

Interviewer: If I could if I could just get you to say your full name and your date of birth?

Suggs: Plummer O. Suggs. I'm kind of horse today I don't know if

Interviewer: That's fine and now when were you born?

Suggs: November 13, 1922

Interviewer: Well where did you and your parents live?

Suggs: We lived in Dickson County the north end of Dickson County.

Interviewer: And what did you do as jobs for work?

Suggs: My first job was before that but we were raised on a tobacco farm my dad raised dark fired tobacco. But I vowed I'd never raise any tobacco for myself so I started to work in Clarksville about the time Fort Campbell was beginning.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the great depression with your family?

Suggs: well mostly just I remember hearing about how things were bad but you know we didn't know it I was a child then.

Interviewer: Right

Suggs: And everybody was poor it seemed to be in todays in relation to times now. But we were not the only ones we didn't realize it was

Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

Suggs: In Woods Valley in Dickson County. It's right up the creek over here.

Interviewer: Did you complete high school?

Suggs: No I started and then had to drop out my dad needed help. There was 13 children and I was the oldest one.

Interviewer: So you worked on the farm?

Suggs: Worked on the farm.

Interviewer: So when did you when you were a child do you remember hearing anything in the late 1930s about Germany and Hitler and all the things that were going on in Europe?

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: How did you mostly hear about these things?

Suggs: Well my dad we of course we didn't have a radio then or TV but he took the Nashville Tennessean and he kept up with it. And I learned to read the paper you know and we learned to read the Bible early.

Interviewer: That's good what do you remember hearing about things in Europe at that time?

Suggs: Just that he was an evil man Hitler was and I remember when Truman I mean not Truman but Hoover he's really the first president I remember much about hearing about. And of course Roosevelt took over during the war.

Interviewer: Right well when did your military experience start?

Suggs: I went in in January of 1943.

Interviewer: And were you drafted or did you enlist?

Suggs: I called myself draft dodging and I joined the Air Core to avoid the draft I figured I'd get in the infantry or something.

Interviewer: How do you go about joining, the Air Core at that time was part of the Army right?

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: So how did you get involved in the Air Core?

Suggs: just the recruiting officer suggested that you know if I wanted to get in that part that I go in early.

Interviewer: Right well before we get into your war where were you at when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Suggs: As far as I remember I was at home.

Interviewer: Do you remember any feelings or emotions you had at that time?

Suggs: No I don't remember.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember anybody around talking do you remember any like news?

Suggs: Oh yeh I remember it being on being the talk in the neighborhood and me and my dad and other people my dad was in WWI well he's part of the reason I joined the Air Core. He was in the Navy and he suggested that I get into the Navy or Air Core or something other than

Interviewer: The infantry

Suggs: Wind up in the infantry.

Interviewer: Right okay so it's 1943 an the wars been going on and you decide that you should go ahead and enlist before getting drafted so you could choose your placement right?

Suggs: Yes because the because the draft board we kept up with that at that time. They would tell you where you were on the

Interviewer: Like how soon it would be?

Suggs: According to how that was going so we knew it was coming up.

Interviewer: You knew you were getting close.

Suggs: I knew my name was coming up yeh.

Interviewer: Okay so you chose the Air Core as opposed to being in the infantry.

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: And so where did you go for your training to be in the Air Core?

Suggs: Well I was the induction station was in Fort Overthorpe Georgia and there's when we were separated into the different branches. We went to Fort Overthorpe and they sent some people to Navy, Air Core, Army

Interviewer: It was just like a big boot camp training place.

Suggs: Right well really it wasn't any training there it was just an induction center then we from there I went on to basic training.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic training at?

Suggs: In Miami Beach Florida.

Interviewer: That was nice.

Suggs: The Air Force had the hotels down there leased cause they didn't have barracks down there they were building them trying to keep up. The tourist business was dead people couldn't get gasoline

Interviewer: Right because of the rationing.

Suggs: Rationing so we lived in I lived in the Majestic hotel on Ocean Drive.

Interviewer: How did you get to basic training? I know you lived in Dickson County so was it your first time to kind of get out?

Suggs: Yeh I really never had been out of the state I don't guess well maybe in Kentucky but by train we caught a train in Dickson.

Interviewer: Was it the train station that's right in the middle of town now?

Suggs: Yeh the tracks run right across the main street there.

Interviewer: Do you remember meeting any people that you'd never come across before like any African Americans or northerners that you'd never had experiences with?

Suggs: Yeh one of my best friends in the service was a fellow from Pennsylvania. And another fellow that I when we lived in tents after I got overseas and two of the guys in the there was six man tents that we set up we were together there almost two years.

Interviewer: Okay now you're in boot camp what was that like on a daily basis in boot camp?

