

Interviewer: My name is Sarah Spenser and the date is April 28, 2005 what is your name and when were you born?

Baggett: My name is James E Baggett or James Edgar Baggett I was born June the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1922.

Interviewer: Alright where did you grow up?

Baggett: I grew up in what they call Lone Oak and Cunningham out there close to Montgomery Central. I went to school there.

Interviewer: What did your father do?

Baggett: He was a farmer.

Interviewer: How were you guys affected by the great depression? Do you remember that at all?

Baggett: Well I can remember we had plenty because we was on a farm we had plenty to eat and clothes when you bought clothes why you'd get a good pair of overall or a good pair of shoes. I mean what you pay \$70 for now for 98 cents so you can tell a difference you know. The wages you got wasn't much but you sure could buy stuff with what little you did get.

Interviewer: Did you have a big family or small?

Baggett: Yeah there was 11 in my family. One I don't remember the one that was born was a girl and then my brother is just older than me about four years they was twins he was one of the two twins and his twin died. So that left well I remember very well when it was I had two sisters living at home and my brother and myself that's I remember that more than anything else.

Interviewer: So were you the youngest or?

Baggett: I was I'm the baby I'm the only one left in the whole family.

Interviewer: Did you work on your farm with your father how did that work?

Baggett: Okay I went to elementary school through the eighth grade then I went to high school at Southside one year so that was 9<sup>th</sup> grade. And that's all because I had to walk about two miles to catch the bus to go to Southside or that one year that was before they built these new schools out here. And rode a cracker box bus they called it was one of those little short ones. And it picked up people from Shiloh and on up this a way and we went to Southside.

Interviewer: So did you start working on your father's farm once you were done with 9<sup>th</sup> grade?

Baggett: Yeah I remember going to school and we didn't have anything you know growing it out of the ground you only had so much you had to work to get that. And I remember my dad told me said you go to school when you get out of school you come home change your clothes and come to the field. I worked you know that away. And on Saturday my dad most of time went to town on Saturday and believe it or not he could walk from out at Lone Oak all the way to Clarksville and back in a days' time. I don't know what he done during that time he was over there though.

Interviewer: What did your dad grow?

Baggett: What did he what?

Interviewer: What did he grow on his farm or what was it?

Baggett: Oh tobacco was a cash crop corn and stuff potatoes and gardens you know for his own use.

Interviewer: So what were your memories of the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Baggett: Well I can only remember what I was working at Fultie Aircraft at that time. I got a job there and I was working there we were building planes for Great Brittan \_\_\_ sky bombers. And I got a call to service and my dad was he was older at that time he was 70 years old. And there was only other son there to help him with the crops he was too old to be working anyway really. And so I applied for a deferment and they gave me six months deferment. And I got called to go get another deferment if I wanted to and I'd see these soldiers come in Fort Campbell out there they was all happy and having a big time. Farming if you don't have tractors and things back at that time it was mules you know. And I'd see them come in town they was all so happy and everything I thought I'd just as well to go I'll just go in the army that will be easier than this farming. And but I wish the first day when I was sent to Camp Forest I wished I'd have took it. But I know now I didn't get killed I'm back and I served my country.

Interviewer: Who took care of your farm of your father's farm while you were gone?

Baggett: Well two of my brothers they helped him you know but he wasn't a big farmer anyway so. Raised three or four acres of tobacco and corn and hay and stuff like that. They kind of they lived close to him and they kind of worked with him.

Interviewer: Was your dad disappointed that you chose to go in the army?

Baggett: No they seemed to be my mother or father neither one complained about it one way or the other you know. I just told them I said well I believe I'd have an easier time to go in the service and I must have been about 20 years old at that time.

Interviewer: Was it 41 or I mean was it 42?

Baggett: After I married I married first time I was 19 and my wife was 18 and she dies in 49 with cancer. And I married the wife I have now about 2 years later and we've been together ever since.

Interviewer: That's great so were you did you enter in the service in 42? Do you remember around what month you might have enlisted?

Baggett: I believe it was September of 43.

Interviewer: Forty three okay

Baggett: And

Interviewer: Now did you get to choose what job you were going to do or?

Baggett: No they tried to get me to sign up for riding a motorcycle and I'd never been on a motorcycle I can't ride a bicycle hardly. I said no I don't want that and I went into the army there wasn't much air force at that time that kept pretty well filled up. But I was considered a replacement you know that's what we had trained later and went in replaced the ones that got killed. Just like the day the first day out we in the company I was assigned to there was a big lot of them that got killed. And I was one of them that and the bus boy and that bum gardener from College Grove. There was three of us went in at the same time and we was replacements to take care of somebody that died the day before got killed the day before. I mean they kept you filled up you know they do that in all orders I guess.

Interviewer: So when you enlisted where did you go to train?

Baggett: Well I went to for induction at Camp Forest Tennessee and they shipped me down to Georgia Fort McClellan. But first I went to Alabama Georgia and was sent from there stayed there a few days to get clothes and things and then sent me to Camp McClellan Alabama.

Interviewer: How long did you train for?

Baggett: Well they called it 15 weeks but we didn't get that much they crammed it in about 12 weeks.

Interviewer: What was your training like what did you learn?

Baggett: Well it's just like the training is now for them I think mostly. I got I trained for heavy weapons I mean we took what they give us you know. And they didn't you didn't have no choice. And I didn't have no choice I had a choice when I went in will you ride a motorcycle and I said no I don't want to do that. I guess that would have put me in the MPs or something like that. But I had a motorcycle here after I come out of the service I rode some but.

Interviewer: So did you learn did you have a specific weapon that you were trained in that was a larger weapon or?

Baggett: Well we with heavy weapons we had machine guns and mortar 81 millimeter mortars and that was mainly the thing. And then other training was exercise and learning to march and everything else that goes along with it the same thing they do now just about it.

