

D-Day and WWII: Never Forgotten Stories

A Historical and Touching Mini Documentary

by

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A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College.

Summer 2020

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Dedication

To Mom, and my late Grandma and Grandpa.

You each gave me a purpose and dedication to storytelling.

Without your unconditional love and support, my story would look very different.

Acknowledgments

I wanted to thank Dr. Christine Eschenfelder, Chris Clark, Dr. Gregory Pitts, Leon Alligood, Val Hoeppener, Dr. Keonte Coleman, Dean Vile and the School of Journalism and Strategic Media. You all kept your doors open if I ever needed to pop in for a quick minute to breathe, to chat or to brainstorm.

Thank you for believing in me.

I also want to thank all of the veterans who put their lives on the line to protect our freedom of speech. Thank you for sharing your stories with me.

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Abstract

The goal of this project was to collect stories from D-Day and World War II veterans in order to keep their memories alive. Through my thesis, I explored the personal and cultural significance of documenting first-person accounts of surviving veterans. Using video, audio and advanced technology to create and capture these stories, this thesis presents personal narratives of service in war time. The creative portion of my thesis includes a short documentary that includes video from Paris, London and Normandy that I captured during my study abroad. These packages detail the experiences of D-Day and World War II veterans and the impact each veteran has left on American society.

Introduction

Coming from a family where military service ran through several generations, I always had a different type of appreciation for those who served our country. I grew up in Clarksville, Tennessee, and my family has lived there for most of my life. My grandparents were stationed at Fort Campbell after spending years in Tokyo and the Philippines. Clarksville became the place my family called home after my grandfather died on active duty in the Air Force in 1978. We were constantly surrounded by uniforms and those who would continue to fight for our country even after tragic things happened to them during WWII and D-Day. I saw men and women in uniform at every grocery store, gas station and restaurant.

In a way, speaking with service members made me feel like I was closer to my grandpa. He passed away when my mother was 15-years old, and I would not be in the picture for another 21 years. But I had always felt a special connection to him. The flag that draped his coffin was always on display on my grandmother's mantel, and my mother would frequently tell me stories about the man that he was. My grandpa loved photography. When my mother was growing up, they lived in Washington state, Texas and many places overseas. Photobooks are scattered around our house that hold photographs my grandpa took on his old Polaroid camera.

Fast forward to my years at Middle Tennessee State University. College has been a wonderful but different experience for me. I do not see nearly as many uniforms during my daily life. The men and women who serve our country have made a huge impact on me, directly and indirectly. When the opportunity to travel to Normandy, Paris and London on a study abroad presented itself, I immediately called my mom and gushed

about how much I would love to go overseas to see the profound impact D-Day and World War II veterans had across the world. I was excited to go abroad for the very first time in my life and cover something so important to American culture.

These veterans are dying every single day and their stories are important to tell. With each day that passes, more and more of their stories of survival and perseverance fade away. As Bob Patrick wrote, “To be able to hear a veteran’s voice, read their words and view one-of-a-kind images; provides a first-person, grassroots level account of what military life, particularly during a time of war, is all about.” (Patrick). Many veterans had a very hard time after their service in trying to talk about what had happened to them. Stories began spreading years after the war, where mothers and wives at home started to understand what their soldier may have gone through.

Speaking about the past, even now, can be difficult for these veterans. From post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other issues, some veterans say that they feel a sense of relief after speaking about their trauma and experiences during an interview (Parr). In addition to telling their personal stories, war memorials erected around the world also affect veterans. This study also explores how documenting stories and recognizing memorials are important for today’s culture. “That is, in *memorializing* we can better practice *remembering* the individual experiences of Veterans.” (“Reflections on War and Service.”)

For my thesis, I created immersive content in the form of packages, which is a television news term for a video story, as well as a short film documentary that relays the importance of capturing these stories. I have recorded and conducted interviews, taken photographs and collected additional video footage to include in my thesis. From

speaking with the men that served in WWII and D-Day, it is apparent that they each bear burdens that seem difficult to discuss. Most of the men who fought during this time period are in their nineties now. Even today, many of these stories are fading away. Precious little time remains to document their stories for future generations.

Methodology and Creative Project Process

Through a variety of visual communication techniques, the creative portion of my finished thesis is a short documentary that includes video, audio and historical background of WWII and D-Day veterans. This short film implements a news style format with completed video stories intended to preserve the personal narratives of selected veterans who served our country. Each package offers new information and stories from past veterans.

For interview shots, there are a few key factors to make sure that the image is captured properly. For my interviews, I used various Canon cameras ranging from the Canon 80D to the Canon EOS R. The Canon 80D is a DSLR camera (Digital single-lens reflex camera) meaning that any light from the outside bounces off of the mirror located inside of the camera (Hayek). This light goes into a prism that is visible through the viewfinder. This camera is an over-all good camera and user friendly. We used this camera for the study abroad due to its dependability and mobility.

