

Interviewer: So what's your full name, where and when were you born?

Griffy: Virgil Griffy no middle initial and I was born November 8, 1923.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Griffy: I was born right down the road here.

Woman in the background: Montgomery County

Interviewer: What branch of the service did you serve in?

Griffy: I never did get a rank other than PFC. I stayed just an enlisted man all the time most of it maintenance.

Woman in the background: But you were in the army right that was the branch. And you were in the what Second Infantry?

Griffy: Second Division.

Interviewer: Okay alright did you have a job before you went into the army?

Griffy: Yea I worked at Goodrich.

Interviewer: Okay was it a decent job, did you like it, did it pay well?

Griffy: It paid good yea best paying job in Clarksville I guess. But I went in the army just like everybody else.

Interviewer: When did you first hear about the Nazis and the Japanese?

Griffy: Hear what?

Interviewer: When did you first hear about the Nazis and the Japanese?

Griffy: Oh I don't know I might have learned a year before that. I know the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor over there.

Interviewer: When did you first hear about did you get to listen to you know when it was broadcasted that Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: Okay

Griffy: My brother went to the Theatre of Japan that part of the world. Where I went it west he went east same time. We went in the army the same day.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to listen to FDR's speech on the radio?

Griffy: Did I what now?

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to list to FDR's speech on the radio?

Griffy: Yea I heard that FDR's speech after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: Did you ever think that maybe the Japanese would come to America?

Griffy: No I never did I didn't think they come a lot nearer doing it than I thought at the time. I just thought the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and they didn't get any further but they attacked the Philippines and took it you know and after a while the Japanese took it back. But I went to the north to the European Theatre operation, when did they attack Pearl Harbor, about a year after they attacked Pearl Harbor. I went to Wisconsin on a train to Wisconsin and I stayed about six or eight months. I went to the Northern Island that's British owned Northern Island not _____ Island Northern Island. And I stayed there about six months not at _____ but I stayed within 90 miles of the Philippines all that time and trained a lot. And stayed in barns and everything else _____ and _____ from France.

Interviewer: So you were drafted?

Griffy: Huh

Interviewer: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Griffy: I was drafted. My brother went in the army the same day I did.

Interviewer: Did you go to an induction center?

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: Do you remember where that was?

Griffy: Yea it was Fort Oglethorpe Georgia.

Interviewer: Did you get tested for like skills or IQ while you were in Oglethorpe?

Griffy: Yea I guess I did. I was tested for a lot of things and my brother and me went in the army at the same time. And they asked us if we wanted to go to the same place and stay together and we told them yea we'd like to but they separated us just as far as they could. I went to Europe and he went to Japan.

Woman in the background: He went to Wisconsin where it was cold and he went to Texas where it was hot.

Interviewer: Of course, so what was your impression of your fellow recruits the people around you that you got drafted with?

Griffy: What's that now?

Interviewer: What was your impression of your fellow recruits?

Griffy: Well I liked the British pretty good and the North Island too when I was there.

Woman in the background: But what did you think of the men around you? Did you like the people you were with?

Griffy: Yea oh yea I never did have no problem.

Interviewer: Was this your first time away from home?

Griffy: Yes

Interviewer: What did how much of an impact did that have on you?

Griffy: I don't think it had any.

Interviewer: Okay

Woman in the background: Although you told me you were really lonesome that first night.

Griffy: Yea I was yea. But I was lonesome a lot of times.

Interviewer: Did you have to patriciate in any stateside maneuvers?

Griffy: What is that now?

Woman in the background: Did you have other than being going through basic that was the only thing you did in the United States as far maneuvers right was just basic training?

Griffy: Yea in Wisconsin I done all the training in Wisconsin.

Woman in the background: Then they left and went to Ireland.

Interviewer: Okay what kind of unit were you a part of once you got into Europe?

Griffy: Now what?

Interviewer: What kind of unit were you a part of when you first got to Europe?

