

Interviewer: How big was your family can you tell me a little bit about your family please?

Brammer: Six boys and one girl.

Interviewer: Six boys and one girl and where do you fall in line?

Brammer: I was I was the fifth one.

Interviewer: The fifth one. What branch of the service did you serve in?

Brammer: Infantry army

Interviewer: Did you and your brothers and sister finish high school? Tell me a little bit about your education.

Brammer: Yes I finished high school.

Interviewer: Alright tell me a little bit about the day to day living in your family if you would please.

Brammer: My father was a stock broker and he bought and sold livestock all over the country. And he bought livestock for some of the big companies in Cincinnati like you know Conner's and different I can't remember all of the names of them. But he bought stock in a lot of them and the stock market I'm talking about livestock.

Interviewer: Livestock

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay um did you work anywhere a part time job in high school or anything like that?

Brammer: Well yes I helped a janitor clean the school every afternoon.

Interviewer: Oh okay how much did you make while you did that?

Brammer: Five dollars a month.

Interviewer: Five dollars a month how many hours a week did you work?

Brammer: We worked about 15 hours a week.

Interviewer: Did your brothers have any other jobs?

Brammer: Well after they got out of school one of them worked at Wall Manufacturing here in Mayfield one of them worked at Jamie Wary Wood one of them was a restaurant manager.

Interviewer: Did their jobs pay about the same or do you have any idea what they paid?

Brammer: At that time I think they was making about nine dollars and sixty cents a week for 40 hours.

Interviewer: Okay before Pearl Harbor before 1941 the war had been going on for roughly two or three years. How seriously did you and your family and your neighbors and your classmates take the events in Europe were there concerns about America going to war or were you pretty much just I won't say oblivious but unconcerned about it?

Brammer: Yes we did have concerns about it because one of my brothers had enlisted in the service after he got out of school and he was in service at the time Pearl Harbor was. And of course we was really concerned about it then about going to war.

Interviewer: The newspapers during the time were there a lot of did you read the newspaper on a regular basis did your family receive the newspaper?

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Were there articles about the war efforts over in Europe and in invasion of France and such or Poland I'm sorry prior to December the 7th? Or were there just kind of a paragraph here a paragraph there?

Brammer: Yeah right a paragraph here and there.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were on December 7, 1941?

Brammer: We lived in Louisburg Kentucky in Jefferson County and that's where we was at. In fact you asked where I was born the family they brought me back to Kentucky when I was nine months old.

Interviewer: Okay so you were born there but you were pretty much raised in Kentucky.

Brammer: Right I was born the rest of the family was born in Kentucky.

Interviewer: You were in high school in 1941.

Brammer: Right

Interviewer: Did you realize how far along was it until you realized that you would be drafted or that you would have to enlist?

Brammer: When I we was in study hall and the President Roosevelt was the President of the United States at that time. And he made a speech and they put a radio in the study hall at that time for us to listen to him. And it was something that always stuck in my mind till this day he said "no boy 18 years old would ever step foot on foreign soil as long as he was President of the United States of America." I was overseas and spent my 19th birthday above the clouds in Italy up on the mountain.

Interviewer: Wow did you what made you choose the infantry you said you enlisted?

Brammer: Well

Interviewer: What made you choose the army infantry or did you have a choice?

Brammer: I didn't have a choice. When I was drafted and I had three other brothers in the service and my senior year in high school I took typing and I was pretty good in typing. So when they drafted me at Fort Thomas they give me a test for clerk typist and I passed the test. And I could stay at Fort Thomas Kentucky and never of had to went anywhere. My other brothers was all over the United States and I wanted to go to.

Interviewer: Did your family your parents your mom and dad know that you had the opportunity not to go?

Brammer: Yes they did.

Interviewer: What were their what was their input on the situation?

Brammer: It was family if one done it we all done it I mean that's the way we were.

Interviewer: Right right

Brammer: My family was a loving family.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic at?

Brammer: Fort McClellan Alabama.

Interviewer: Okay

Brammer: Seven weeks

Interviewer: Seven weeks

Brammer: General y it was about 17 weeks but we they needed men so bad they cut it down to seven weeks.

Interviewer: Do you remember how many people were in your basic that went through basic with you or not?

Brammer: No I mean the whole camp was full.

