

Interviewer: Well we'll go ahead and get started if it's okay Mr. Tarkington. If you can't hear me I'll talk louder. What's your full name and where were you born?

Tarkington: My full name is Richard Washington Tarkington I was named after two both of my grandfathers but I've always went by R.W. and I was born in Hickman County and January 3, 1924.

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

Tarkington: The 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry division

Interviewer: Second infantry what were your parent's names and what did they do for a living, who were your parents?

Tarkington: My parents were Jim Tarkington and my mother was Bessie Worley Tarkington and my daddy was a blacksmith.

Interviewer: Really

Tarkington: Mother was just a house keeper.

Interviewer: How many did you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

Tarkington: I had five brother and three sisters no wait a minute four brothers and three sisters.

Interviewer: So I guess you went to school here.

Tarkington: Yeah four brothers there was eight of us.

Interviewer: Eight all together wow that's a lot of hungry mouths to feed.

Tarkington: Yeah eight of us.

Interviewer: So did you go to school here in Hickman County?

Tarkington: Yeah went to Little Lock I just finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Little Lock that was second year high there and I thought I had sense enough to do anything but I found out later I didn't.

Interviewer: So I think that's the experience of a lot of us life teachers us that doesn't it. What do you remember about the great depression here in Hickman County?

Tarkington: I remember you mean talking about back in Hoover times?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: I remember that pretty well. Of course I was born in 24 but 1930 that was the year 100 was built and I built that I remember that mighty well. But I remember momma boarding a lot of the workers there that worked for Tom Pat because we had you know for a little extra money. But I still say if it

wasn't for the government now giving checks and everything we'd be in worse shape right now then we was in 29.

Interviewer: So what were your family's impressions of FDR?

Tarkington: Well I liked him.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: He come in and started a lot of well it was actually WPA and the CC you know a lot of the kids a lot of the boys went in the CCs that's kind of like the army I don't know whether you know about it or not. Grays Bend Road out here was built by the CCs it was called the CC Road. You remember that don't you?

Interviewer: Yeah we have a CCC Road out in Dickson County and they built Montgomery Bell State Park too.

Tarkington: Oh yeah that's right they did yeah. And I think they built a lot of school houses to the WPA did and of course that helped give everybody a job that could work. I don't think they made no whole lot of money but it was a lot of money back then.

Woman in the background: Did you go to Possum Holler School?

Tarkington: Yeah I did yeah I did. I first went to Oak Grove we lived over there close to Tom Patton place then I was eight years old. I went there until I started when I was four years old.

Interviewer: So did you have a job before you went into the service?

Tarkington: Making whiskey

Interviewer: Well that's alright a lot of people did.

Tarkington: That's the only thing we had to do on Hassel Estate I mean we had no way of making a living there wasn't nothing you could make any money. I know you remember some of that don't you?

Woman in the background: Yes I do.

Interviewer: There was a lot of people in Hickman County that did that survive I certainly understand I hear it a lot.

Tarkington: Some of them still does it.

Interviewer: Uh huh yeah I know better than to walk in the woods when there's smoke coming out of the middle of the woods for that very reason. So I understand that you were a volunteer in 1943.

Tarkington: Yeah what I did I wouldn't have had to have left when I did but I volunteered to leave with the next group. There was some of my friends on Hassel Estate was going and I wanted to go with them and of course they took me right on in I volunteered and I left with them. And I went to Fort

Oberthrope Georgia and they sent me on to Camp Swift Texas took my training in Camp Swift Texas. That's about 60 miles west of Austin and they put me on a BAR that's a Browning automatic rifle. And somehow or another when I got my basic training the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry division needed some replacements and the needed a BAR man so they sent me to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and I went over with the 2<sup>nd</sup> division 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry division.

Interviewer: So where were you on December 7, 1941?