Interviewer: Were y'all trained in the M1?

Baggett: Yeah

Interviewer: Now you mentioned that there were three guys or two other guys with you that were from this area. Did you guys enlist together or you just happen to.

Baggett: We was drafted together.

Interviewer: You were drafted together.

Baggett: See it was really a draft it what it was.

Interviewer: Okay

Baggett: Of course now they volunteer a lot of these people complain because they are sipping them over to Iraq you know to fight over there. But hey volunteered they wasn't drafted then. You know if you volunteer for something they need not expect nothing else because when you volunteer you volunteer for whatever time they need you.

Interviewer: Right so were those guys drafted you know that they were going to be with you in your training?

Baggett: No I didn't know they was gonna be with me until after we was shipped out to the same place.

Interviewer: So did you guys become closer as you were out there by yourselves?

Baggett: Well yeah when we got overseas they put us in the same company but each one was in a different company or a different squad. And that away I seen them a lot I didn't see the bus boy because he sprained his ankle and got out. He was real lucky he didn't get shot at.

Interviewer: Now during your training did you do were you excited maybe for this opportunity to join other men at war or were you worried?

Baggett: Well I'll put it this way I had a problem with a condition on my neck and if I've have just complained about it and let them check me I wouldn't have had to went. But as I said I thought they was having a good time seeing how they was coming in here to Clarksville and knowing didn't know they was just so glad to get out from camp to get a leave that they was doing this. So I just figured well I'll be better off there than working out here on a farm.

Interviewer: So in some ways you were excited to go.

Baggett: As I didn't get killed and I made it fine through there except as I said the reason I got lost was all that weight I was carrying because I just couldn't keep up.

Interviewer: Explain what happened to your neck when you were traveling.

Baggett: Well I was in elementary school and I guess I was in about the 7<sup>th</sup> grade something like that. I didn't know this guy was doing it and he was going around and he would hit you in the back of the neck like that and said make your tongue flop out. Well I knew what it could do because I have killed rabbits that a way you know break their neck. And so I was standing away from him and this one guy slipped around and got me and I wasn't expecting it and I had well it's knocked that out of line up there and it's formed a knot back there the cell stem coming through there at the top you know. And it hurts it hurts anything I do might near all the time. They x-rayed it after I come out of the service because I said that I didn't complain about going in and I could have got out because I had a brother-in-law he went in the same time I did and he worked for the railroad and he claimed he couldn't get his arm up no further than that. So I don't believe that because I knew him and he just lied about it and he got out. But I've been the person that tries to be truthful and regardless of how it works whether it's to my advantage or not because I believe that's what you should do. You have no regrets if you tell the truth and do as you're supposed to do. But I hadn't seen the bum guard fellow as I said he was in another company and another squad. But at that time the group went to this certain place you know and they was all together.

Interviewer: So when you got done with your basic training what did you go through in order to get over to Europe? Did you take a troop ship or?

Baggett: No yeah well we got delayed in route coming home for a few days. I was living over in Clarksville on Elder Street there. And my wife and I first wife had done married in the beginning.

Interviewer: Did you have any children?

Baggett: Had one

Interviewer: Were you sad to leave her and the child or?

Baggett: I didn't decide to leave as I say they drafted me. I got called on the draft.

Interviewer: But did you feel kind of sad or worried to leave them behind or?

Baggett: Well I took my training Fort McClellan and my sister came in her husband at Fort Lewis Washington and so she came down there and we came back to Clarksville with her. And when I got ready to be shipped I went and got on the train and went to Fort Meade I believe it was Maryland. And from there we had to do some more physicals and everything checked us. From there we went and loaded on a boat I went on a train from here to Fort Meade up there. And it was snow on the ground about that deep and it was cold wasn't used to it being cold like that but I made it. You know you can make it with most anything you do if you just stick with it. The biggest thing was having to pull your clothes off and go a short distance to the wash house to take your bath every morning. And you know how it is at a place like that there was so many people showering you couldn't if you got out of the shower if you didn't watch it you'd get dirty before you'd get your clothes on and get out. So I just we didn't carry no more clothes than we had to until we got back to the barracks. But from there went into New York and got on the \_\_\_\_\_ the second largest ship of Brittan. And we went over on it went to Ireland and got off there and got on a train there and came to London England. And we wasn't in London England but about two days and nights doing some more shuffling us around you know. And put us on a boat went across the canal over there between France and Brittan. And when we got over there we got off and they carried us up to up on top of O'Hara France up on top of a big bluff there where they had a camp that was after the war you know. And as I said they shuffled you around where they need you so I got sent to join the group at Remagen where Remagen Bridge over the Rhine.

Interviewer: Do you remember what date you got into Europe got into France?

Baggett: Well I goo we left here and we got over there sometime first of March I believe it was. As I said it wasn't as cold over there as it was here but we was six days and nights going over on the ship.

Interviewer: What was the troop ship like what was the ship?

Baggett: Well it was as I said it was a large ship and it was about I don't know how many thousands there were that was on the ship but it was a big group of us. And of course the ship and they zig zagged the reason it was taking so long is they zig zagged on account of submarines blowing up the ships. And if you see after the war and during the war how many ships we lost and things it was lucky that we didn't get hit. I had to pull guard out on the deck of the ship. You wasn't allowed to smoke you wasn't allowed to strike a match or nothing on account of giving yourself away a ship or submarine would get you. So

we had to pull guard around the ship deck and that's what I had to do at night my whole trip over there. And that ship was just rolling and rocking and I come back on a Ernie Powell ship we had a new one. It was a little small ship. But I made it alright.

Interviewer: So once you got to France was that in 44 or 45?