Interviewer: Okay was there anything about your basic training that stuck out? I had one gentleman tell me about how tough it was he thought he could I mean it wasn't gonna be that difficulty and it ended up just being the hardest thing he ever had to do. Is there anything like that you remember?

Brammer: Well I had several things sick out for me I was 18 years old when they put that 90 pounds on us and they had a mountain down there called Bain's Gap. And they had we had to jog with a full pack up over that mountain. And I remember that boys just fell out all up

Interviewer: Was it the summer time when you were doing this?

Brammer: This was in September.

Interviewer: Okay so it's still pretty hot in Alabama in September.

Brammer: It's hot yeah but I didn't fall out I made it.

Interviewer: When you finished basic where did you go after they released you?

Brammer: They sent me home for six days and I went on to Baltimore Maryland and they put me on a truck and shipped me to New Port News Virginia and got on the ship and headed overseas.

Interviewer: And where overseas did you land?

Brammer: Went to Oran Africa and from Oran Africa we went to Naples Italy that's where I landed in Naples.

Interviewer: How many soldiers were in your infantry division? Roughly is fine

Brammer: Oh 1500

Interviewer: Alright that's fine that's fine. How long did it take you to get to Italy? How long was the trip over do you remember?

Brammer: Let's see I think it was probably about 10 days.

Interviewer: Okay did you know that the invasion of Italy was about to occur that was what you guys were headed over you were well aware of that?

Brammer: Right

Interviewer: Okay how long were you in Italy before or how long did you wait how long were you over in Italy before the invasion took place?

Brammer: Well they had already it had already taken place.

Interviewer: Okay

Brammer: In Naples Italy they had already invaded Naples.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: And it was we had it under control.

Interviewer: Okay

Brammer: At the time that all that in there but we went on from Naples Castagno then.

Interviewer: What unit were you part of the 36th infantry in which unit?

Brammer: I was in the 134nd infantry.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Brammer: The 36th division.

Interviewer: Alright who was your commanding officer?

Brammer: At that time we had a guy name Alfrickter.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: And he was a real hero he shot his toes off so he could get to come back home.

Interviewer: Wow do you ever did you ever find out what happened to him as far as

Brammer: Never did we didn't care what happened to him.

Interviewer: Were you from that point on suspect of any of your other officers as far as their loyalty to the cause?

Brammer: No not really we had several officers that come in and they was shipped straight from the United States. They expected to treat us like they treated us here in the United States.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: And they tell us dig me up a foxhole and we'd tell them worry about your own foxhole. And most of them a lot of them they never made it.

Interviewer: Prior to his incident if you will did you suspect him of being I mean was a good leader up till then?

Brammer: He was a good leader.

Interviewer: He was alright?

Brammer: Good leader but they told us we had to make the invasion of Southern France.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: And at Anzio you know we'd go in there you know. That's when he done it I don't know where he done it accidental or on purpose or what.

Interviewer: So you're not sure that he did it?

Brammer: No I'm not sure he done it on purpose but we all felt like he did.

Interviewer: Sure sure just kind of one of those things that shoot your toes off.

Brammer: When you was in there when you was over there fighting I mean everybody was like brothers and if somebody turned on you well they didn't last too long.

Interviewer: Exactly exactly tell me a little bit about the equipment and arms that you trained with and how well they performed and what your experience with them were.

Brammer: M1 riffle is what I was trained with and it was an excellent gun. I mean we I could they taught us how to clean it take it a part put it back together with our eyes closed. And you know we could I could take mine apart and clean it at dark no night or nothing. And but it was great we had good equipment at the time we just didn't have enough of it.

Interviewer: Okay can you tell me something about the shortages that you experienced over there.

Brammer: Well when I well we didn't have we might have had a few tanks but we didn't have very few tanks. And I was almost to Florence Italy before I saw any planes at all. And every plane that you know you heard was a German plane and of course you could pick up the sound. You'd know the sound of what plane or whatever.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: And I'll never forget this as long as I live the Germans had us pinned down in a field. I heard this noise and it was a different noise than I'd ever heard in my life. And I looked back and looked up and seen a plane with a big white star on it and that's when our planes came in. And I'll tell you from then on we walked through it you know.

Interviewer: Can you compare and contrast a little bit for me the difference in equipment between the Americans and the Italians and the Americans and the Germans to the best of your ability from what you saw.