Tarkington: Well I was on top of Lemmon Hill off there me and Pete Rose was making whiskey. And he came in late and he told me about the bombing you know and everything. He said they bombed a lot of course I didn't know how bad it was until I got the paper the next day. And a lot of the guys started volunteering then to go but I wasn't old enough. So I went in as quick as I got 19 I could have went in when I was 18 but daddy and them didn't want me to.

Interviewer: Right so you went in right after 19 that happened?

Tarkington: Yeah I was 19 the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of January and I went in I believe it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February a month later.

Interviewer: Nineteen forty six?

Tarkington: Nineteen forty three.

Interviewer: Okay 1943 okay so yeah that was right after Pearl Harbor as quick as you could I understand.

Tarkington: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah okay did you approve of the way FDR handled his office in the beginning of the war did you think

Tarkington: Do what now?

Interviewer: Did you think FDR was doing a good job with the war when he first started taking office.

Tarkington: Yeah yeah I thought so

Interviewer: So you went in to the infantry. You started off in infantry and stayed there?

Tarkington: Yeah I was in the infantry trained in the infantry took my basic in the infantry and then joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry.

Interviewer: Did you feel like you were prepared?

Tarkington: Yeah I thought I could do anything. You know how a 19 year old boy will do.

Interviewer: Tell me about basic training what was that like?

Tarkington: We worked hard but it was for getting us in shape is what it was.

Interviewer: Right so did you live in barracks?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: Did you live in barracks?

Tarkington: Yeah during basic yeah.

Interviewer: Okay how was the chow?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: How was the food?

Tarkington: You know a lot of people thought it wasn't good but I liked it.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: Of course I you know they used to give us we called it SOS \_\_\_\_\_ and a lot of people said I'm not going for that stuff I'm not eating it. I loved it

Interviewer: Uh huh

Tarkington: And they'd have fish on Friday and hardly nobody would eat it because it was bass and I loved it. I don't I didn't have no pick with the cooks it was good.

Interviewer: Alright so then you finished your basic training then what happened?

Tarkington: I got transferred out and I joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> and we went to well straight with we went to Lord I can't think remember the name in New Jersey.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: I'll think of it in a minute but anyway they said when we were there if anybody hadn't had a furlough we had six months said you'd get a furlough before you went overseas. So they was fixing to send me over and I hadn't had a furlough so I thought I'd just take one. So I got almost to my sister's house in Nashville there's a little beer joint in there that I had been in and I knew and I went in there to get me a beer and the MPs got me. They put me on a troop train I mean on a train and sent me back there and I had there was about 40 of us there that had been \_\_\_\_\_. And they put us on the Queen Mary and we passed the other outfit and we went on the northern island and was over there cleaning it up for them we was over there cleaning it up for them when they got there.

Interviewer: Wow

Tarkington: They went over on the Susan B Anthony I'd have been on it if I hadn't have messed up but I went on. I tried to take my furlough but I didn't get it.

Interviewer: So what happened next?

Tarkington: Well we stayed over there awhile then we come back to England you know we trained over there that was in the last part of February in 44.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And we trained over there some and we come back to England and got ready for the invasion.

Interviewer: Yeah

Tarkington: I left I believe we got on the ship I guess it was about three days before the invasion. But we was sitting out in the water we could watch what was going on. A lot of the fighting you know we couldn't see the men but we could hear a lot of the shells and things. And we went in the second day at Normandy.

Interviewer: Normandy okay right so you're on this transport and you can see what's happening?

Tarkington: Yeah I never will forget the sight of it. They had I don't know what kind of cable they had fastened to the ship but it went up and it had great big booms hanging up all of them did. That was too keep I guess the planes from coming in you know to hit that they couldn't they were way up in the air they couldn't I thought that was the awfulest sight it ever was. It looked like that big Goodyear balloon you've seen that?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: That's what they all looked like.

Interviewer: Like a blimp or a hot air balloon?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: Like a blimp or a hot air balloon?

Tarkington: Just like it. It looked just like a it looked like a great big giant football.