Baggett: Well I got over there in I believe the first of 45 maybe I'd have to look and see.

Interviewer: That's probably right because D-Day was 44 so.

Baggett: I was over there about two and a half year's altogether. Come out in 47

Interviewer: Okay that's probably about right. So what was your first mission once you got there what did they do with you?

Baggett: Well they assigned us to a company.

Interviewer: What company were you with?

Baggett: Company A

Interviewer: What unit?

Baggett: 60th battalion 1<sup>st</sup> armor.

Interviewer: Okay

Baggett: You memorize your number mine was easy to remember 44020800. That was the way I would say it 4402800 that was 44-0-20-and then 800. And that hits me all the time now a lot of times. And I think of it a lot but I made it fine.

Interviewer: So when you got with the men there you were replacing someone.

Baggett: Yeah as I said the day before we was in a field there a fruit orchard was what it was on the side of the river. And we was there about two days and they killed them out where they needed placements and all of us that was there went into combat right then.

Interviewer: Did the men treat you any differently in the unit because you were a replacement or did they?

Baggett: No I noticed have you seen the 12 not there was about 15 of them the soldiers that was what do they call that?

Interviewer: Band of brothers?

Baggett: Band of brothers yeah.

Interviewer: I've seen part of it I haven't watched the whole thing.

Baggett: Yeah that was something and you can buy the whole I didn't buy any of it but I've seen it on television. But you can buy that whole series for about \$98. It's expensive but it's a lot of it.

Interviewer: So but did you feel like they treated you pretty much like everybody else?

Baggett: Yeah and when you get in there even in training and of course a couple of them was in there with us and I don't know whether we didn't they treated us fine. But I noticed on this Band of Brothers that some of them kindly made it rough on a lieutenant somebody that came in a replacement. But that's the way they do you get killed out and then that's what you are a replacement company they put you right in there where somebody needs you you know.

Interviewer: So with your new you know company that you were with what was your first mission that you guys did as a group together?

Baggett: It was about it was the first day after we crossed the river. Crossed the river on a pontoon that just tore a bombed the Remagen Bridge over the river and they threw these pontoons in the river and tracks on it and we went over on a tank. We was got on a tank and went across the river on that pontoon bridge. We got over there you've got your stuff with you you've got your rifle and everything loaded on trucks and went up to close enough to you take you up put you right in there.

Interviewer: To like the heat of the battle?

Baggett: Yeah you don't forget that either.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Baggett: Well I'm I think most people are scared when you first go in there and then bullets gets flying around you and that will come in a little later. But I almost got it two or three times it was my fault really.

Interviewer: What happened?

Baggett: Well one time the main thing see with all of this with my neck like it was I couldn't carry that weight and all. I couldn't keep up that's how come me to get lost. And the second time I got lost in that same day and, I'm getting horse how. And so we was going across a big pasture open pasture field and had a cross fence across it and there was a gate out to the right end of it. And we come in at the left side and we got as I said it was hard for me to keep up. And our unit was going out across this below the fence going out here and going through this big gate and coming back around that away. So I figured I just can't keep up I need a breather and I tried to go through a barbed wire fence and my helmet net got stuck in it. And these three rounds come by my face just you could hear it ring as it come by because we got to them later. They was up in the woods and it was just such a distance they couldn't get a zero in on me is the reason they didn't get me because I couldn't get out. Finally I knew I had to get out of there and I just yanked my helmet off and tore it lose and got out of there.

Interviewer: Did anyone help you try to get out or?

Baggett: No I was towards the back of the group and everybody's got to take care of their self you know.

Interviewer: Right

Baggett: And when I got out I got behind there and after I got out her from that after you went through the gate we went through a thicket. And I've never seen a thicket as thick as that and trees was anywhere from six to eight foot bushes about ten foot tall and you just had to follow the one that was in front of you because you had to work your way through it it was that thick. I've never seen anything as thick as that. And there I just there's where the bus boy sprained his ankle and went back. And so I went on around after I tore out of that fence I went on around back up there. And a little later up on top that hill there we got close enough to the enemy that you put your machine gun that BAR Browning Automatic Rifle people up front. And they got into exchanging fire up there and so I just laid in the little it wasn't a ditch it was just a swag supposed to be the ditch of the road. And they were shooting at us and I rolled in behind this tree flat you know and rolled I was first behind a tree and a bullet just came over top my head and hit the tree right over my head. So I rolled into this little swag there to try to protect myself. And when some of the I guess the BAR men or somebody shot one them just in front of us there the German. And he was shot through the stomach and he was laying there moaning and groaning and in that Band of Brothers and in Iraq when this fellow went in and shot crippled they wasn't dead but they looked like they was dead. And he shot them and they are trying to prosecute that fellow for it. And on that Band of Brothers there was something like that happened and that happened to us. We walked on up there and there he was a German laying there and he's hurting and couldn't do nothing for him we didn't have no medic with us at that time. And so they got in a debate who was gonna kill him shoot him put him out of his suffering. And wouldn't nobody finally one guy did he was afraid to do it. But I've told my wife about it several of them I said I'm that a way if I see a cat or dog over there that's been run over so bad they can't do nothing with them I take my gun and kill it and get it out of its suffering misery. And so that's what they decided to do with this fellow just kill him where he wouldn't lay there and suffer. And you can't blame that fellow over in Iraq because they were so bad on you can fake being dead you know and don't know what's gonna happen. Just like Germans they was bad about going in be inside with a family or something and you go in and you don't know whether he's gonna shot you or not you don't know. Because some of them have even used children you can't take a chance like that a lot of times.

Interviewer: Did that ever happen to you where a German soldier was kind of faking surrender or?