Brammer: Well the German equipment was the best.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: They had what they call an 88 gun big shell and the saying is they could drop one in your hind pocket running across a field. And they had machine guns that at night especially they would just irritate you to no end our machine gun would go tap tap tap tap. Their machine gun would go bra bra bra like that if one of them hit you in your body wherever it hit you it cut you into.

Interviewer: Right

Brammer: But ours was just tap tap tap but ours was more accurate than theirs was. But they had good equipment they really had good equipment.

Interviewer: Tell me about your first experience in combat. Where were you at and what you remember about the very first time that you were right in the middle of it?

Brammer: My first experience in combat was I was in my foxhole and we had of course we had radios. And they all told us to fix our bayonets put our bayonets on the riffle so we could go hand to hand

combat. And when we got when I got out of the hole there was another guy with me and we started out and we was gonna have to fight them hand to hand. And just as probably three minutes before one of our tanks came through not one but several of our tanks came through and took care of it we didn't fight hand to hand.

Interviewer: Did you ever how often was hand to hand combat I mean experienced?

Brammer: Well just according to if you run on it. If there wasn't too many of you and there was a bunch of them of course you'd had it then you know.

Interviewer: Right right

Brammer: It's the situation where that you know they well I don't know you know.

Interviewer: Uh huh just kind of depended on the situation.

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Sure sure where were you at when you had your first experience with the tank.

Brammer: In Italy.

Interviewer: Okay your free time such as it was how did you spend what little free time you had?

Brammer: I didn't have any free time. I went all the way up through Italy and never had a day off or never had a bath for three months our clothes was stuck to us. We all smelled the same so.

Interviewer: Didn't even know.

Brammer: We didn't even know.

Interviewer: And had other things to worry about.

Brammer: That's right and the Germans they smelled worse than we did so we could smell wherever they had been. And I'm sure they could smell where we were.

Interviewer: Sure just the difference.

Brammer: The different smell. Theirs smelled more like a garlic smell you know.

Interviewer: Did you have any correspondence back and forth with your family? Were you able to write letters and receive letters?

Brammer: Maybe get mail onced a month or something like that.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: You know at that time I mean it was.

Interviewer: When you're moving around.

Brammer: It was really tough.

Interviewer: Sure sure did you sleep your sleeping arrangements you slept on the ground?

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Slept on the ground.

Brammer: In a foxhole dug our own dug our holes.

Interviewer: You were injured before you were able to receive a promotion correct you came in as an infantryman and you went out as an infantryman.

Brammer: Well when I was in Italy we all of our officers had been killed and they made me a field lieutenant. But to this day I never got my promotion because you know I got wounded right after that.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: They sent me I just didn't do nothing about it.

Interviewer: You had said you told me earlier that you were a scout to begin with.

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit because scouts have it awful difficult you're sort of out there on their own ahead of things.

Brammer: I was first scout and I had to contact the enemy it was my job to contact the enemy. And that the second scout was behind me let him know where they was and then he'd let the platoon and all know where they was.

Interviewer: How close did you have to be you say contact the enemy how close to actually how close in proximity were you to the enemy camp?

Brammer: Well what comes to my mind the first time that I contacted the enemy they was in and of course the buildings were made out of rock over there. And this one building had a steeple up like a church steeple see I don't know what it was it wasn't a church. But anyway it had holes around this steeple you know like a you know open thing.

Interviewer: Sure sure

Brammer: And of course when I saw that I hit the ground you know. And I saw this German stick his head out had his rifle you know and he had heard me but he didn't see me. So I laid my rifle on that window and he stuck his head back in. But I never will forget on the middle window I aimed my rifle at it so when they came back if they came to it I knew what would happen and he finally came to that

window and I took care of him. And there was another one and he come to see what had happened and I took care of him and after that they were the only two there. They was contacting us.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: They was scouting for their.

Interviewer: Right right was that the closest you ever came? Was that the closest encounter you ever had as a scout?

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: That was the very first one?

Brammer: Yeah that was the first one.

Interviewer: Baptism by fire.

Brammer: Yes it was.

Interviewer: Baptism by fire.

Brammer: That's true.

Interviewer: Were you impressed with the enemy as far as you made the comment earlier about how technologically advanced there as far as the rapid fire the machine gun. Personal qualities of the German soldier did you pick up on any of those did you have any experience with them?

