you probably felt sleep deprived sometimes or over worked maybe?

Stack: Half way on this run they had a kitchen and a cook I don't know whether they ever changed the cook or not. But they'd have coffee and you could eat a snack and like these times they wasn't going to stop you they'd well if they were going on too I'd had them hand me super and a good two or three cups of coffee in just a ten coffee can or something and something to eat. And we'd go on through sometimes and not even stop to eat.

Interviewer: Were you ever promoted during your time in the service?

Stack: I was at Fort Hancock New Jersey I had a promotion I thought it looked like a lot of money for a soldier. I had the first class rating and I had what they call a first in first I didn't know what the strips all meant you know on your blouse and uniform. But when I had \_\_\_ they thought you were really getting the other soldiers thought you were really getting in the money then. It looked like a lot of money to me see I drew some I was in the army they paid \$21 a month. You paid your \$2 a month laundry bill out of that. I think that the first rate it was the one that paid the most the best I remember it was on up around 70 and 80 dollars a month.

Interviewer: That was a good job huh.

Woman in the background: He's got a picture (looking at a picture of a group of men).

Stack: I do know that I'm in this section here

Interviewer: The first part over here. Alright that's a good picture.

Woman in the background: It says that outfit on there doesn't it where he was at?

Interviewer: Oh yeah quarter master core Fort Hancock yep. That picture is from 1941.

Stack: Huh

Interviewer: I was just telling the date from the picture is form 1941.

Stack: That was the year the Japs made

Interviewer: That's just the year down there.

Woman in the background: I don't have my glasses on.

Interviewer: That's just where they developed it I imagine.

Woman in the background: My daughter was going to get a frame and put it in but she hasn't done it.

Interviewer: It would be nice if you could frame that it is a pretty picture to put up.

Woman in the back ground: Yeah it would be a special one she can get it she used to work for a photographer.

Stack: You know some of the faces on there look familiar to me.

Interviewer: You can picture them in your head probably. Alright I'm just gonna ask you a few more questions and I guess we can finish up.

Woman in the background: Where are you from?

Interviewer: I am from well my family is all from Minnesota but I went to high school here in Clarksville and I've been living here for the last 6 or 7 years so I guess I can claim Clarksville now.

Stack: Where were you born?

Interviewer: I was born in Stuguard Germany actually 1978.

Stack: Germany?

Interviewer: Yes sir my dad was in the military and we were stationed over there when I was born. Last couple of questions here for you. Were you impressed with the qualities of the enemies army with the Nazi's or the Japanese did you think that their army was qualified or their leadership and tenacity things of that nature?

Stack: I never met a foreign person I never was around that at all.

Interviewer: Okay the only other real things I have is you were saying your left eye it was damaged what year was that?

Stack: It was some time in the 40s early 40s.

Interviewer: You were still in the military though when that happened?

Woman in the background: He was blind and they shipped him on overseas.

Stack: And I didn't know that the army would do that then. I doubt them taking a man with one eye and sending him overseas.

Interviewer: Right

Stack: But they did. And I run just this right eye all the time when I was on the railroad. Of course I knew everything but I knew everything about the engines and all. If I was taking off say going to the south if I was on steam engine and another thing that I didn't tell you weeks we'd have to run Iranian crew on the second engine. That was a rugged railroad there You had to have double barrel engines to get over. And you'd come through some cuts a steam engine makes a world of noise anyway coming out of that smoke stack. And you'd get to some rock cuts nearly on up 100 feet deep. And you could get two big engines inside them cuts too I'm just glad I wasn't put somewhere along them rock cuts they say a tunnel through the place. I'd hate to run through that because they put out so much smoke and gas.

Interviewer: I forget to ask you this earlier and I'll ask you now. What were some of the things that you carried on your trains was it just all military equipment and if so what type of equipment?

Stack: I guess most of it on the freight yard up there and they wouldn't let us go any further than there.

Tape ended