

Interviewer: What is your full name and when and where were you born?

Eighmy: Earl Elmer Eighmy I was born in Taylor County Iowa just west of Bedford.

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

Eighmy: Well I was in several. I started off in the field artillery at Fort Riley then they sent me to Fort Knox then they sent me then to Camp Campbell. Be sure and get that camp in there, Camp Campbell before the post was opened. So as far as I know I'm the oldest living military veteran of Camp Campbell Kentucky.

Interviewer: What was the primary unit you served in?

Eighmy: I wound up with well the primary I guess would be the first one would be the 2nd Calvary Division and the 3rd Field Artillery of the 2nd Calvary.

Interviewer: Before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threat to America from the Nazi's and the Japanese?

Eighmy: I didn't pay it too much attention.

Interviewer: Did you read newspapers to keep up with the headlines over there?

Eighmy: No

Interviewer: Nothing like that okay.

Eighmy: No I was just wanting to get out and get back home.

Interviewer: Do you recall where you were when you heard Pearl Harbor had been attacked?

Eighmy: I was in a day room in Fort Riley Kansas with the Service Battery with the 3rd Field Artillery.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to listen to FDR's speech, the Day of Infamy?

Eighmy: Yes

Interviewer: Did you guess that the war would reach America? Did you think that the war would fully come to America shores or did you think it would stay where it was overseas?

Eighmy: Well I was hoping it stayed over there yea.

Interviewer: Did you have a preference for which branch of the military that you served in?

Eighmy: I would have had before Pearl Harbor. But I didn't take it I just stayed where I was at.

Interviewer: Did you go through an induction center where you were tested for skills and IQ and things like that?

Eighmy: Yea at Omaha.

Interviewer: And did your civilian job have anything to do with your time in the military? The job that you had previous:

Eighmy: Yea I guess so because I had worked in a garage on cars as a mechanic and they put me in this only service battery of the 3rd Field Artillery which had trucks. So that got me transferred over there or that's where they put me when they first picked me up.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic training?

Eighmy: Fort Riley

Interviewer: And were you selected for more specialized training?

Eighmy: Yea they sent me to Fort Seal Oklahoma to mechanic school.

Interviewer: What did you think of the people that you served with, your fellow recruits? What were your impressions of them?

Eighmy: Oh they was good bunch of guys. They was just like me a lot of them was there just because they had to be not because they wanted to be.

Interviewer: Was this the first major time you were away from home?

Eighmy: Yep

Interviewer: Give a day in the life of what it was like to be away from home for the first time.

Eighmy: It was a little strange but I finally got used to it I guess. I still wanted to go back home though.

Interviewer: Did you participate in any maneuvers stateside?

Eighmy: Yes I was in the Louisiana maneuvers in 1941.

Interviewer: What did that intell? What was that like what did you do during those maneuvers?

Eighmy: Oh just about what we'd been trained to do. We had done the same thing at Fort Riley only we didn't have the B25s buzzing us like they had down in Louisiana.

Interviewer: How good did you think the training that you had was suited for you for what you had to do overseas?

Eighmy: Well I was surprised to find out I found out I had muscles I didn't know was there.

Interviewer: Tell me about Camp Campbell. What was it like in the camp itself?

Eighmy: Well when we first came here there wasn't even a sidewalk. We was in mud ankle deep and the first night here we had to sit on a bunk take out boots off then climb up on the bed and take our britches off because of the mud. That floor, the next day we had scoop shovels and water hoses flushing out the barracks it was a mess. But then we started carrying lumber off a scrap pile to make some duck boards to walk on. Just about the time we got them made here they come pouring blacktop walkways. And that is where I learned to ride a motorcycle at camp. The motor officer said you're going to ride this thing if you are going to be a motor-cycler you are going to have to ride these things. I said okay but it's your bike if anything happens to it don't talk to me about it. So I was on that darn thing and it took off, you talk about putting on a rodeo. I did I jumped a ditch on that things and went across a frozen plowed field. And every part of my body at one time or another I think was on the seat of that Harley. Did I finally by the time I got to the other side I could ride it I finally straightened up and got used to it. I had a good time with an old Harley after that but that's where I got my back broke. One morning there was frost on the concrete driveways we had and when I made a turn it slid out from under me and I laid it down and I crawled out from under it. I reached and grabbed the handle bars and it still running and it in gear never thinking I raised it up. When the hind wheel dug in that gravel that thing jerked a knot in my back and I've had trouble with it ever since. So that was my big experience at camp.