Suggs: We were taught mostly the discipline you know we drilled and marched but they had obstacle courses and things set up on the beach there.

Interviewer: So just a lot of physical activity most

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: So when did you all of you in that boot camp were all Air Core down in Miami?

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: So after boot camp you had to go at some point you had to get your Air Core training.

Suggs: Right so I was transferred from Miami Beach Florida we went to Lincoln Nebraska it was an airplane mechanic school out there and that's and it consisted of the electrical on the planes and also mechanical.

Interviewer: Like hydraulics

Suggs: Hydraulic had several different phases in the mechanics school we went to.

Interviewer: So you went and graduated or completed the mechanic school?

Suggs: Right right

Interviewer: What was your job title like

Suggs: Air craft mechanic.

Interviewer: Air craft mechanic. Were you I understand like in the Navy a lot of the mechanics only had one plane that they serviced and took care of was that kind of the same thing?

Suggs: Yeh this was a B24 they were referred to as the Liberators. I don't know if you

Interviewer: I don't know were they really big or

Suggs: Yeh the B24 and the B17 was the what they called the heavy bombers at that time they were the largest ones.

Interviewer: So was there a group of you that serviced that one plane because it was so large?

Suggs: Yeh well a maintenance crew they called it and I wound up being the crew chief on the maintenance crew. But the when you start out your all privates well we wasn't privates we was corporals at that time I believe.

Interviewer: Oh really

Suggs: Graduated from a private first class they call it to a corporal.

Interviewer: Even though in the Air Core you're still going by Army ranks?

Suggs: Army ranks yeh.

Interviewer: Okay so did you always have the same pilot? Did ya'll have a relationship with the pilot at all?

Suggs: Yeh we knew the crew the flight crew that consisted of the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier and the gunners the tail gunner and they had two waste gunners in the back.

Interviewer: So ya'll were in constant communication with them about the plane.

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: After you finished the school where did you go next did you have more training?

Suggs: Yeh I had advanced mechanic school in Walloon Michigan its Ford Motor Company had built that place up there and they were building B24s. The last phase of that part of the training they assigned us to a plane a we followed it from the time it started on the assemble line until it went out and we went out with it. And when they took the flight crew took the plane overseas and we connected up with them when we got over there.

Interviewer: In that factory ya'll were learning about how the plane was built all the parts? It was kind of like a

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: So after that that's when you shipped out?

Suggs: Shipped out yeh after we finished that.

Interviewer: And was this still in 1943 or was it already 44 by then.

Suggs: It was 44 then.

Interviewer: So where did your crew where were ya'll stationed at?

Suggs: Overseas?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Suggs: In Italy Southern Italy. It was kind of a country atmosphere out in the country where we built the airport it was Forge, Forge Italy was one of the closest towns of any size.

Interviewer: It was just kind of in the middle of no where?

Suggs: Yes it was Forge Valley the little area that we

Interviewer: So what was an average day like at that time?

Suggs: Well of course our primary job was to keep the plane ready to go all of the time. And when the plane was actually in the air the maintenance crew didn't have anything to do much so we sat around and played cards and you know everything until they got back. But when the plane hit the ground, got back, we were on duty again until it was ready to go if it took day and night or two days or whatever it took.

Interviewer: Was the plane pretty much always in action? Was it always either coming back or fixing to go somewhere?

Suggs: Yeh well the you know the of course the whole group we were broken down into squadrons the group. And each squadron had so many planes but they all go if the group was had orders to bomb a certain target on a particular day. You know we knew we didn't know it was coming up they just told us we had to have it ready you know and everything if possible.

Interviewer: Were you always aware of maybe where the plane was going and what it was doing?

Suggs: Not until right up maybe at that time they took off you know because a lot of that was kept secret.

Interviewer: Yawls main focus ya'll was just kind of like

Suggs: We'd get it ready then they'd let you know what the target danger or the target location.

Interviewer: How were the meals at the base? Were ya'll getting hot meals or were ya'll on rations?

Suggs: We had hot meals most of the time because they set up actually our squadron was on a farm and they had it set up a mess hall and it was indoors. And we got fresh cooked meals.

Interviewer: That's pretty fortunate.

Suggs: Right that's the advantage of being in the Air Core verses the Infantry.

Interviewer: What do you remember some of the missions' maybe or the tings that your plane was involved in that you knew about?

Suggs: You mean knew about

Interviewer: Like certain targets or things that were important during the war that your plane that you were in charge of did was involved in maybe battles

Suggs: Well I remember them going into the invasion of Southern France when they hit when they invaded that area. We were down south just pushed them out of North Africa you know into Italy and that's when then they were fitting the targets the aircrafts was. Just about anywhere in Europe they had these well the 12th Air Core the 12th Air Force they called it was in England and the 15th was in Italy and of course they were all they hit the same targets you know at the same time.