Brammer: No you know later on in the war they had a lot of kids fighting for them you know and anybody that could shoot a gun they had them. And they were trigger happy and you know young people they would kill anybody whatever comes in their way they loved it.

Interviewer: You were injured twice.

Brammer: Right

Interviewer: If you don't mind could you tell me where you were injured and where you were in Europe and the events that transpired after that?

Brammer: the first time I was wounded I was wounded close to Florence Italy. And we was in a battle and there was a shell that landed pretty close to me and hit me in the right forearm my shoulder and my back. And the medics sent me back to the field hospital and they sent me back down to the hospital Mediterranean Sea.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: And I was ordered to come home I got orders to ship me home because I couldn't hold a rifle. And I was there about two weeks and they skin grafted my shoulder here and pulled that tight so went wading in the Mediterranean Sea because there wasn't nothing wrong with my feet you know.

Interviewer: Right

Brammer: And they saw me I don't know to this day whether that was the reason or what but the next day they put me on a truck and sent me back to the front line. And I told them I said I can't even use a gun. They said we don't care we need men we need men. And so I went back to the front lines and they give me a rifle so I done the best I could. Then I went from there I went to France and we made an invasion into France. And we went into southern France we didn't go in on June the 6th when they made the Normandy.

Interviewer: Right right

Brammer: We was we went down south of that when we went in. Of course that Normandy got more publicity.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: Than we did I mean we went in southern France down around Morris_____.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Brammer: Then we went up through the Rome Valley and on up through

Interviewer: Where you said you were gonna meet up with the 101st if I'm not mistaken.

Brammer: Right well up through crossed the Mosel River and went through the Mosel Mountains.

Interviewer: Combat pretty heavy as you went up through there?

Brammer: Yeah combat was real have yeah. They had the best troops in France at that time. Well when we was in Italy they drawled back some of the best troops and put them up in France.

Interviewer: Right

Brammer: You know.

Interviewer: Knowing that the invasion was gonna come somewhere along the English Channel.

Brammer: Right

Interviewer: Correct.

Brammer: They had good troops.

Interviewer: Your second injury was your leg.

Brammer: Yeah my leg yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about that if you don't mind.

Brammer: Well I was acting as an officer and I had taken four men down at the bottom of the hill and put them on what we call out post. And I looked around and they were digging foxholes and I was leaning up against a tree you know just sitting just standing there talking. So I looked around and I saw a German tank sitting back there camouflaged but I didn't say nothing because I was gonna tell them to all hit the ground and stay there. But before I could get that out of my mouth they shot right into us they fired right into us with one of them big guns. And it killed them all but me and it blowed my leg off and my knee. And they probably wasn't out there 25 foot in front of me and I of course I was bleeding profusely. I took my belt off and made me a tunicate and tied around it you know. Then I started to crawl and they watched me all the way and I expected any minute they'd shoot me with a machine gun you know in my back. But they never fired another shot at me they let me get back up to my outfit and then of course they started shelling them. But these four guys took me put me on a blanket one got on end of it and carried me down on the other side of the hill. And they called the medics so there was a like a dirt road and this jeep came along and he didn't stop for me and I was getting weaker all the time.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: So I had you know hand grenades all over me so I got one of them hand grenades and I got up here and pulled the pin out of it with my teeth. And I said they next one that comes by he's gonna stop or he ain't going on either. So the next one came by he stopped but my hand was loosening up on that grenade and if he hadn't have squeezed my hand and put that pin back in I wouldn't have been here today.

Interviewer: Wow that was August of 1945 October.

Brammer: October 5th 1944.

Interviewer: Okay I'm sorry.

Brammer: The first time I got wounded was June the 21st 1944.

Interviewer: Okay and the leg injury was the end of WWII for you?

Brammer: That was the end of WWII for me because

Interviewer: Where did they take you when you got back?

Brammer: They took me to a field hospital of course it was full of wounded. Got there and this happened probably about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and time we got back to the hospital it was 8 or 9 o'clock that night. And then I passed out and I didn't come to until the next night about 11 o'clock at night.

Interviewer: And then you were shipped shortly thereafter back home.

Brammer: Shipped back home. And who unloaded me off the ship, German prisoners.