Interviewer: So immediately after advanced training where did you go?

Eighmy: After advanced training well like I say they sent me to Fort Knox and then to camp. Then later after Tennessee Maneuvers in 43 I guess it was they took us out of that outfit and sent us off with special troops to Camp Gordon Georgia. And so I've been through that whole thing there.

Interviewer: When did you first depart to go overseas?

Eighmy: Oh golly I don't remember now that was in I'm thinking February of 44 but I'm not sure about that.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember where exactly you departed from?

Eighmy: From Camp Shanks New York.

Interviewer: Did you go by plane or by ship?

Eighmy: Ship

Interviewer: What was it like going over the Atlantic?

Eighmy: It was an experience. It wasn't too bad I mean it was we got a little rough seas but not too much. Got in some good rough ones coming back but just like I say it was just another experience.

Interviewer: Was there any major emergency protocol?

Eighmy: Yea I heard a few ash cans go off when they spotted picked up submarines. But we didn't get into that didn't get into any shooting of it. So we had the navy escort I guess going along with us.

Interviewer: Okay what was living conditions like onboard?

Eighmy: It wasn't too crowded it was on the ole big ship the ole Broman liner they took with Germany in World War I, the USS George Washington it was a pretty good size ship. But coming back was on a liberty ship and that was another experience. We got in some rough seas on that and they had us stationed right up in the front hole next to the anchor hole. Where they put the anchor chain and when that ship would drop I believe that chain and then that chain would hit and the next trip that things broke into. I was on that ship when we made that voyage and I was glad that was the last one. And the next one they had to rescue the bunch from that.

Interviewer: So where exactly did you land at?

Eighmy: We landed in New York.

Interviewer: Overseas?

Eighmy: Oh overseas, Lehar France.

Interviewer: When you landed in France did you have any temporary housing?

Eighmy: No they sent us to a tent camp somewhere close to the English Channel. I don't know where it was but then we did go on from there to _____ Germany and they had us like in the old SS troop barracks. And we spent about two weeks there we made a trip back to _____ Germany pick up bridge tread wings and pontoons and equipment like that. We flew in a second time trip the company had left we had to fly to catch up with them.

Interviewer: Did you see any combat immediately after landing?

Eighmy: No

Interviewer: Okay was there any prolonged training period when you landed?

Eighmy: No we had already been through that. But they did after the war ended they had part of the company going up on a river somewhere and putting this bridge together and taking it down, just kept handy on that.

Interviewer: Okay so what kind of equipment and arms did you train with?

Eighmy: A little bit of everything. I've driven ten ton wreckers and those big Brockway bridge trucks and stuff like that. I even had to put a Caterpillar tractor back together in Georgia after they sent it over to have a new clutch put in it. They tore it down and then shipping order we had to bring it back and they asked me if I could put that thing back together. I said just give me a good wrecker operator and a crane operator and I'll put it together. And I did we got that thing back together and going again.

Interviewer: So if you can give me idea of what happened from the time you landed to your time through Europe? Kind of give me a sequence of events.

Eighmy: Oh let's see we made two stops I think in Luxemburg in that little country coming through Belgium back on our way back with this bridge equipment. And then from then on we were just trying to catch up with the company, we finally caught them. And we were driving down the autobahn one day

and the guy I was with driving the truck I looked at him up on the road I said this dog gone war's got to be over. The other side of the autobahn was packed full both lanes of it as far as you could see with guys walking Germans walking back. And I said, when we caught up we found out that the war had ended. So we lucked up pretty good on that.