Griffy: I was in the infantry I was in the infantry all the time.

Woman in the background: What was your job?

Griffy: Huh?

Woman in the background: Your job was what?

Griffy: Well just infantry.

Woman in the background: Yea but weren't you the person that had to carry stuff all the time from one place to another? I can't think of what that's called.

Griffy: No I just had the stuff that I used. The first Christmas I know I was between France and Germany somewhere and on Christmas day my mother sent me some shoe polish and I didn't need no shoe polish you know. So I wrote and told her what did she think I was going to do with it.

Woman in the background: Now he was like the runner, I can't think of what that's called.

Griffy: What's that?

Woman in the background: What was your job? You know you were the person that carried orders from one place to another?

Griffy: Oh yea I was _____ and I went to well England I wasn't in England long I was in _____.

Woman in the background: You were a messenger. Isn't that what you were?

Griffy: Yea

Woman in the background: He was the messenger.

Griffy: I was the messenger. Taking place on the front line I was the messenger for my company commander. A lot of times I was the main man for the company commander and many times I was right out in the open infantry. And in Germany when I got to Germany we were about to take part to go into Germany and the Battle of the Bulge started. I had to withdraw from there and it was about a month or two before I got back _____. And then I got pretty close to Germany in fact I had gone into Germany where they had bombed _____. And one boy had gotten shot and another one called me to help him save that's man's life. And I laid in that water _____ so long that when I got up I couldn't stand up I'd fall back. I was paralyzed on the count of I stayed in that water so long. But the next day that night we went into Germany then. We were _____ at that time.

Interviewer: What was your first experience of combat?

Griffy: Oh man I was from then on I was in combat.

Interviewer: Okay

Woman in the background: But what was the very first combat you remember?

Griffy: Well I guess that was the first combat I remember in Germany.

Woman in the background: Huh

Griffy: In Germany.

Woman in the background: Not on the beach?

Griffy: At the beach when I invaded France I was in that part of the country for almost a year. I was in the ____ country and everywhere I went a battle was.

Interviewer: So what was combat like in France?

Griffy: It was the hardest combat I was in France. From the time I hit the beach from between Germany and France. I was between Germany and France on the Siegfried line what they called it and they Germany oh I could take one step and I'd be in territory of Germany and ____ over France. But after we had fought all summer in France for about a year 11 months I believe it was most of it was in France. A lot of it was on the Siegfried line between France and Germany.

Interviewer: Okay did you ever encounter the German hedgerows?

Griffy: What?

Interviewer: The German hedgerows?

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: So what were they like?

Griffy: They were kind of like the Northern Islands and France was more like Germany. And in Germany we traveled a lot at night by tanks and then we would ride in tanks a whole bunch on a tank. And after a while there wasn't no tanks it was just infantry.

Interviewer: So what after you got done in France what happened after that?

Griffy: We just kept going until we got into Germany, went on through Germany. We went to almost to Berlin and then rode trucks from Berlin directly south into Czechoslovakia.

Interviewer: What took you to Czechoslovakia?

Griffy: I don't know I don't know why we went to Czechoslovakia. We went straight south into Czechoslovakia that was seven miles and we stayed in Czechoslovakia then until the war was over.

Woman in the background: Tell him about what the people were like in Czechoslovakia.

Griffy: Oh they made us cakes and pies all kind of ____ and things like that.

Woman in the background: He said they celebrated as they came into Czechoslovakia.

Griffy: Yea they really treated us good.

Interviewer: How long were you in Czechoslovakia for?

Griffy: To fight

Interviewer: How long?

Griffy: Huh

Interviewer: How long? How long did it take for you to get out of Czechoslovakia?

Griffy: Oh to come home?

Interviewer: Yea

Griffy: We stayed in Czechoslovakia

Woman in the background: How long were you there? About a month?