Baggett: No most of the fighting you don't see the guy himself. I mean I didn't zero in on a particular one. We'd go across this big hill with our rifles down this way firing as we go and they are up in a house that was up there on the top of the hill or somewhere up there. And you don't know if they are going to kill you or not. Bullets will be flying both ways and you're lucky if you don't get hit. And sometimes some of them get hit pretty bad.

Interviewer: I know you said the weight that you were carrying slowed you down. What exactly were you carrying with you?

Baggett: The bazooka rounds weighted 11 pounds apiece.

Interviewer: Wow

Baggett: And I had three of those. I had the M1 rifle and it's pretty heavy that M1. It's not like a carbine and I had this belt of ammunition all around. I had entrenching tool I got rid of that too though. That first day I give it to this fellow I give him that I didn't get rid of my canteen cup but I got rid of my blanket roll



and my trenching tool because I just like I said I was weighed down. And then two hand grenades swinging up here to your straps and I had what the call a bandoleer a M1 ammunition it swung over one of your shoulders you know of over your neck somewhere. It I think carried about maybe 8 clips and I just couldn't get along with it.

Interviewer: What was in your backpack? You had a backpack on right?

Baggett: That's what I took off there when I went back I said you take this. But I managed to keep my canteen cup and mess kit. And at night if it was at night and we were resting or going to sleep you dug a hole to get in well usually he would be put pulling guard when I was sleeping if I done got was out pulling guard he would be there. You know just use his blanket and trenching tote. But one night I dug with my hands the best I could. I thought I was gone that night because it had almost dark I mean it was dark enough you couldn't tell who anybody was. And they was just throwing artillery over our heads just landing in front of us and I was laying there and I was trying to get in there because I was afraid this shell was going to get me. You've got more if you're in the ground you've got more protection. And so I was up first I saw this I couldn't tell who it was a guy coming along by the fence row there end of the fence there was a fence across there too. And I hollered halt to him and he didn't stop I hollered it the third time and I shot I didn't hit him but I shot and he let me know who he was then and it was one of our people. And he had no business being out there walking like that get shot he would have got killed if I'd have zeroed in on him I would have killed him. But I didn't have time because he was done getting up too close and I was afraid he was gonna get me while I was lying down there. But you've got to take care of your own self in there you know.

Interviewer: Oh goodness

Baggett: And I'm just glad I didn't hit him.

Interviewer: Now was nay of your leadership upset that you got rid of your entrenching tool and your backpack or did they not care? How did they feel about that?

Baggett: They didn't they wasn't worried about me they was worried about their own self. And there was a lieutenant that was leading us each company has got their own officers and I never did say anything to them about it myself. I don't guess they even know I didn't have one but I just couldn't carry it.

Interviewer: What was your leadership like? Did you feel like they were doing a good job or?

Baggett: Well I'll put it this way I don't know they are trained to be an officer and that's not too much of a of course some big officers get in there sometime may have to maybe. But as we was going forward he had the maps and things and he was supposed to know how to where to go. And as far as I know I've heard them say we're lost all the time because they don't know where we're going. But we didn't get too far out away from the other units because they was keeping up with us too see.

Interviewer: Now you mentioned that when you first got in with this group of guys and you were moving you got lost twice. How did you find your way back?

Baggett: Well I could still see everybody going around a fence that's when going through this thicket I lost time getting hung in that fence and I was on the tail end going in. And you'd get in a strain of cars

going somewhere and if you're on the tail end the first thing you know you're going to be unless you drive awfully fast part of the time you're not going to catch up with them because they're done gone when you was had to stop for this light or something. Well I had to stop and I made a still target was the reason whoever it was it was the enemy it wasn't our troops up on the woods there was woods. And of course when they got to shooting at us we was shooting back at them whether we seen them or not. You put enough led in there and they're going to be trying to hide or quit one or the other. And it was got on a tank there one night they came in and we got on that the next morning they said we was had to the next Sunday morning is when you really have to get out and go. They would pick it worked out the weekends are when you get caught. And they hollered for us to get out get ready we had to go. Said we had a relief they was they had a group and I was thinking that was in the Battle of the Bulge but I'm not sure if it was or not. But we had to get out we got on a tank and rode where we'd go through the woods the tanks then of course they didn't go too fast. But if they got shooting at us the enemy got to shooting at us we'd unload off that tank and fire back. And that's when we then we'd get back on the tank and go a little further you know. I don't know how far we went on the tank but we went several miles I guess.

Interviewer: So most of the time you'd be traveling on a tank troop?

Baggett: No

Interviewer: Or just sometimes

Baggett: It just at the time we'd gotten behind. We was traveling pretty fat though because it was close to the end of the war and we was meeting hundred and thousands of them coming back. The Germans they just surrendered just as far as you could see. And I had it I'll put it this way I had it a lot better than if I'd have got over there six months earlier. I was thinking the other day it's a good things I did take that deferent if I hadn't I'd have been in some of that bad and I always hated thoughts of having to go over there and fight the Japanese because you've got to kill them they are not going to surrender. And they're gonna get you and you've got to get them first. And so

Interviewer: So as you guys moved through Europe did you have a vision of what the overall plan was? Or were you just kind of following

Baggett: No the lieutenant was leading supposed to and of course if he gets killed some of the next in rank probably fills in. And but no I never did even get to look at a map. I mean we the lieutenant was the one that was leading us forward. And of course he was he's supposed to be up front and he is most of the time I think. And he tells you where to go where we've got to go. Just like that morning some of our soldiers are surrounded and we've got to go break them out. And we was lucky we didn't get any hot fire power there. But now these Japanese I was so afraid after the war was over in Europe I was training to come home right after it ended the day that Japan surrendered I was processing to come back home what they call delay in route for a few days and then go to Japan see. And it happens that Japan that atomic bomb they knew what was best for them they better quit while they had a little few left. That was something.