Interviewer: Okay yes

Tarkington: That's the way they was made.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: Great big you know it was about as big as the ship it looked like to me it was way up there. And every one of the ships had that. And we was parked out so when we got ready to go in they just we had to get off of the ship off of ropes.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: And get in a I forget what they call them light infamy something or another anyway it carried you in the bank and let the hood down in the front and you walked out.

Interviewer: It's like a duck.

Tarkington: Yeah LST

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: Small LST

Interviewer: So you are standing there you're 19 years old.

Tarkington: Nineteen well when I went over there I was 20.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: See I went in 19 and I went over in 44 so I was 20 then.

Interviewer: Okay so you're 20 and that ship pulls up and it's time to go what do you think?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: What are you thinking when it's your time to jump off the

Tarkington: Well I was scared

Interviewer: Yeah

Tarkington: I didn't do much thinking

Interviewer: You just went

Tarkington: Yeah just went. That's the way one of my friends got killed that way over Hassel Estates Virgil Neely. That's how he got killed getting off of the ship. But you could look out on the water and it was just as bloody it looked red.

Interviewer: Really

Tarkington: Where people had been shot getting off. We had to get off that LST couldn't go all the way to the shore. They had to stop out in the water and we had to get off and we had to wade in water that deep going in.

Interviewer: Right you had to carry your weapon overhead to keep from getting

Tarkington: Yeah my BAR had a tripod on it.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: Kind of like your camera there and when I got to the shore I took it off and threwed it away because it was too much in my way that I used it's been on just like shooting a rifle.

Interviewer: So you went up the beach heading toward the

Tarkington: Went up above

Interviewer: Yeah did you get injured?

Tarkington: No I didn't then but I got my later on we went on and fought through there and on through St. Low and on a hill they call Hill over 92. Well there wasn't nothing much going on and we was walking beside a tank and the tank driver told us to get on and ride because you know no telling how far we would go before they opened up on us. So we didn't get very far until the Germans opened on us and he whirled around and when he went over them hedgerows they had been pushed down with something like a dozier on the end of a tank. And it had a mounds and went up like that and I was down I was sitting right on the back of it. And when it went over I went up and when I come down the tank had done gone. And I hit on my leg right there and I run for I guess 200 yards or more and got behind another hedgerow and I stayed there and we fought for I don't know how long until everything quieted down. And I got up to move and I couldn't walk. And they sent me back to England and put a walking cast on me and I was back on the front line in three weeks.

Interviewer: My goodness in a walking cast you're out there fighting again.

Tarkington: Yeah just like a looks just like an ole drum that come off of a break pad it rolled you know when you walked. I walked pretty good with it I was back on the front line.

Interviewer: So then what did you do?

Tarkington: Well I went on and fought on there until we went to went on down to Breast and from Breast on down to well I guess the next battle we had was going on towards Belgium. Got in Belgium and we stayed there for a good while out from Bastogne and that's where the Battle of the Bulge come that's where that happened.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: But see that was I was in there June the 6<sup>th</sup> and went all the way through there and that was December the 18<sup>th</sup> whenever that happened.

Interviewer: December 18<sup>th</sup> okay

Tarkington: And they marched me back we stayed in an old house that night and we didn't have nothing to eat we had some water. But the next day they marched us I don't know all day long then they put us on a boxcar put about 100 of us well there was 100 of us to a boxcar and we stayed on the that box car until the 26<sup>th</sup> day of December without anything to eat or drink.

Interviewer: You went from around December 18<sup>th</sup> until the 26<sup>th</sup> without anything to eat or drink?

Tarkington: Eat or drink

Interviewer: Wow

Tarkington: They just pulled up a little piece one time and then we sat there for a long time and the only way we could use the bathroom would be through the cracks in the door. And we started out fixing where some of us could lay down but I guess there was 15 or 20 of them died and we couldn't do that we had to take care of them.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: And when they did when we did get to camp and they gave us something to eat they had a barrel of molasses and I didn't eat none of them because I knowed what it would do to me. When we got in that camp down there the only toilet we had was a big hole out in the middle of the field with what looked like fence rails around it. And they all got all of them that ate a lot of them molasses had diarrhea.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: It was pitiful.