Griffy: No I was there longer than that probably five or six months. In fact they had the war won ____ took Czechoslovakia. And they were talking about sending me back to Texas to make plans to fight the Japanese but when we got home to the United States the whole company come and they made peace with Japan while I was in the United States. Texas was as far as I went. They made peace with the Japanese we never did have to go to Japan or any of that part of the world.

Interviewer: Okay so if you can give me an overview of your entire time of your time in France and Germany. Like if you can give me a series of events that you went through there.

Griffy: Well I probably well the worst part was France when we first invaded France and during that time. Then I went on into Germany and went several miles into Germany though I went into Czechoslovakia.

Interviewer: Ok

Woman in the background: Can you tell what it was like on the beach? What did you see what were you hearing?

Griffy: I seen just mostly land you know. I was attacking a lot of times at night I remember that. And that was in Germany.

Woman in the background: I know you talked about in France in the beginning the United States tanks weren't very good.

Griffy: Oh at first the first part when we went into France the tanks _____ and then tanks would go up and _____. And so they put blades on those hedgerows and go right through _____.

Woman in the background: They were getting shot a lot I guess so they put those blades on the first so they could just go right through.

Griffy: Yea go right through those hedgerows. But all of France had hedgerows Germany too. ____ walls stone walls a lot of things like that. I guess that's the reason I trained in the Northern Islands so long, I was there six months and trained a lot.

Interviewer: What did you think of the Germans?

Griffy: Well I never was able to fraternize with them. They had no fraternizing with the Germans at all. They wouldn't let us talk to them unless it was business.

Woman in the background: But there were those kids that you met was that in Czechoslovakia that you met up with those German kids?

Griffy: Yea oh yea I saw a lot of kids in Czechoslovakia.

Woman in the background: Yea but where were the German ones? You talked about how young they were and you asked them why they were working for Hitler?

Griffy: Yea we captured a whole bunch of 14, 13 year old kids most 12, 14. And we asked the First Sargent asked them what are y'all doing fighting for Hitler anyway? And one of the kids said but I must, that's all he said, but I must.

Interviewer: And so they were Hitler youth?

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: Okay so when you got back to the states what did you start doing when you got back?

Griffy: Well I when I got back to the United States I was supposed to go to Japan and fight over there. Of course _____ in Czechoslovakia was the last place we had to fight anywhere in Germany. It was the end so when I come to the United States I thought I was going to Japan then I was going to go take a furlough and go to Japan. But they to talking to the Japanese and made peace with Japan before we had to go over there. Now my brother that went in the same time I did that's where he went. He was on an island in Japan in Japanese territory and that's what he done. He drove _____ and in the beach and he'd take they had a hospital on that beach and he would go to the hospital and to the beach and get men that got wounded and take them to the hospital. That's all he done.

Woman in the background: And then what did you do though? Once you got out what did you do? Once you got out of the army?

Griffy: Oh I went to farming.

Woman in the background: Farming

Interviewer: Where did you do farming at?

Griffy: Huh

Interviewer: Did you come back here to do farming?

Griffy: Yea

Woman in the background: On this farm.

Interviewer: Okay oh so when you were in Europe what did you do in your free time?

Griffy: I didn't have any free time.

Interviewer: You were busy all the time?

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: Okay when you were in the field did you get hot food, sea rations?

Griffy: Yea we got k-rations every kind of ration there was I guess and after I got in France I'd get so called hot food several times.

Woman in the background: I know he talked about Christmas once them coming and fixing Christmas dinner for them. Was it Christmas dinner that you got knocked out of your hand?

Griffy: Yea I was standing under a tree ____ were about that deep and I was standing under a mess tent and there was a tree trunk fell out and hit me in the head and knocked my mess food out of my hand. I didn't even have any supper that night.

Interviewer: Oh man

Griffy: That tree just come down just like an airplane.

Interviewer: Did you mostly sleep on the ground or in tents?

Griffy: Yea I hardly ever had a tent I slept in the ground most of the time.

Woman in the background: Most of it was in those holes.

