

Interviewer: Okay first off what is your full name and when and where were you born?

Bradley: John Edward Bradley. I was born in Stewart Tennessee April 7, 1923.

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

Bradley: Army infantry.

Interviewer: And what was the primary unit you served in?

Bradley: I was a mortar man mortar machine gun mortars and 30 caliber machine guns.

Interviewer: And what were your parents' names and what were their occupations?

Bradley: Farmers and Harry Bradley was my father.

Interviewer: And do you have brothers and sisters?

Bradley: Not anymore they're all gone. I had two brothers and a sister but they are all deceased.

Interviewer: And as far as schooling goes how far did you make it through high school?

Bradley: Up through the third year of high school then I joined the army. I left at the top of the fourth grade. That's what everybody was doing at that time so I did it too.

Interviewer: Sure what year was that 1941?

Bradley: That was 43 I think it was.

Interviewer: Yeah do you have recollections of the great depression prior to the war?

Bradley: Yes I do.

Interviewer: What was that like for you did it affect your family?

Bradley: Well it didn't bother us we was all farmers. We had plenty to eat and nobody had no money I didn't think you were supposed to so it didn't bother us. But we eat good.

Interviewer: Were you old enough to have a job before your time in service or did you have any other occupations?

Bradley: Well it was off and on I had jobs nothing for very long at a time, I didn't want one.

Interviewer: I'm sure you worked on the farm.

Bradley: I did that too yes. I drove trucks and tractors.

Interviewer: Do you remember before Pearl Harbor how seriously you took the threat that the Nazi's or the Japanese

Bradley: No I didn't

Interviewer: You didn't think about it much? You didn't read the newspaper?

Bradley: No I didn't it didn't enter my mind too much. Of course when your 16 or 17 years old you don't think much about stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yea do you recall where you were and how you heard the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Bradley: Yes I do it was a Sunday morning my daddy had just bought a new truck that day we went and picked it up Sunday morning. I remember that day well.

Interviewer: Did you listen to FDR's speech?

Bradley: Yes we did. I listened to that in high school.

Interviewer: And I suppose you never imagined that the war would reach us.

Bradley: No it won't affect me.

Interviewer: Did you approve of the way FDR was handling his office?

Bradley: Yes

Interviewer: And were you drafted or did you join up?

Bradley: Well I was going to be drafted so I went ahead and joined. I'm considered a draftee though.

Interviewer: Did you have a preference for the branch of the military you served in?

Bradley: Yes and I asked for the infantry and I got it because at that time everybody wanted action.

Interviewer: Sure

Bradley: I got it.

Interviewer: Did you go to an induction center?

Bradley: Oh yes

Interviewer: Where you tested for skill and IQ levels and all of that?

Bradley: In Camp Shelby Mississippi.

Interviewer: What kind of basic training did you receive?

Bradley: Well I had nine weeks basic training in everything from map reading to rifle practice all that good stuff.

Interviewer: And what was your impression of your fellow recruits in basic training?

Bradley: At that time?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: They were all good. There were no goof offs there really wasn't we were all serious.

Interviewer: Was that the first time you had left had been far away from your home or left the state?

Bradley: No I had worked away from home some. I missed my home yes but I didn't consider running off. Some did leave they couldn't take it they went awol. I knew better than that.

Interviewer: Did you practice or participate in any maneuvers here in the states before

Bradley: Yes

Interviewer: What kind?

Bradley: I was stationed in Pennsylvania in _____ and we went on maneuvers up in West Virginia.

Interviewer: Did you feel before leaving did you feel well prepared for fighting?

Bradley: Yes

Interviewer: Training was good.

Bradley: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What kind of the living conditions in the camps

Bradley: Where I was at?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: They were alright you know it was the army.

Interviewer: Sure

Bradley: We ate good had warm barracks to sleep in unless you were on maneuvers of course that's the story.

Interviewer: Did your unit, your unit traveled overseas to the European Theater?

Bradley: Pardon?

Interviewer: You traveled to the European Theater?