I also used the Canon EOS R which is a mirrorless camera. This camera creates a clear, crisp and visually pleasing picture without using any mirrors within the camera itself. The light passes straight through the lens and then into the viewfinder, meaning the photographer can see directly what she is recording or shooting. This gives the videographer more control over the settings and final product. This also provides the best image quality to capture the tiniest details on the subject. When recording the veterans, this camera provided images that are extremely crisp and captured the essence of the subjects.

I chose these two cameras to use for my project because the quality is superb, and they are easy to use. For each interview setting and everywhere I filmed during the study abroad, I had to adjust my settings, the ISO and frame rate, according to what I was capturing. When it is darker outside, the camera's ISO or image sensor is balanced to what it looks like outside (Hayek). The ISO helps let light in, but if one set the ISO too high, the footage is extremely grainy.

To record their audio, I used a lavalier microphone which is clipped on the front of their shirt. This gives the interviewer the ability to move around and causes less of a distraction during the interviews. Each interview exceeded an hour in length; in order to capture the entire interview, I used 64 gigabytes (GB) secure digital memory cards, also known as SD cards. For the video editing process, I used Adobe Premiere Pro 2019 and 2020. This editing software allows me to edit the video, audio and any graphics all in one program.

The style of this creative thesis demonstrates the importance of documenting oral histories and stories from those who contributed to the growth and perseverance of our country (Ruby). These stories will be lost if not documented. Historians and educators have stated that they are worried that D-Day is already losing the attention of and resonance with students (Waggoner). Most students and some younger people we spoke with over the course of the trip could not identify who fought during D-Day among other details (Waggoner). This proposed creative activity did not qualify for oversight as defined by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

Pre-Production

During the planning process for my creative thesis, these were the planning steps and documents I created in order to complete the creative project.

Documentary Outline

- I. Introduction
 - a. Opening graphic and music
 - b. Establishing shots of WWII
 - c. Welcome from anchor
- II. First package
 - a. Ed Covington (WWII Veteran and Purple Heart Recipient)
 - b. Introduce second package
- III. Second package
 - a. Normandy Beaches Package
 - b. Introduce third package
- IV. Third package
 - a. Ivy Agee (Stormed the beaches of Normandy)
 - b. Introduce fourth package
- V. Fourth package
 - a. Oral History from Bill Allen (D-Day Medic and LST-523 Survivor)
- VI. Closing and end credits
 - a. Closing of documentary from anchor
 - b. Closing graphic and music
 - c. End credits and special thanks

Production

Production for this mini documentary spanned nine months. From interviews, Normandy beaches and additional b-roll, the filming was the part that took the longest during this creative project. It began in London, where we traveled to different war memorials and museums. This was very helpful to enhance the historical background for the documentary. When we arrived on the Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, I was hit with waves of emotion ranging from grief, awe and gratitude. I let myself pay my respects for a couple of moments, listening to the waves crash onto the sand where veterans once fell. Then I picked up my camera and filmed as much as I could. I tried to capture the essence of the waves, the sounds and the feel that the beach gave off. This was one of the most special moments I had during the trip and during filming.

Once we returned from our study abroad, I then contacted three veterans to interview them about their experiences during WWII and D-Day. I scheduled a time to meet and then prepped my questions. Interviewing each of the veterans was very special. I spoke loudly and clearly to ensure that the veterans who are in their nineties were able to fully comprehend the questions I asked. My questions ranged widely from the stories that they told me and what they were able to remember. After capturing these hour-long interviews, I then archived the footage on my external hard drive and began the post-production process. The production process spanned over eight months and took numerous days of shooting to get all of the footage that was needed.

Post-Production

The post-production process was the most difficult portion of this project. Finding significant moments to tell in a short story versus an hour-long interview took time and patience to find the perfect segments to include in the documentary. I began the process by importing all of my footage and interviews into Adobe Premiere Pro 2020 and archiving moments that I thought would be important during the editing process down the line. I created title graphics and found music that accurately represented the time frame to enhance the documentary itself. During this time, I also had to begin the planning process of what I would say during my anchor intros and outros. I gathered information from each D-Day veteran and wrote out some key facts about their stories to help me with the writing process later on.

Each video took several hours to go through footage and clip out certain parts of their stories. I then created a bare-bone cut of each package and began finding b-roll clips that I captured either from my time on the study abroad or from memorabilia in the veteran's houses. The next step was creating a rough draft and writing a voice over script for each package individually. The post-production process for Never Forgotten Stories took over 45 days to complete. This time was spent archiving footage, writing scripts, sifting through hours of footage and crafting the final story.