Interviewer: What life like in Europe where you were staying just your normal every day routines? Did you have good food?

Eighmy: We were used to it just everyday mess hall and stuff like that. One guy he decided to clean his rifle he pointed it out the window and fired a shot and said she's clean it's ready to go.

Interviewer: Was it possible to live similarly as you did back in the states? Were you able to clean up pretty well, were you able to eat well, things like that? Like were able to take showers, eat hot food, things like that?

Eighmy: Yeah they had overseas they had transit mess halls when we would travel we would stop at them. Then they had showers we could go to that were just you know temporary things they would put up for a shower but at least you got clean and things like that.

Interviewer: Were you ever promoted during your service time?

Eighmy: Yeah I came to Camp Campbell as a staff sergeant. But I'd get in trouble when I would get a little molly once in a while and they'd bust me down to something else. I finally had to work my way back up.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a sense of the big picture of what was going on in Europe at the time? Did you understand the different things that were going on around you?

Eighmy: Yeah pretty much of it. I was lucky and didn't have to go through Decal and places like that those prison camps, we missed that. That was another experience with the guys that got to that. I left we left New York from Camp Shanks going over and came back to the same place. I got to see the Statue of Liberty we came sailing back by that and as we were sailing up the Hudson River every steam whistle I think on that river was blowing. And we found out that the war had ended in Japan. They shipped us back for 30 day R&R to get you know back to go to the Pacific but I didn't have to go the war ended just before we pulled into the harbor in the entry to the harbor in New York.

Interviewer: So once you came back to the states what did you do post service?

Eighmy: Well the first thing they did they sent us to Atlanta to a Camp I can't think of that place Joe.

Man in the background: It would be McPherson or Gillam, Gillam Fort Gillam.

Eighmy: No I can't think anyway it was a camp in Atlanta Georgia. And we had two weeks there they forgot about us I think, they just left us along. And we made a trip into Atlanta every night about three of us, had us a good time. Then one of the guys got anxious he wanted to go back to Texas well he got after them they loaded us up then and shipped us to Camp Swift Texas. And that's where they decided I had already had 30 days well we didn't have anything to do so just take another 30. So I got on a train just as the train was pulling out here come a jeep and I found out that they send the jeep over to get me

to send me to the separation center. Well I spent another 30 days in the army that I didn't need to but I didn't know about it. So when I got back that's the first things they did sent me to separation center. I got through that and I went back and the CO was on leave and the motor sergeant the motor officer that I rode quite a lot of miles in Europe with the truck but he happened to be acting CO. And I walked in and there with my little ducks on my jacket and I pulled a chair up and I propped my feet up on the CO's desk and I said I've always wanted to do this. He said well make yourself at home. So I caught the train back to here after that and then I went back to work at Camp Campbell doing the same thing I was doing in the army. And I was working there as a civilian when they changed it from camp to Fort Campbell. And these people around here a lot of these egotistical guys don't want to hear the name Camp Campbell they think it's downgraded or something. If it hadn't been for Camp Campbell there wouldn't have been a Fort Campbell, they don't realize that. At least they don't want anybody to know it. I stayed there I retired from the government service from Fort Campbell. That was 1975 wasn't it Joe?

Man in the background: Uh huh

Interviewer: Well are there any particular memories that you have from being in Europe that kind of in your mind play out as something very important to you during that time period?

Eighmy: No not really. I still have problems getting away from camp at night in my sleep. I get to dreaming about being back in that motor pool and but no I spent 24 years as a flight instructor at Outlaw Field out here too. So as far as I know there were only two of us old timers' or pilots from Outlaw Field left.

Interviewer: What did that intell your time out Outlaw Field what was that like?

Eighmy: Oh that's the reason I can't hear I think. I spent that much time I was flying students up and down up and down pressure changes in my ears, and now every once in a while my ears will pop and I can hear just as good as anytime, then they plug back up. I have trouble with that, that's about the only thing. There was three of us old comers or pilots left and one of them died here about three weeks ago wasn't it Joes? Something like that.

Tape ended.