Bradley: Yes

Interviewer: Did you from which port did you depart and how long was that voyage?

Bradley: We left from Camp _____ in Washington on the USS _____ it was the ship that assisted the Queen Mary. I went and came on the same ship.

Interviewer: And how many soldiers were onboard do you remember?

Bradley: There were approximately 9,000 on that one boat.

Interviewer: And where did y'all land?

Bradley: _____ Hampton. We landed in England then we crossed the Chanel two weeks later.

Interviewer: And did you participate in practice maneuvers there in England as well?

Bradley: Uh huh

Interviewer: And were you housed in temporary or permanent barracks?

Bradley: Pardon

Interviewer: You were housed in temporary or permanent barracks?

Bradley: In England we were in quanza huts. I don't know whether you'd call them permanent they were barracks they were just quanza metal buildings.

Interviewer: I see. And did you make civilian contacts while you were there in England? Did you talk to any

Bradley: Civilians?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: Oh yea we'd go into town if we wanted to and there was a pub right next door so we didn't really have to go far.

Interviewer: Sure. How long after arriving in Europe did you see did you enter into combat? How long was that before

Bradley: Oh I'd say about four weeks before we was in combat. We landed in France of course and traveled up to France and our first objective was ___ Belgium.

Interviewer: And

Bradley: The ____ River we crossed.

Interviewer: Do you remember the type of equipment you had with you when you went into combat? Was it exactly what you expected or were there surprises involved in how you were supplied?

Bradley: I was in mortars and machine guns and everything went great with us they all worked good yes.

Interviewer: And did you have a positive impression of the officers and NCOs they had?

Bradley: I was well satisfied with the officers we had. General Bradley's nephew was our company ____ officer. He was very good he was tough but he was a good officer he was OCS. Now West Point yea he was from West Point.

Interviewer: And where was your first experience with combat Belgium was the first?

Bradley: It was in France.

Interviewer: What kind of experience was that?

Bradley: It was something different. It's hard to explain maybe it's five or six o'clock in the morning when you jump on this attack. Everyone was carrying their rifles down like this shooting and it smells of gun powder. You never forget it.

Interviewer: How did it feel to be shot at and to shoot back?

Bradley: Sure we were shot at mud splattered in our face. The rattles were hitting so close to me that I had the base plate up edgewise to protect my face and they were hitting beside of me.

Interviewer: And did you feel that the cohesion of your unit was strong did you guys hold together and work well together?

Bradley: What

Interviewer: The unit that you were with did you guys work well together?

Bradley: Oh yes we better that's serious business.

Interviewer: And how soon after ____ France did you have some free time or time outside of combat?

Bradley: _____ I don't know as I ever had any free time. When we had ____ off we could go to the neighborhood town right close by. But as far as going back on a pass no, never.

Interviewer: And from France you traveled to Belgium and then how long were you there in Belgium?

Bradley: The reason see they sent us over there in Germany Europe we was scheduled to come home. They sent us orders we were going to go from there straight to Japan and that's what we did.

Interviewer: So you fought in both wars.

Bradley: But just before we left to go Japan surrendered and we didn't have to go.

Interviewer: Well that's good.

Bradley: Then I came home for 30 days and then went back to Mississippi.

Interviewer: When you were in the field did you get hot food, rations?

Bradley: At times but in combat no we didn't have a chance to get it we ate sea rations k-rations.

Interviewer: Did y'all sleep on the ground? Did you often sleep on the ground or in tents?

Bradley: We slept on the ground and we slept in houses. But we wouldn't sleep in their beds we'd sleep on the floor.

Interviewer: Were you sleep deprived at all?

Bradley: Pardon?

Interviewer: Were you sleep deprived did you have a lack of sleep?

Bradley: No but at times yes but if we was in ___ we slept good. Of course somebody had to get up and work more duty at three o'clock every morning if it was your turn you got up because we had to pull the guard duty regardless.

Interviewer: And did you and your fellow soldiers have time to relax at all play cards?