Interviewer: Wow

Brammer: I really liked that.

Interviewer: Yeah

Brammer: Yeah

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about what it was like when you got back to your home back to your mom and dad and how that was.

Brammer: Well they said they was gonna send us close to home so our parents could come see us you know. They sent me to Temple Texas.

Interviewer: That's not close to home.

Brammer: No it's not. We lived in Luxburg. So they sent me to Temple Texas and I was in the hospital nine months. And I got there sometime in November but they let me come home Christmas of that year for 30 days.

Interviewer: I bet it was the best Christmas present your mom ever got.

Brammer: Yeah 30 days and of course came home on crutches you know. And at the depot here in Mable they had a band you know for me welcoming me home.

Interviewer: Did your mom know that you were in Temple that you were hurt or do you know this?

Brammer: When I got my leg shot off when I was in the hospital the Salvation Army done more for me than anybody.

Interviewer: Oh cool

Brammer: The only thing I got from the Red Cross was a donut and a cup of coffee when I went overseas. And I asked them when I got wounded for some paper you know I wanted to write a letter while I was in the hospital and never did see it no more. So the Salvation Army come through and they the girl wrote a letter for me you know she wrote a letter for me. And I wrote a letter to my aunt she lives here in Mable she's a school teacher Alice Ward her husband was a banker. And I wrote a letter and I sent this letter to her telling her what had happened to me and things and told her to tell my mother you know. When I left to go to the service my mother had the prettiest black hair you ever saw she never had her hair cut in her life she didn't believe in having her hair cut. And when I came home her hair was white.

Interviewer: Worrying about her boys.

Brammer: Her boys' four boys.

Interviewer: Did you receive a letter from her when you were in Temple or did you get a chance to hear back from her before you went back?

Brammer: Well they sent me yeah they wrote me a letter it was my mother's sister and she got the letter told her about it explained it to her. I told her you know I was gonna be alright.

Interviewer: Tell me about the first time that you and your brothers for back together.

Brammer: Well we it was really a great reunion.

Interviewer: I bet it was.

Brammer: Yes it was.

Interviewer: Were they injured?

Brammer: No one of my brothers he had he's kindly had a little nervous condition you know from it but of course it affected all of us.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: But not outwardly where you could see it.

Interviewer: Uh huh when the war was over in Europe was there tell me were there celebrations or was it okay that one's done now let's go over to Japan? What was the attitude here stateside?

Brammer: Well of course everybody was at that time they you know they was proud to be Americans.

Interviewer: Sure

Brammer: But there's one thing in the war I'd like to tell you about.

Interviewer: Sure please do please do.

Brammer: You know today I can't understand some people you know if they have it a little rough they go all to pieces and they can't stand it. My outfit was pinned down for three days once in our foxholes. We didn't have nothing to eat we didn't have nothing to drink we couldn't go to the toilet or nothing because if you got your head up out of the hole you got it blowed off. I took my helmet we all did there was tow you know there was tow in a hole and took my helmet off I relieved my kidneys in it I relieved my bawls in it throwed outside of the hole. Caught water in it rinsed it out the best I could drank the water made coffee with it you know.

Interviewer: That was your survival.

Brammer: Yeah but people say oh you can't do this you can't live like that. I'll tell you all I've got to say is war is hell on earth it's a real hell. I feel like anybody that went through the war has been through hell.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about or compare if you will September the 11th with December the 7th and what your perception of everything was.

Brammer: Well September December 7th 41 Pearl Harbor of course I was young and in school and it really didn't affect me at that time like the 11th September 11th. And I've always told my wife I said someday I don't know when but we're gonna feel the effects in this country of what the other countries have gone through. And she said I don't think so we are well protected. Well I guess we are well protected in some instances there wasn't much protection against the way they done it.

Interviewer: No

Brammer: And as far as I'm concerned whatever we can do or however we can do it and I really truly think our president has done a wonderful job so far. You know he brought us all together we seem to be closer and be real Americans than we have been in any time in our life since WWII well the Korean War Vietnams War and things. But most people thought they was political wars things we shouldn't have been in I don't know whether we should or not but anyway people felt like that WWII if we didn't do it he'd have been over here. And he would have because he had the stuff to do it with.

Interviewer: Mr. Brammer I appreciate it thank you very much I appreciate your time.

Tape ended