Interviewer: Do you have any like especially memorable experiences that you had maybe during battle or just during war time experiences?

Suggs: I guess one of the when we were going over on the way over there we were in a convoy we was on the ocean for 28 days. And right after we went into the Mediterranean Sea we went through the straights of Baltic the Germans hit us one night at midnight. Bombed we had a bomb and I remember they ordered us to get behind anything you could shove people that was on if you was on deck you know you got behind any kind of structure to protect yourself. And I watched the artillery people on ship were all shooting at the planes overhead and they were coming over straight at us. But our convoy knocked down several of the German planes and they left you know it was over the rest of them run. So that was one of the scariest things that ever happened to me.

Interviewer: Were you having to cover up or were you still having to work during that time.

Suggs: No we was just trying to save our

Interviewer: Right so the war was coming to kind of a close as it was did you have any idea about maybe the big picture that was going on like maybe the Generals and the things that were ahead of the Army and infantry were doing? Did ya'll get like briefed about those kind of things?

Suggs: Not much that I can remember. About the only thing we got in the way of communications we used to listen to that the radios over there on the planes what did they call her Axes Sally. She there was a station that we could pick up and everyone listed to her. Of course that was propaganda we didn't know much about what the brass was doing I guess.

Interviewer: Were you aware of the things that were going on like of the big battles and things that were going on did you hear about those as they were happening or was it kind of like you hearing about it in the news here?

Suggs: Mostly hear about it after it was over you know.

Interviewer: So you never hear about things like D-Day? You just heard about them after they were over?

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: Were you aware did you hear anything about President Roosevelt and like and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill did you hear about anything about what they were doing politically? Were you aware of any of that stuff or were you just concerned with military?

Suggs: We wasn't worried about politics we were worried about getting home.

Interviewer: Right were you did you believe that Roosevelt was doing a good job from what you would hear

Suggs: Oh yeh yeh that you just didn't hear any negative rumors about the Politian's at that time it just seemed like everybody you know everybody was thinking the same way and had the same goal. I think that's a lot different than it is today.

Interviewer: Did your family that was back here in Dickson County did they change any as the war started and progressed did they get more money and better jobs and things or were they still

Suggs: Well my dad left the farm and well he went on a part time investment he took a job at Fort Campbell he worked as a fireman out there on the Fire Department during the war. And that's the only public job he ever had during his whole life I guess till

Interviewer: Was the pay better

Suggs: Oh yeh it wasn't like being on a farm you wasn't used to a regular pay day.

Interviewer: Right I can see how it was different. What about your brothers and sisters did they have to do anything different?

Suggs: Well I was the only one in WWII I was the oldest in the family so I didn't have they were still in school.

Interviewer: So their lives continued pretty much

Suggs: Continued pretty much the same.

Interviewer: What about did you get mail a lot? Was that important to you?

Suggs: Oh yeh yeh we looked forward to mail call.

Interviewer: So you spent a lot of time writing or reading letters?

Suggs: Me and my wife had been going together about six months I guess before I got in the service and we continued to write. We did our courting by mail.

Interviewer: I bet that was difficult.

Suggs: All of those almost three years and I married two weeks after I got home we got married.

Interviewer: That's get be a difficult that's a hard relationship to carry on.

Suggs: Yeh most of our courting was long distance. She wrote me most everyday I didn't write that often but I wrote two or three times a week anyway.

Interviewer: Would you get here letters daily or would you kind of get a group of them at a time?

Suggs: Get em sometime a dozen at a time you know the mail was never that regular.

Interviewer: Did you have any other family members' cousins and uncles and things that were in WWII as well?

Suggs: Well I had some neighbors you know and other people but I was the only one in the family at that time that had to go.

Interviewer: Well in 1945 Roosevelt dies then Truman became President what do you remember about the decision to drop the bomb in Japan? Do you remember how did you hear about that?

Suggs: I guess I was overseas when that happened and I remember when it happened but I don't I'm sure we heard it over the radio. And probably the officers would have information meetings sometimes with everybody you know and of course they was always looking for something good to tell us something encouraging at least.

Interviewer: So I guess when all of you heard that

Suggs: Oh I remember that very well we celebrated it was a big time.

Interviewer: Was that kind of the end you knew that was the end of your service?

Suggs: Yeh I didn't get out right away but it was about three months I guess after that before I actually got out.

Interviewer: So what were your responsibilities after the war after the bomb was dropped and the war was officially over? What did you have to do still?