Bradley: Oh yes

Interviewer: And were you able to keep in contact with your family back home?

Bradley: Yes but it was slow. We had what they called v-mail and they'd make a picture of it and send it. It would still take a long time. It was all censored our company officer had to read it before it was mailed. It was free the postage.

Interviewer: Do you recall any of it being censored or were there restrictions on what you were allowed to talk about?

Bradley: Oh yes yes if you put something in your letter that shouldn't be there they'd just mark it out. It was censored heavy.

Interviewer: And where would you say you experienced the harshest combat was it there in France or later in the war?

Bradley: It was after we had crossed the Rhine going into Germany that was the roughest.

Interviewer: That was the Battle of the Bulge?

Bradley: Yea and the Siegfried Line they had a lot of pointers _____ with concrete that we couldn't get into.

Interviewer: And were you ever promoted during your service time?

Bradley: What?

Interviewer: Were you promoted during your service time?

Bradley: Promoted?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: No

Interviewer: What about the others around you did you feel that those who earned promotions deserved them that earned those promotions?

Bradley: The way that worked there was a program the Army specialized training program and certain ones before we ever got them went to this Army specialized training program and they had to have a certain IQ to go there. And they were very good and when we'd need a replacement they would pick from them. We didn't get a chance to have a promotion. Nobody really wanted one. We got a boy command he was a Jewish boy Jerome _____ and he made staff sergeant one day but he drowned that night and never knew it.

Interviewer: Now do you recall the seasoned troops how did they relate to the replacements that would come in?

Bradley: Great oh yes

Interviewer: Didn't take long for them to pick up?

Bradley: They were just as serious as we were they knew they were new and whatever we said they'd listen to us. No there was no problem there.

Interviewer: I guess you know obviously combat can take a toll on you, did you ever feel psychologically any impact of that?

Bradley: No I didn't maybe I just didn't think about it. I was scared as much as anyone else but I just gritted my teeth and went on.

Interviewer: Were you did you ever feel impressed by the qualities of the enemies fighting?

Bradley: They were very good. They were more qualified than we were really.

Interviewer: Now what about civilians and refugees that you encountered

Bradley: They were great to us Germans and all.

Interviewer: And were you part of the occupation force?

Bradley: Just for two weeks. We was schedules for them then they changed it they were going to send us to Japan because they were still fighting there. So I only had two weeks occupation.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded?

Bradley: Me?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: No I got a nick above right here but I didn't go to the medics. If I'd have went they would have sent my parents a telegraph that I was wounded in action and they wouldn't know how long how much for maybe until I wrote them a letter. So I never did go I didn't get the Purple Heart or nothing no way.

Interviewer: Did you receive any other awards for your service?

Bradley: I got the Bronze Star.

Interviewer: And were close friends fellow soldiers wounded, killed in battle?

Bradley: Nine from my squad killed.

Interviewer: And while you were fighting did you ever have a sense of the big picture of what the strategy was?

Bradley: No you know at my age I really didn't keep up _____. I really didn't know what we was doing there. They said well we're have war that's all.

Interviewer: And did you ever have encounters with the atrocities the Germans were committing against the Jews and other people of Europe? The kind of atrocities in the concentration camps?

Bradley: Yes we seen some of those camps they were a mess. You wanted to get out of them as soon as you got in them. You didn't want to breath in there it was horrible very horrible.

Interviewer: And how did your unit or how did other soldiers and yourself included kind of react to the realization of the truth.

Bradley: They couldn't take it just couldn't take it. They wanted to get out of there. Really we had no duties there because the medics went in there they couldn't feed them we couldn't just throw food out there they'd kill their self eating it.

Interviewer: Do you recall particular moments acts of bravery on the part of yourself or others?

Bradley: No

Interviewer: Just doing your job?

Bradley: No I can't think of nothing unusual. We just did what we had to do. If they said do it we did it.

Interviewer: That's bravery in itself. How did you receive the news of Germany's surrender? Was there a celebration?