Interviewer: So were you relieved when you found out about the atomic

Baggett: I was glad but I hated I was thinking I'd get to come home but you've got to have so many points to stay over there I mean to come home. And if they've got more people then they need like we were replacements to fill in and others were over there too. And the ones that just come in or had been

there less than a year they had to stay there and protect these prisoners. As I said I was Lahara shipped back to Lahara and we had a compound I forget how many prisoners there. And our company the ones with me and the others in the company we had to pull guard there. We got the prisoners out because they went out and worked these you know how they do in the army. Somebodies out there cooking and fixing you know because you're not you don't have time to go if you was a good cook you wouldn't have time to go in there and cook your meals. But I mean if you're not in combat they have your meals and bring them up to you.

Interviewer: So as you guys were moving through Europe what were you primarily doing? Did you take towns or did you?

Baggett: No this was at that time after the war this ship to Lahara France that's where I went and assigned to the MPs. And from there see we was guarding the prisoners the Germans that they had in the compound. And of course our cooks and all worked there and we had pork to eat one day and beef the next. I mean they really those prisoners went out and stole that stuff get you know. And we had good eats that was after the war and during the war you had to eat what little you had.

Interviewer: Did you have any struggles with the prisoners of war were they ever difficult?

Baggett: No I didn't let them get away with what a lot of them did though. Because they wasn't supposed to go out with army clothes on I mean they had their work clothes. But they weren't supposed to go out dressed like ordinary soldiers. And they got the white underwear shirt and shorts they got the white and we as our own army we had to take the brown OD stuff. And they would go out and they'd wear stuff our and swap it for stuff what would frog line it was called. The Germans whatever they wanted to do that's what they done as they pleased and nobody questioned them you know. But I got shipped from there to Anworth Belgium there we was guarding warehouses big warehouses full of clothes and stuff that was unbelievable. And I was assigned to a warehouse that was shirts and pants and they was stacked you couldn't they was stacked to the ceiling great big mounds of them.

Interviewer: Were they something for the army or?

Baggett: It was for our own troops I guess but after the war they didn't need it. So I thought a lot of time I know what they done they wouldn't let us they counted ours when we went in every evening to pull guard they checks us to see that we didn't have on extra clothes or to see what we had on because when we come back out they checked to see if you had got any of those clothes out of there to put on doubled up you know to go out. We wasn't allowed to take nothing. And that's not hardly don't look hardly right but you're not supposed to steal bit the thing of it was the Germans was wearing a lot better clothes than we were.

Interviewer: Now when you were at the when you were in France guarding the prisoner of war camp.

Baggett: Yeah that was back in Lahara.

Interviewer: What were you doing were you patrolling around to make sure nobody left or?

Baggett: No they had of course they was in you've seen them just like in the United States they out you in a guard house of course they've got a big wire fence around it. And had gates and our job was to had about a square building a little building about as far as from here to the wall over there. And that's

where we stayed while we was on guard. And when the prisoners go out on detail like going out to cook or get stuff we'd check them out and count them and then when they come back in you do the same thing. And every now and then we'd have to go in the compound and go through their stuff see what they had because they would steal anything. And we had to turn in razor blades to get more razor blades now that's ridiculous to think you're in the service and you're having to save that when the Germans and all or Jap whoever it might be they steal because they're going to these places. Their guarding these places a lot of them but I was guarding and two or three of the guys that went with me one time for Belgium there's where they had the mountains of clothes and we was guarding the clothes and as I said they didn't let us come out with an extra shirt or pair of pants on because they searched you just like. Well when I worked on the aircraft a lot of times they'd search people that worked there as they came out because they was inside to see if they had walked off with something.

Interviewer: Now while you were how long were you in combat? Like how many months were you in there until the before the war ended?

Baggett: It was I was over there I believe sometime the first of March.

Interviewer: So three or four months.

Baggett: And yeah and the war the German was they surrendered in 45

Interviewer: Forty five like in May or June of 45.

Baggett: Somewhere along there. Must have been 44 because I got discharged in 40 well let me see. You know it's been so long ago it's hard to remember all of it. I can remember most everything that happened because you don't forget it. I've been like a lot of other people my heart was up in my throat most of the time when they was in combat. What time you was so scared you couldn't think about being scared you just went in there done it you know like the Band of Brothers. You know he it's and if you don't go back I found that out. Even if I'd have wanted to went back I wouldn't. It scared me when I got lost those two times because there was Germans all around there and I'd have been killed or a prisoner of war if they'd have caught me. But I wasn't lost that long they noticed I was out and they come back sent a guy back to get me.

Interviewer: Did you make any friends or did you become close to the men that were in your unit?

Baggett: No as far as the Germans and French I went to Paris France from Lahara that was on the leave they give you you know to rest you up when you're there in the compound. No but you're not supposed to fraternize they call it.

Interviewer: But did you become friends with your own soldiers that were with you?

Baggett: Oh you're friends with them you are friends with them when you first find them because that's you buddy. You know that's the reason I said I didn't it scared me when I got lost because I knew I would either be killed or captured as a prisoner. And you want somebody to be there with you and I mean I think all of them will you that. You don't want to be out there by yourself.

Interviewer: Were any of your friends were they wounded or during combat?

Baggett: No the ones that we was with didn't. I mean well when we was in combat one guy got his rifle shot out of his that's where I went through that fence that time. One fellow got his rifle shot out of his hand so they were there shooting at us. But if they was far enough away that it could be the least bit off and wouldn't hit you maybe. That's what saved me on those three shells coming around. And I knew better than to stay there any longer. It's a wonder I hadn't got killed anyway. But

Interviewer: What were you eating along the way just sea rations or?