Interviewer: Yes sir I've never seen a POW camp can you tell me what one looks like?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: I've never seen a POW camp could you tell me what it looked like?

Tarkington: Well it just looked like a big ole where we was at well of course it had you know a fence and barbed wire and everything else around it. But it had big old barracks big old long barracks wasn't very wide but it was long. And every night when we come in from work and everything we had done they'd just line us up there and then count off about 100 of us and send us in there. We didn't get the same bed we didn't have no bed all we had was a big old burlap bag to lay down on and one to cover up with. And of course we had a stove an old wood stove we had wood they had wood there for it.

Interviewer: Were you in there with any of your buddies' people that you knew real well from home?

Tarkington: Yeah there was one boy that was in my outfit got captured a different place than I did. But I knew him see how come us to get captured the Battle of the Bulge was bulged out around like that.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: And they brought in two new divisions and relieved us. And they told us we was going back to Paris. And we went back I went back maybe 20 miles back there then got out make camp there. Then when they broke through we had to go back and we was backed up just like that where we come from. But we was trying to hold them off where they was breaking through the other. And we was up there and they left a squad in each company up there to \_\_\_ the shells and the rest of them went through. And told us to withdraw at night and there was twelve of us I believe that was left up there in my squad and there was only me and buck sergeant was the only one left. And we got back to a little old building back there and I said let's just stay here he said no they told us to come on back at night of course there was a big snow on the ground and you could see everywhere. And of course I listened to him and we



didn't get nowhere until we was captured. But here's a story I'm gonna tell you on that. About 10 – 15 years later I worked on a hay bailer and J.R. Taylor lived down at Guthrie and he called me one day to come out there and work on his bailer. When I drove up I had POW tags on my truck he said were you a prisoner of war? I said yes I was. He said where did they get you at and I said Battle of the Bulge and he said what outfit were you with? I said the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry division and he said what regiment I said the 23<sup>rd</sup> and he said where did you get captured at and I told him about the best I could where the ridge was and that little old barn there that we got in. He said you did you go upstairs and look what was up there? And I said yeah it was just all loose hay piled up and he said do you remember what was on the window and I said I do it was one of them had an old sack over it and the other one had a yellow looking raincoat. He said I put them there he said I was in that building when y'all come in I was under the hay.

Interviewer: Oh my

Tarkington: And he had to have been because he wouldn't have known about that.

Interviewer: You're right

Tarkington: So he was in the same outfit I was in but he was in the 9<sup>th</sup> regiment. We had the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 38<sup>th</sup>. I was in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and he was in the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Interviewer: Did he get captured?

Tarkington: No

Interviewer: He stayed in the hay.

Tarkington: He went on and fought all the way through it.

Interviewer: Wow

Tarkington: And he's still living he called me when they put that story in the paper he read it and called me.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: He's 90 years old.

Interviewer: That's wonderful.

Tarkington: That's just unbelievable.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: But I said I noticed something.

Interviewer: And what is his name?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: You remember his name?

Tarkington: Yeah J.R. Taylor.

Interviewer: J.R. Taylor okay

Tarkington: Yeah and I've got a book let me show you this book. I got a book to read and I was reading it and it was something about well Brad give it to me the one that interviewed me he let me barrow it.

Interviewer: Uh huh (tape was turned off for a moment) Okay now you were saying this book Citizen Soldiers tells about does it tell about your unit?

Tarkington: The only thing it tells is in there is about the Battle of the Bulge the outfit I went with.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: But it didn't say very much about it then. I told about the 106<sup>th</sup> and the I believe the 99<sup>th</sup>. That was the new divisions that come over. The 99<sup>th</sup> had been over there a little while but the 106<sup>th</sup> hadn't.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And I found out later that Hugh Phillips one of my friends here was in the 106<sup>th</sup> so he knows our butts got a beaten that each of us took. We would have had it rough in there but he didn't get captured he made it through.