Bradley: No we were very quiet very quiet. We liked the German people they were good to us civilians I'm speaking of. The SS that was just like a different country dealing with those guys. Of course they had been trained so strict. That's what got a lot of them killed too.

Interviewer: And did it I guess did you have you know a lot of soldiers in war that will often say that their opinion about how or what their expectations were coming in changed over time as the war progressed. Did you feel like that?

Bradley: No nothing changed with me.

Interviewer: Do you recall the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Bradley: We just seen on the headlines of the Army Times paper.

Interviewer: And did you feel that the use of such powerful weapons was justified?

Bradley: I think if they hadn't have used it they killed a lot of people yes but if we'd have invaded we'd have killed a lot and there'd have been a lot of us killed. We were scheduled for the invasion we was ready to leave Germany and go straight there when they dropped them when the invasion. We didn't like it but we knew what the invasions were.

Interviewer: Do you or how did your family get by while you were away? Did they participate in the war effort here at home?

Bradley: They was farmers that's all they could do.

Interviewer: And I'm trying to make sure I cover all the bases. What were the period of years that you were there in Germany exactly? From the beginning to the end how many years were you there or how

Bradley: How long was I there?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: About a year and a half I think it was.

Interviewer: Have you been back since?

Bradley: No I would like to go back to Belgium I liked Belgium.

Interviewer: And have you kept in contact with?

Bradley: No I haven't.

Interviewer: Has your sense of the significance of the war changed at all over time?

Bradley: No war is bad but sometimes it's necessary.

Interviewer: And what did you do after the war?

Bradley: Oh I piddled around driving a truck here and there and then later on I got married and I went to Michigan and I worked for Cadillac Motor Car Company for 30 years. I retired in 1980 and moved back to Tennessee.

Interviewer: Do you have any fond memories of your time in service that really stand out for you?

Bradley: No I can't say of a particular one. I was reading on this thing though one Sunday we was off in Pennsylvania very close to Hershey Park and I enjoyed going to Hersey park. _____ but if you got there and got drunk screwing around you were restricted and could never come back. Old man Hersey didn't put up with nothing he didn't but everything was free to us there parks and all.

Interviewer: And the experience in Europe the civilians you encountered were they generous?

Bradley: Oh yes yes yes

Interviewer: Were there any soldiers who that you can recall that just kind of

Bradley: Abused it?

Interviewer: Abused it yea.

Bradley: No

Interviewer: Not to your recollection?

Bradley: No I tell you soldiers back then they were more tame than they are today. Of course we didn't have dope we could go to the battalion club of course then drink the beer. But we didn't get sloppy drunk no because if you did you couldn't go back.

Interviewer: Do you have children of your own today?

Bradley: Do I have children?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Bradley: I have two sons ones retired from General Motors and he lived in Florida now and the other one lives here he works for the school system he's my youngest son.

Interviewer: Have you been able to talk to them about your experiences in the war?

Bradley: Not much no. They never asked I don't bother them. Oh they know they've seen my literature they know.

Interviewer: You have a collection of photos there.

Bradley: Would you like to look at that?

Interviewer: Yes sir. What kind of activities did you participate in while you were not in combat? Did you play sports or cards?

Bradley: Oh no we didn't have no time for that none at all.

Interviewer: And did the weather conditions ever seriously affect you?

Bradley: No I couldn't tell it wasn't a lot of difference. It was hot and then it was cold.

Interviewer: Have you ever visited the memorial?

Bradley: No

Interviewer: In Washington D.C. would you like to?

Bradley: Someday I think I would yes.

Interviewer: Are these individuals that you were

Bradley: This was our commander.

Interviewer: Mr. Brigadier General Don Faith. Is there anything that you wish future generations would remember more than anything else about this war?

Bradley: Well I don't know how to put it how useless it is. There is no winning in wars.

Interviewer: Did you bring back artifacts or souvenirs from there your time there?