Griffy: Yea

Interviewer: You slept in a foxhole?

Griffy: Yea I sometimes I'd dig in _____ so if a bomb hit the top of the tree trunk ____ laying. I'd sleep in the after we got in France I done that a lot.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any time did you ever have a chance to take showers or shave?

Griffy: No

Interviewer: Anything like that?

Griffy: Very few there was a boy one boy that was when I was in Germany and France on the Siegfried Line they had this they'd send us to take a shower or something, clean up and one boy had this building he knew some boys that I knew. And he said he told them he said you are from Clarksville and he said there are some people near Clarksville that he knew and I said yea I know them and I knew the Knights,

Knight that was there last name. And I went to school with them and I ____ and I told them and they was from north and I told them yea I knew most of them had moved north in Indiana.

Woman in the background: Was it you or somebody else that took all their clothes off and went into a stream or a river or something and cleaned up?

Griffy: Oh yea there was a place you could ____ and clean up and put you got a new

Woman in the background: Fatigues?

Griffy: Yea of course I went one time for two months without taking a bath.

Woman in the background: At one point you were in Germany when that guy chose you to go back to England right?

Griffy: Do what?

Woman in the background: Weren't you in Germany when that guy chose you out of everybody?

Griffy: Yea chose me out of 140 men to I needed to I ____ to a place back in London for a while to get off the front. And so he sent me to England for a while.

Woman in the background: To send one back and he chose daddy to go back to England. Tell him what you did when you were in England. When you were there what did you do? When you went back to England.

Griffy: Oh I just went to ____.

Interviewer: How much time did you have?

Griffy: Huh

Interviewer: How much time did you have back in England?

Griffy: I don't know I stayed in the army about three years.

Woman in the background: Yea but when you were in England how long did you get to go back? Were you there for a week two weeks?

Griffy: Go back where?

Woman in the background: To England you went on that furlough to England.

Griffy: Oh I can't remember now.

Woman in the background: Can't remember. I know he met up with another guy that was on furlough at the same time and he went to Piccadilly Circus. Daddy went over there with him and he was like I don't want to be here.

Griffy: We got a furlough to London yea. And Piccadilly Circus was a place to ____ yourself yea. This boy he said when he got there he said, I had never seen him before, he said I've got to go ____ myself. I went to what did you call it?

Woman in the background: Piccadilly Circus.

Griffy: Yea and I left Piccadilly Circus that wasn't no place for me.

Woman in the background: He went back he slipped and went to the movies that's what he did.

Griffy: Yea I went back and stayed all the time I was there. I went to the movie every day.

Interviewer: Well I've only got one last question. Were you ever wounded in battle?

Griffy: I don't believe I was.

Woman in the background: The only wounds you had was when that hand grenade went off right?

Griffy: What

Woman in the background: That had grenade that went off.

Griffy: Yea it did. A boy had a hand grenade and a

Woman in the background: Gas mask

Griffy: Gas mask and I didn't know it. And we were fixing to go to go we ended up fighting in London in France too all of France most of it, what we needed to take at that time. And I was standing to go I was lining up and a boy had a hand grenade and a gas mask and he knew it but I didn't. And it went off and he was trying to throw it and it went off and put me in the hospital for four days. I was on my way to ____.

Woman in the background: He got a cut up on his eye. Then he had to find his own way to ____ to meet up with them.

Griffy: I had to get to go on my own to ____ stayed four days in the hospital. It cut here you can see it now but just barely missed my eye a piece of shrap metal. And this doctor was taking it out and when he got it out he had this shrap metal piece and he handed it to me and said you keep this I said I don't want it.

Interviewer: Alright then.

Griffy: That's the infantry division _____ (looking at a frame of medals). Of course in combat you didn't have _____. That's my _____ the thing that looks like _____. We were fixing to fly ride trucks to

Woman in the background: Czechoslovakia

Griffy: Czechoslovakia yea that's how we had to go in trucks. I called that my mess kit.