Interviewer: So you were telling me a minute ago about being captured and they put you on the railroad cars packed then in 100 a time where was the camp where was the prison camp that they took you to?

Tarkington: We went to Star Lock 13C.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: But when I stayed there I stayed there I guess about a month and I volunteered to go out on commando you know work detail. And they sent me back to Swankford.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: That's where Brad put in there I went to Stockwell but it wasn't I went to Star Lock 13C. And then I come back to Swankford and that's where I worked at and that's where I called that German guard a crowd head SOB. We stayed there until the war was about over and then they started marching us back just we could here guns you know from Americans.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Tarkington: Then we would march every day for I guess for a month. And one night I thought I could hear guns on both sides of us and the next morning we woke up we slept in barns. The next morning we woke up all the guards was gone and we was out you know rambling around trying to find something to

eat whatever we could find because we were all about to starve. And there was a lieutenant that his driver drove up in a jeep and we jumped up on that we were glad to see him. And he threw out a box of ten and one rations I don't know whether you know what that is or not. But it is enough rations for ten people.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: It is just canned goods and stuff. And I knew that they had a little roll of cigarettes in there and I was trying to find it before I was something to eat. And I come up with a roll of toilet paper. I could have got me a can of food out of there but I was trying to find them cigarettes.

Interviewer: And you came out with toilet paper.

Tarkington: Toilet paper

Interviewer: So that was April of 1945?

Tarkington: Yeah April the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Interviewer: Okay so what instructions did they give you? Did they tell you to stay put?

Tarkington: They told us to stay where we were at and give us a number and said when they got, we were number 17, and said when they got to us they would come and get us. And when they did they came and got us and carried us in and run us through a just like hogs and cattle. We had lice all over us and run us through that. Then they give us clean clothes and sent us to \_\_\_\_ France and we come home for 65 days.

Interviewer: Let me back up just one step.

Tarkington: Yeah back up anywhere you want to I'm going too fast for you.

Interviewer: No you are fine. Back in Swankford and you called that German guard a crowd head SOB.

Tarkington: Yeah

Interviewer: He hurt you didn't he.

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: What did he do to you?

Tarkington: He hit me with the butt of his gun right there in my left ear.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: Then he knocked me down and took his gun just like that and I thought he was fixing to kill me.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: But he didn't and so and I'm 90 percent deaf out of that ear now I can't hear nothing. If I stop this ear up I can't hear. I can hear a racket but I couldn't tell what it was.

Interviewer: So when did you get to come home?

Tarkington: I come home in June but I had to I stayed home for 65 days then they sent us down in Florida for recuperation. Then they were supposed to send me to Camp \_\_\_\_ Arkansas for discharge and they got me on a troop train and sent me to Seattle Washington fixing to send me back overseas again. But I told them they was discharging with 45 points and I had 70 points.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And so I stayed out there for about two months and didn't do nothing but eat. I'd go in I got all the whiskey was rationed out there and I'd get all the cards that people didn't drink and I'd go in and buy whisky. Then when them troops come over across the water they'd pay 45 \$50 for a fifth of whisky right quick. And I was making all kinds of money. So I told them when I got ready to discharge they said you're gonna do one of three things we'll discharge you here and that's to get married here, go to work here, or you're going to re-enlist. And when I got ready to go I went down to the depot and I had another jacket on that didn't have the what we called it a rusty duck whenever you got discharged they sewed a duck on your uniform. Well I've got one on that cap. You ever seen a rusty duck?

Interviewer: No sir I can't say I have is it this one?

Tarkington: Well look there you'll see. See that little gold looking right there.

Interviewer: Right there alright.

Tarkington: That's a rusty duck.

Interviewer: Let me see if I can get a shot of it right here. There we go this one right here.

Tarkington: The little one.

Interviewer: Oh the little one I see it. The little on the gold one.

Tarkington: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay right here sure enough. I'll hand that back to you thank you thanks for sharing that. Did you get any decorations while you were over there?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: Get any decorations?