Baggett: Sea rations most of it was pretty good. I mean I've told people here I don't really know what it is to be hungry. But I have been places where I know what it is to be hungry and over there you eat what you if you're hungry, I tell people here, I don't want this or I don't want that, I said if you're hungry enough you'll eat anything. My mother used to take corn meal and mix water with it and made what you call a plain hoeecake that's what they called it. And it tasted good because it was kind of sweet without milk and all that stuff in it so yeah you eat what they send you. Now after the war there we got a ration a certain amount of cigarettes, candy, something like that. And I swapped my cigarettes to some of the others for candy you know because I didn't smoke and we could swap. He wanted the cigarettes and I liked the candy.

Interviewer: Did you ever get care packages or letter from your wife?

Baggett: No oh I got a letter from my wife.

Interviewer: Did you

Baggett: And I wrote just about every day myself. But letters didn't come back as fast as they went there.

Interviewer: Were the letters from her encouraging or what would they?

Baggett: Well she had my baby was born just before I left. So she had to take care of the child for those years and she was staying with her Momma she was living with her Momma. And after I got out of the service we stayed there because she lived I don't know exactly the day she died but she lived a while. In fact we went out in the country and moved first we moved to Nashville and I went back to work at Vultee Aircraft where I used to work. Got called three places but I went there and I got laid off for lack of work at the aircraft and there was three places I put in for work Fort Campbell, Vultee again, and Aladdin Company in Nashville this was out of Nashville a big company went in there. And so I decided to take it here because it was closer to home here you know where my family lived out there. And I bought it used to be a railroad track through there and I bought there was still two houses left there. It was four houses for the railroad people to stay in live in you had two white couples and two black couples and their families. And so when they took the railroad out in 48 I guess it was I bought that I lived down there moved down there. What I had in Nashville I wasn't up there long because I got laid off for lack of work after the second time I come back out of the service. So I worked up there awhile after I married and we lived out here between Hackberry and Lone Oak.

Interviewer: Now was your wife already sick when you got back or did she become sick after you got back.

Baggett: She became sick after I came back. She had cancer in her head her eye swelled up something terrible. And there wasn't no sure for it. I had just got a new car see you didn't get when you come out of the service they hadn't been making new cars too much and I put in for a new car at King Nash Motors I was up there in Nashville. And I got that and they brought it out to me one afternoon we drove the fellow back and we went to Sheriff Eli Mound to visit my sister. And we drove it down there and while we was down there her head got to hurting so bad and we got back she and her older sister lived in Nashville went up to the doctor up there. And they x-rayed it and they showed this cancer in her face there and was just springing out like how a rock hit a windshield it just goes in every directions and that's the way that was. And this doctor he had me go in a room showed me the slide showed it on the wall and he told me after he didn't tell her that he'd taken a knife and went up her nose and sliced a piece off without even deadening here or anything had it tested. It was cancer and its they started giving her radiation treatments x-rays and radiation and we was there in Nashville in the city limits so it didn't last too long until she was down I mean she was down. And that was found in April I believe it was and in September she died so she didn't last too long because it was bad.

Interviewer: My mother died of cancer and I can kind of I've been through that experience. It's like knowing everything.

Baggett: Well a lot of people I had two brothers died with it and a sister and I had it I had prostate cancer in I believe it was in 51. And I had it and you know what I was going to a doctor there in Nashville Dr. Barnett a neurologist and the day he had set up for me we went up there on a Friday a Thursdays to get through the hospital to get things set up for the operation on Monday morning. And coming back home my wife got deathly sick before we got in town and vomited and she came home and she wound up in the hospital herself. And but you know what he told me to come home I was coming home that Thursday I was going on Memorial over here and have a stress test because that's one thing I didn't have. He said you go home and have a stress test now because he'd done told me said when you go in they'll examine you at the hospital and all of that anything that's wrong. And so I got on the treadmill and it just barley was moving and I'd been on one in 70 and you couldn't run and keep up with it I mean they'll keep going until you get to where you just can't go seemed like. So I was just making steps like that I wasn't on it a half a minute until they stopped it said it's through. I said you're not through are you said yes. I said well I was on one once before back in the 70s and I said they had it going fast and I couldn't keep up with it. And they didn't tell me what there was wrong with me or anything and I come back home and my neurologist in Nashville they called him and he called me and said we're gonna have to put it off again because said we can't put you to sleep. That's what it was couldn't put me to sleeps that's what they said that's the reason they called it off. It had been called off twice. Once they didn't have room enough in the hospital at that time and I don't know what the other one was for. But that last time he said we can't put you to sleep said we're gonna have to cancel it call it another time. And you know I went over here to Dr. Montgomery no it was Dr. White out there. Dr. White and I said will you give me can you call Nashville and help me get a good doctor for me to go to find out what is wrong with this stress test.? And he did and on Monday yeah it was on Monday my wife and I my wife I've got now we went up to Nashville we was living here at that time. And so I had the screening before and my PSA number if you know anything about anything like that but a persons that got a cancer a male person with prostate cancer they take your blood and have it checked and they can tell you if you're in a group if it's going up or down or how serious it is. That's about the only thing they had at that time and so when I when he had taken samples and said he had to take eight plugs out of my prostate and they all showed cancer. So we went said there's three things you can be operated on we can freeze it we can use radium treatment or said you can just let it go and risk everything being alright. Well then see I had done had a stress test they couldn't put me to sleep that's what they said. When we went to Nashville

the following the next day or on Tuesday and to find out from the doctor up there just what is my problem and he found out pretty quick what the problem was. And he said well said what they found on there why they couldn't put me to sleep was I just didn't have no breath and they didn't tell me that but that's what it was because I went he called and told me said we can't put you to sleep. But yet they put me to sleep because when I went up there right after that the next two or three days I went after that up there to find out what the problem was that I couldn't be put to sleep and they told me he says you've got a coronary artery disease. I had eight bypasses done the next day I never even come home.