Suggs: Well when I was in Italy when it actually was over but then they transferred some of us to air transport command and we I was stationed at Maricatch in Casa Blanca in North Africa there for a few like a month. Then I went to Egypt and stayed there on an Air Force or an Air Base continuing to maintain the Kremlin by that time they had the B29s that come into play just before the war ended. And they were when we left Italy we went to Africa and stayed there and they was transporting these B29s over to Japan. And backing them up because they hadn't gave up at that time.

Interviewer: They still hadn't surrendered?

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: Were you ever concerned was your group concerned about possible ever having to invade Japan? Were ya'll going to be involved?

Suggs: Yeh that's what we ere actually going over there to help them out but it the war ended while I was in Africa there.

Interviewer: So I guess when ya'll heard that ya'll were really excited.

Suggs: Oh yeh yeh

Interviewer: When you were in South Africa were you still maintaining the same plane or the whole airport kind of?

Suggs: No after after we left Italy our squadron broke up and they moved the plane on somewhere else and assigned another crew to it because most of the at that point the crews were getting out on points you heard of that?

Interviewer: The time they had been in?

Suggs: Yeh the time they had been in and the action that they had had you know. If you had a certain number of points you got well I remember that was 50 points and I don't even remember how they calculated it. It was based on your dependants at home and what kind of action you'd been in and they kept the young single people longer. And that's to wind down you know because at that time most all of the military they was either in there drafted or volunteered to avoid the draft and they was just looking for it to be over and get on make a life you know.

Interviewer: Right was your plane ever shot down?

Suggs: Not shot down it was shot you know damaged by gun fire several times.

Interviewer: Did ya'll patch holes and

Suggs: Patched holes and whatever it took to get it replaced parts

Interviewer: What kind of pay were you getting at this time?

Suggs: Well I reached a Buck Sargent I guess I don't know what they call that now. We started out as a Private, Private First Class Corporal and then Sargent we had three stripes and I think it was less than \$100 a month the best I remember when I got out.

Interviewer: Did you did you get that directly or did it go

Suggs: Well we got part of it I had a little allotment sent home like \$25 of that maybe and the rest we spent it however we wanted to.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything you did really with your money did you go see sights or?

Suggs: Well I every chance I got you know if we was off duty depending on how long you were off what I got to Rome and Naples and spent a weekend night. At one point they gave us at Mussolini Fasious College in Rome they took that over and was a rest camp for us there and the people that had been on constant duty for a certain length of time they would send you there for a week and let you kind of have a vacation.

Interviewer: You had to spend a certain amount of time was it leave or was it just you just got rest?

Suggs: Yeh it was well it was just called R&R.

Interviewer: Well how much time did you have to spend to get that you remember?

Suggs: No I can't remember the it wasn't all based on time I think it was more situations.

Interviewer: Battle experience

Suggs: Yeh was part of it the way they come up with that.

Interviewer: So when did you finally get I guess I don't know if they dismissed or you finally got to leave the service?

Suggs: Well I got out we left over there the 9th of November and I got to back to Norfolk Virginia on the 20th of November. Went to from there we just got off the ship and got on a train and went to Camp Attaberry Indiana and we were discharged there then I got a train to Clarksville. I got home the 22nd of November and I got married on the 6th of December.

Interviewer: That's quick

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Was that all by plane coming over then the train?

Suggs: No we came home on a troop ship.

Interviewer: Oh on a boat.

Suggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Wow

Suggs: From Italy to Norfolk Virginia about nine days on the at that time 28 days going over 9 days coming back.

Interviewer: Wow

Suggs: It was a different type of ship.

Interviewer: So what did you do when you got home I know you got married did you go and come straight back to Dickson County?

Suggs: Yeh I come back to my parents home up there but I was working I was living in Clarksville when I went in working at Fort Campbell. And I went back out there the same job I took I rested a year off but I went back to work the first of January in 1946.

Interviewer: What were you doing exactly there?

Suggs: Well I was in electrical maintenance department out there.

Interviewer: So did you consider a lot of people consider that war a good time and a lot of people consider it really a struggle a trying time what do you recall during the whole war experience kind of your overall how you describe it?

Suggs: Well partially I had a good experience because nothing except a few little scares you know you have people have wrecks and for instance one of the pilots that was on our crew over there spent 50 missions and got rotated home and got killed in a car wreck while he was at home. He flew 50 missions in combat came home on leave and got killed in a car wreck. But all in all you know being from the country and used to working I had a good time you know.

Interviewer: You were glad to be able to see some place maybe normally you wouldn't?

Suggs: Yeh got a lot of experience that I seen a lot of things I never would have seen I'm sure.

Interviewer: So what was your final rank coming out of?

Suggs: I was Staff Sargent I got the one rocker.

Interviewer: And you were honorable discharged?

Suggs: Right

Interviewer: In 46?

Suggs: Yeh well it was in 45 I got discharged the 22nd of November.

Interviewer: Well I think that's it.