Tarkington: Yeah I got I don't remember I got four battle stars Normandy, \_\_\_\_ France, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And I got the combat infantry badge I got the good conduct medal I got the Victory medal and I got a medal from France the French people. And I got the POW medal that's about all I can't think of the other. But what happened I had a bunch of old coins in a had in a box that was about the size of this book. I had my medals in there and I had all my coins in there and somebody got the whole box. But I'm pretty sure it was my brother-in-law that got it because he was telling somebody that he had a 1852 nickel and that's what I had in there. And I don't know why he took my well he didn't want to take all the coins out he just carried the whole box with him probably threw them away.

Interviewer: Oh

Tarkington: But I sent off to get them and I never did get them and Randy my son that's at Vanderbilt he said he got with one of the soldiers and he said he knowed how to one of the people that works up there he said he knowed how to get them. And he said he was pretty sure we could get them I hope so.

Interviewer: Yes absolutely.

Tarkington: I'd like for my you know my kids and grandkids to have them. I don't care too much about them because I don't have a uniform to put them on now.

Interviewer: What was your highest rank when you were discharged?

Tarkington: Well when I was got through with my basic training I was promoted to squad leader buck sergeant. And I went in town that night and I got drunk and I got a room upstairs it was upstairs and I couldn't find the bathroom so I went out on the grass and I was relieving myself. And the MPs come by and they come up and got me and they carried me in and they busted me. And I said I'd never sew another strip on but \_\_\_ twiced and that made me a since you had been overseas six month you automatically become PFC. See I was a buck private and made private first class. Then they said all POWs would be advanced one grade so that made a corporal. So I was discharged as a corporal.

Interviewer: Okay did you ever encounter Patton?

Tarkington: Oh yeah yeah Patton come up to where I was at on the hedgerow. That's when they first put that thing on the dozers I mean the tanks to push the hedgerows down. And he was up there it is a bunch of fire going on and he asked me to look over the hedge and I said if you want to look over look over yourself. I said I know what you'll do so he stuck his head up like that and a bullet blatched off his helmet.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Tarkington: I wasn't fixing to look over. And somebody said wasn't you afraid he would court martial you and I said I wished he had I wouldn't have had to went through that. Yeah and he's the one when we got to the Siegfried line he wanted the infantry to go on in and take it. You know get all of it then he'd come through with his tank. And he said we can take it if it takes us six by sox loaded down with dog tags. Now I didn't hear him say that but somebody else did and they told it. And that's how come me vote my first republican ticket. I said well I vote because he more than likely saved my life. And I voted for him and I thought he was a wonderful president and I've been voting republican ever since. And if we'd have done

Patton like they wanted to another thing I hated Patton for his army his tank is the one liberated us. And this lieutenant asked him or they said he did I didn't hear this either. They said what do you want to do with them? He said well they're yellow bellies they should have been dead anyway.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness

Tarkington: That's just the kind of man he was. I always believed he said we should have fought until we died that's what he said. He said I've heard him say men were expendable. He'd rather you lose 100 men as one tank. See Patton we were right in Patton the infantry was right in Patton's army.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: The tank that I was on belonged to Patton when I was riding when I got throwed off was Patton's.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Tarkington: And I just never did I told some of them I said I don't believe he got killed in a jeep wreck somebody killed him. I would if I'd ever got a chance that's how much I hated him. I didn't like him and he went with his pearl handle 45s he had two of them and carried all the weapons he had was two 45 pistols.

Interviewer: So did you when you came back after the war did you take advantage of the GI bill?

Tarkington: Yeah I didn't really take advantage of it I took blacksmithing.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And I worked I run a blacksmith shop for that's what my daddy did and I run it for a good while I guess for a year. And then I went to Detroit and I stayed up there from 52 until 60 I was up there 8 years. Then I come back and went to work for my brother at International Harvester and I stayed with him until 1973 then I went in business for myself small engine sale and service.

Interviewer: So you went full circle you left from Hickman County and you came back to Hickman County.