Interviewer: Oh my

Baggett: Eight bypasses at one time and now I don't know how they got to it but when they checked me I don't know how they slipped something in my arm or something that I didn't know it. I didn't take no pills or anything and I don't think they gave me a shot but I was knocked out from the time and it was a hospital at that time so they had done give me something knocked me out morphine. I still have morphine trouble and morphine you won't fill a thing in it. And that's what they give most people to operate on them I found that out they even give a dog they was operating on here on TV some morphine. I said they even give them morphine. On that morphine they had given me a shot of that and I was in a hospital I thought we was downstairs see what it will do to your mind but I thought my oldest son and my wife and myself was down I thought we was standing on the street up there in Nashville. And it was in the hospital at that time my wife said no you was in the hospital at that time. And so they I said they showed me he was down there this doctor and he showed me this strip about that long showed me the places where they had my bypass. I said well can't I go home and come back in the morning? He said no he said you've got two real bad one said you may not get home. So from that he said he said what do you think about it? I looked around at my wife Betty Jean is her name I said what so you think about it? She said well you're not gonna get any better. And I never thought about it being such as bad serious operation six at one time. And I just looked back around at the doctor and I said okay go ahead with it. He said alright I'll do the operation in the morning.

Interviewer: So back to your military experience was that your last place that you were at in Europe or did you go somewhere after that?

Baggett: No I come back into Lahara.

Interviewer: Oh you went back to France.

Baggett: I think I was over there first probably before I was in Lahara at that compound. But I was a in a labor supervision company I noticed that's what they've got on my thing there too. Labor Supervision Company was supervising people just like MPs you've got people there that are always in charge. You've always got someone a little larger in charge. And so I didn't stay anywhere too long though because I got sent back over to France.

Interviewer: So were you just kind of waiting your time out to get enough points to come back or were you thinking about maybe staying in?

Baggett: No I'd have come home if they'd have let me come home but I didn't have enough points because see I hadn't been I don't know how long I had been in combat but I was in there for several months because I got my Combat Infantryman's badge that was I think you've got to be in combat a month maybe two months to get that so. I recon that's I didn't get to come home I had to stay another



year. That's what it was they done it on a yearly basis. Well you know because you're in occupation you have too much time already over here and you're gonna have to serve a year over here because these others that's been in combat they're all gonna go home first.

Interviewer: Did you ever think about staying in the military or did that?

Baggett: No I'll tell you why I didn't

Interviewer: Why

Baggett: When I come home they tried their best to get me to join the reserves. I said no I wanted to get free I wanted to do something I wanted to do didn't want somebody to tell me what I had to do. And it wasn't that I didn't mind people telling me what to do I wanted to be my own boss for a while. So I come home I said no I don't want to. And I'm glad now in a ways that I didn't well I'd have been too old to be sent over there anyway in the Iraq war. They had they Vietnam War at that time I guess.

Interviewer: What were you looking forward to most about coming home while you were still in Europe?

Baggett: Well of course I knew I would see my family because they were still living my son and wife first wife they was living over there off Elder Street in Clarksville to see them. I was gone a whole year of course I wrote to them and they would write to me. But my mom and dad was getting old and I knew. But I was thinking I'll go back to the aircraft because I liked working there and that's what I did. As I said I put in an application at Fort Campbell, and the aircraft and Aladdin. And I got called to all three places the same time.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Baggett: And the reason I took this one was it was close to home I was living this log house we lived in that. That's my log house I've got a son that's living there now been up there oh about five years. I had renters and he didn't have no place to go and he and his wife divorced. But he's married again now he hadn't been paying no rent or nothing so. I guess he'll live there he's air air-condition work and things are bad there now too like a lot of stuff is. People seem to just go out and get a job here and there.

Interviewer: Now when you were in combat still did you guys ever have breaks where you got a chance to do something fun or what would you do if you had any downtime?

Baggett: Well while I didn't have that in combat I think we went 30 days or more before we even got to take a shower. Got loaded up with these little ole mites they call them it's kind of like a chigger only it's a lot smaller than a chigger. And I had to get the place over there we had to sleep in combat we slept in the German's they use their farm animals down here and they slept up over the top. I mean that's so much of it. And we that first time they give you a shower and all they were supposed to give you new clothes after you shower and clean up. I had those mites I can't think of now what they call them but anyway it's a little speck you can't hardly see them. And it itches and they'll get around your joints more than anything else. And they strip you down or you strip yourself down you go in this room and they spray you with something that kills those things. And they sprayed me twice that night and I believe I had to go back that second time and do it again but they got rid of them I didn't have no more. I know the place they was at probably because we was up in a loft we was up over this cabin things.



Interviewer: Now would you ever pass through German town when you are moving through Europe or pass through any of the towns and get to do anything there or stay there?

Baggett: No we didn't get to like I said the war was ending pretty fast there on the last and we bypassed a lot of the enemy we bypassed them. Just like when we were on them tanks they'd get to shooting at us on them tanks up in the woods there and we'd have to fall off the tank lay down and fire back you know. And we might have to get off two or three times because of that. That's when they shot that tree that time when they shot that tree we'd just been off the tanks I mean just before we got off of it. And I was I got behind this tree. I'll tell you there's this desert storm war I believe was the fastest less hindering war of any of them. They liked to never got ole Sudan but they finally got him. They liked to go this ole they can't get Osama Bin Laden yet but he's got a second that works and he was on the road and he got away from them he turned and got away from them before he got away from them they had him.

Interviewer: Now once the war was over and you were in France and Belgium were there any things you got to do for fun there like maybe get to see France or other areas?

Baggett: Yeah when I was there in Lahara at the compound I got one weekend one week I know we went to Paris.