Bradley: I had a German snipers jacket and it's supposed to be in a museum in Nashville. And I had a pair of nuks brass nuks I got them off of a truck driver. The sergeant stepped the truck was pulling up a hill a German truck and the sergeant stepped on the running board and pulled him out and got these nuks off of him and gave them to me. I let an old man at home after I came home he wanted to keep them a day or two and I said okay. Well while he had them he got robbed and the robbers taken his nuks. And the robbers were caught in Bowling Green and the police destroyed them. Nuks are strictly against the law but each nuk had a pack on it and if you hit something like that it tore marks right down.

Interviewer: That's unfortunate.

Bradley: Yea I should have never let the old man have them.

Interviewer: Did you what was the greatest distance that you traveled from home during the war? Was it just to Germany?

Bradley: Yea

Interviewer: Did ever encounter the Soviet troops that were coming from the East troops from Russia?

Bradley: Yes uh huh.

Interviewer: Did you have a fond

Bradley: We had very little contact with them because we left about that time. But they were odd people they swear that they didn't know what a battery was and they were washing their hair in the commode. I heard they actually caught them doing that. But I wouldn't take nothing for my trip over there my experience. And it didn't affect me later on after I got out and goofed around a year or two and got married and had to go to work. Then I spent 30 years on Cadillac's.

Interviewer: Do you feel a sense of pride about your service?

Bradley: Pardon?

Interviewer: A sense of pride about your service?

Bradley: Yes

Interviewer: That's good

Bradley: It's something that can't be taken away from me. It was a learning experience very much. I met some wonderful people. I knew every one of them well (pointing at a photograph of a unit on the wall).

Interviewer: Those are your

Bradley: My squad.

Interviewer: Your squad.

Bradley: That dude with black hair that is Sergeant Crooked Arm Clark he had an arm broke as a kid and it was real crooked so we called him Sergeant Crooked Arm.

Interviewer: And those gentlemen survived.

Bradley: That's me standing on the back. That's was in _____.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

Bradley: Pardon?

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

Bradley: No I can't think of nothing. I had a good wife for all those years cancer got her. We raised two sons and they never gave us no trouble the police never had to come to the house. We're proud of that but she raised them right. I was working I worked afternoons mostly and I gave her credit for raising the boys.

Interviewer: Your experience in the military served you well here at home.

Bradley: Oh yea

Interviewer: And you received were you welcomed with a celebration on your return?

Bradley: No

Interviewer: So you didn't have the experience some soldiers later had.

Bradley: Ordinarily if I was home and able I would be putting flags out in the cemeteries this week. The other boys will do it though.

Interviewer: Well unless there is anything else you'd like to share.

Bradley: No I can't think of nothing. I was no hero.

Interviewer: I think I disagree.

Bradley: Didn't try to be one. I tried to do my best and I think I did. I never had a Court Marshal I only got locked up one time but that was an error.

Interviewer: What happened there?

Bradley: We was coming from the PX we was going on maneuvers the next day and four of us went up to the main PX and got some supplies and we were walking back the MP truck drove up and told us to get in. We got in we thought they was taking us back to the barracks but they was taking us to the stock aid. Having a fight at the NCO club and we didn't even know where the NCO club was. Finally the company commander come and got us. They were going to lock us up. Of course they got chewed up too and they should have got chewed out.

Interviewer: Well I really appreciate your time talking to us sharing your experience with us.

Bradley: I'm glad to talk with you. As I say I was no hero I didn't try to be one.

Interviewer: We feel very grateful for your service you certainly fought for our freedom and we appreciate it a great deal. Hopefully we can preserve this for later generations so they will never forget.

Bradley: I want to go back to my home in Tennessee ___ Ridge. I'm hoping I can make it I don't know whether I will or not. If it's too hard I'm not going to do it. You can't get nobody to stay with you that's how _____. They treat me good here they feed us good and they keep us clean. So I couldn't ask for a better living.

Interviewer: It's painful to be far from family. It's still painful somewhat to be away from someplace you call home.

Bradley: He lives here and comes and my son in Florida he'll be coming back pretty quick for a week or two.

Interviewer: Good I am going to go ahead and turn the camera off.