Tarkington: Yeah and there's nothing like it. I've been all over just about all over everywhere and I've never found nothing I like better than Hickman County.

Interviewer: Well do you have any other stories that you care to share Mr. Tarkington?

Tarkington: You mean army or?

Interviewer: Yeah if you have anything else you want to add you're welcome to.

Tarkington: Well I can tell about the what I had to do with twelve people but you read that though didn't you?

Interviewer: I was gonna leave that up to you to tell if you want to tell it.

Tarkington: You want to hear it?

Interviewer: If you feel up to telling it you're welcome to.

Tarkington: I don't care to tell it.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: The morning that we captured them we was on outpost what you call outpost I don't know if you know what that is but it was out looking you know overlooking just watching for them.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: And there was 12 of them

Interviewer: These were Germans?

Tarkington: Germans

Interviewer: Yes sir

Tarkington: We captured them they throwed their guns down we called the company commander and he said well it's time to change guard said just let the ones that's coming in bring them in. And that was me and another boy and we carried them back to the company commander and he said while y'all are with them just take them over to headquarters. And the headquarters was way out in a valley and then just kind of on another little ridge. We got down to the bottom of the hill they had their hands over their head like that one of them took his hands off his head and stuck them in his pocket. Now I don't if it was me or the other boy but I'm sure it was me because I had the Bar and he just had the single you know just a rifle. And I opened up on him because I didn't know what it was and when I done that the other one started to run and we killed them all of them. And I looked in that boys pocket and he had his hands on had three cigarettes. And I said well he was only a kid about 17 years old but I was just 19 or 20 I was 20 then. And we come back and told the company commander what happened he said and that didn't you know that didn't bother me too much then. But after I got to be a prisoner of war and still living I've had lots and lots of nightmares over it.

Interviewer: Does it help to talk about it?

Tarkington: It don't bother me now.

Interviewer: Okay

Tarkington: For a long time my family didn't even know about it.

Interviewer: Right

Tarkington: And in the last I'd say ten years I started telling them about it. But now it don't seem like it well it's seems like they rarely believe me. But I can't hardly keep from crying when I do talk about it.

Interviewer: Of course of course

Tarkington: Then the day I got captured I don't know how many that I of course I don't know that I killed any but I seen a lot of them fall. And that didn't bother me bit because that's what I was over there for. But we never know he could have had a hand grenade in his pocket. And my nightmares over that was a man and a boy and I could never see the man's face. I could see his arms looked like he was old and wrinkled. And the boy didn't look like that one that I killed but I figured maybe that's what it was. Then I liked to just when Maggie died and of course I drank a lot and I went to the VA and I was telling them about all my nightmares I had and \_\_\_\_ told me he figured that was the boy's father I was thinking about and the boy. But he you know he had no way of knowing but it got better but when I married my second wife I had nightmares you know and I'd be hollering shoot him you know and if you don't I'll get him. And she got afraid I'd get up and start shooting one of my guns and she talked me into the notion of getting shed of all of them. I got shed of all my guns but I had to buy me some more whenever she passed away I went and got me some more. But you know I got to thinking well you know maybe I might just get up and I never had thought about getting a gun but you couldn't tell. And I said maybe she's right maybe I should get shed of them.

Interviewer: Well thank you so much for sharing your story with me.

Tarkington: Well that's just part of it there's a lot more to it and all of that.

Interviewer: Well you were over there for a long time.

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: I said you were over there for a long time.

Tarkington: Yeah well I had a good time and I had some bad times. While I was in England and when I come back for my leg hurt I had a good time in France. We'd go into Paris every night.

Interviewer: So what do you do for fun in Paris?

Tarkington: Huh

Interviewer: So what did you do for fun in Paris?

Tarkington: Fun?

Interviewer: Yeah

Tarkington: I wouldn't want to tell that.

Woman in the background: Oh he wouldn't want to tell it.

Tarkington: Not all of it no way.



Interviewer: In Paris well thank you so much.

Tarkington: Yeah thank you for listening to me.

Interviewer: I appreciate it.