Interviewer: What did you do in Paris anything interesting?

Baggett: Got on a bicycle me and a couple of the guys went up there on a train.

Interviewer: Did you think it was neat I mean had you ever was it unlike anything you had seen in American? What were your impressions of being in a new country and seeing everything?

Baggett: Well I'll tell you just like when we went into France to start with people over there I can understand being through the war the Germans had been there in France and they messed all over everything I mean mess too. And of course they had in France they had these stalls out on the street that you've walk in and do stuff there just like a toilet. And I don't know you have to do what you can do you know. And when you're in combat you just do where you do it and that's when I landed there in Lahara to start with and we had to walk up this ole hill and they told us be sure and watch where you walk because people just. You know the houses was tore up a lot of people they had it rough. And I've always said it's so much better to fight over there than to have them over here because I'd hate to think what they would come over here and do. Because I've seen soldiers the ones I was with have muddy shoes on and go in to a place and they'd pile up in the middle of a bed you know don't have no care about what they do to them or nothings else. Steel anything they could get out of a house you know I didn't do that. It wasn't right and I'd just think you know I told my wife here not that long again I said I didn't do things like that because they'd come over here and the enemy would do the same thing probably.

Interviewer: What would they take what would the other soldiers take form the houses?

Baggett: Well anything money they'd find some money and they could swap that you know. If they could find some they had fruit you know canned fruit or something like that. Just anything they could find in there they wanted you know. I didn't see anybody in the houses as we were going through but like on the brothers you know of course old Hitler he had all kinds of silver and everything else and they'd load up their helmets. You might have seen that too and their pockets with that silverware and

stuff. How they got home with it they had to have a buddy in the mail place to get it made it home. Because when I was over there after the war I got I bought myself a rifle with a scope on it and a Nazi flag. And I fixed them up and carried them to the post office and sent them home they never did get home. The people in the post office they took anything they wanted just like we'd get soap you know to wash with and they'd give you a bar of soap you didn't get a lot of it. These mess sergeants and things they'd take cases of it. When I was in training they'd give you cereal for breakfast a lot of times and there was no sugar for it. Somebody was black marketing the sugar to people out civilians outside because sugar was hard to get ahold of. So but I never did believe in doing that and I didn't do that.

Interviewer: Did you ever think about using your GI bill when you got back? Were you eligible for the GI bill?

Baggett: Yeah I was eligible for it I got. I'll tell you I done it and I wouldn't do it again because I quit I was drawing that 20/20 I believe they call it was a week that they give soldiers. And I signed up for it and got a job at Kroger's making \$25 a week and by the time they were taking Social Security out of that and paid my way to town I was living out in the country I didn't make a thing. And you know I quit it too when I found out what was going on. I said here I am drawing \$20 a week I can at least draw the rest of that I had. I said here I am working a whole week and ain't got a thing when they get through. There again I was being too trying to be too honest. Of course there's nothing honest with it because the people that it was give to you and I don't see how their doing something now they claim I don't know anything about it except what I've heard and read. They government's paying for Viagra for these men to take you know for sex you know having sex. That's been on television and it's been in the paper. And who would believe that our government our tax dollars are furnishing money for somebody to do that. They better be spending it against cancer or something because I've had my share of cancer stuff.

Interviewer: So when you look back on the war years do you look on the fondly? Would you do it over again if you had the opportunity?

Baggett: Well I'll tell you there's a lot of it hard and I don't forget that but yeah I because I feel this way I feel, my wife and I was talking about that here the other day, if I hadn't had went in the service you'd have had a guilty feeling. Everybody else went why didn't you go? That's one reason besides seeing the soldiers come in having such a good time getting a pass you know to come to town that you know. But no I like I said a lot of it was bad but it was just like that 20/20 a week it's foolish for anybody to do better than our government will take our tax dollars and spend it like that. Just like years ago and I cut it out of the paper I forget how many billion dollars it was the government was paying for condoms for these people overseas like Germany and them places. For the population that don't make sense to me. And I voted for Bush and Bush done a good job on that trade center thing but I think here lately I kind of hold it against him some things he's doing. Just like right now we've got oil and all this we're paying this \$2 and something a gallon some of them paying 3 and \$4 a gallon some other places paying that for oil and their saving this for Russia or somebody else where they can come in and we can give it to them. They give Russian 9 billion dollars they was asking for 13 billion here a few years ago and they actually give Russian 9 billion dollars. We'll never get that back that's money that we worked and paid in. And when you get to paying big taxes of course my taxes wasn't so big because I didn't make so much. But I had a good job working in the aircraft I worked at \_\_\_\_ Martin.

Interviewer: So did you stay in the aircraft industry did work there until you retired or

Baggett: As I said they put me in one A and I never did figure out why they put me in one A when we was building planes for Great Brittan to use during the war fighting the Germans. \_\_\_\_\_ sky bombers and then we got and they still are doing parts for airplanes up there. That's the best place I ever worked in my life I mean I worked I was a shear operator up there and I cut steel up there that thick on them shearing machines bug machines push the buttons and they cut it and everything. But I just don't so much of this government stuff and I blame Bush for not going ahead and getting enough people that's got the republicans in congress I voted republican and I have most of my life. So he could have pushed this using our own oil he's on it more now than he was and I think the democrats didn't want him to do it because they'd got a little ole just like that snail darter that done away with that power plant in Tennessee. Because they was gonna do away with them little snail darters wasn't nothing in these streams of water and that's what it is I've got a piece of paper I showed where I cut out of the paper where out west they won't let people I forget whether it was California or some other state. They wouldn't let the people raise a crop out in their field because they'd do away with some little old bug. Now that don't make sense.

Interviewer: I've heard about that before too.

Baggett: Well thank you for your interview

Interviewer: Tape ended