Once each package was finalized, I created another project and dropped all of my packages into it. The next step was to add background music, intro and outros and graphics. I utilized the MTSU Studio one television studio on campus to film my anchor scripted parts and then dropped that into the existing project. After completing that, I was able to fully finish the project and begin the review process with my advisors.

Discoveries

Each of the brave men that I spoke to trace his memories back to what life was like during the war. They each spoke for over an hour long during their interviews and touched on numerous subjects about their childhood, life during the war and what life was like after the war. While many of the subjects were similar in manner, each veteran spoke of his unique experiences and what he had to go through personally. The death toll was tremendous, and each veteran saw his fair share of death. They all spoke about these tragedies, just in different ways.

Each veteran highlighted how his personal faiths helped them throughout the war. I asked questions directly about faith due to the fact that during the pre-interviews, each of the veterans spoke about how faith played a factor in their survival. They all said that their faith helped them get through the war and with life afterward. The full list of questions asked are located in Appendix A. During the interview, Ivy Agee Jr. spoke about his faith for four minutes, Bill Allen spoke for eight minutes, and Ed Covington spoke for five minutes. They each were hard of hearing as well, which posed as a challenge for interviews at times. I navigated this through repetition and slowing down each question so that they were able to fully comprehend it.

I also experienced some technical difficulties during the post-production process which included a broken hard drive and a crashed computer. These both came about a month and a half before the deadline for the project and I am very thankful that I backed up all documents, files and Adobe Premiere Pro projects before this occurred. I try to save all of my work in at least three separate places in the event that something drastic like this happens. Once files like these are lost, they cost thousands of dollars to save and

they would be impossible to reshoot if I did not have backups. Having stored all of this information prevented losing all of the footage and everything that I had worked on prior to this point. Through this, I learned the importance of having backup hard drives, how to navigate through technical problems and how to solve them quickly and efficiently.

While abroad, I enjoyed getting to delve deeper into the history of World War II. Walking on the beaches, through the streets and down cobblestone alleyways helped me grasp the larger picture of the task at hand. The beaches of Normandy really opened my eyes and stopped me in my tracks. It was an emotional moment for me, seeing where so many had lost their lives and the respect that all visitors gave the waters. This trip helped my connection with the veterans because we were able to talk about places that we had both been to. I was able to speak about certain locations and experiences that they related to. I have been surrounded by military influence for a majority of my life, but this trip meant something different to me. I also had to adapt very quickly when filming in the field. Everything that I filmed abroad had to be done fast since we were on a group trip. As a one-person camera crew, I brought my tripods, cameras and audio equipment basically everywhere that we went. This meant that I had to become very quick and efficient at setting up and tearing down to ensure that I could get the perfect shot. I was able to get this done quickly because I researched documentaries abroad and found out that the key to doing this was confidence. I had my camera out basically the entire time we were there just to make sure that I never missed the perfect shot. There were some language barriers with some of the interviewees, but we were lucky to have a French teacher on the trip with us from another school! So, she was able to assist during

interviews and translate what we would say to one another. This was extremely beneficial once we were in France.

Going abroad and filming a documentary helped me learn many new things about myself. It gave me a greater appreciate for travel and storytelling altogether. It was my very first time going out of the country and embarking on something as large as this project. I made some lifelong friendships with other students on the trip as well. While difficult and tedious at times, completing this documentary helped me prove to myself that I was capable of doing something on a larger production scale. It pushed me as a storyteller, an editor and as an overall human being.

Stories have always been important and impactful to me. I have always been motivated to ask questions and learn more about someone and what makes them the way that they are. During each of the interviews, it felt more as if I were on the frontlines of one of the most impactful and deadly days in American history. These veterans brought me into their homes, offered me a water and sat with me for hours retelling memories that are not easy to speak about with a stranger. If given the opportunity, I would love to work on a documentary again in the future. This gave me the reassurance that I could take on a large project like this and see it through until the end. I also realized that doing investigative or elongated features is something that I would love to do for a career along down the line. I had also never worked on a solo project like this before which I really appreciated because I was able to use my creative abilities to their full potential and try out new techniques and jobs that I had not in the past.

Each of the veterans displayed appreciation for younger generations wanting to learn about their history. They were all very excited and willing to do the interview which

showed their enthusiasm in preserving their story. Another key factor in which each veteran talked about was wanting future generations to never forget what happened and the massive loss of life that occurred during World War II and on D-Day. By capturing their stories through video and audio retrieval, the oral histories from each veteran can be used for future causes and discoveries about life during the war.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions for WWII Veterans

- What was life like before the war? Tell me about your childhood and how you grew up.
- How did you get involved with the military? What were some of your everyday duties?
- On D-Day, what was your role? Can you tell me some of the sights and sounds that you remember?
- I've had the privilege to speak with other D-Day veterans, and they've all said that faith played a key role during their time. How did your faith impact you after seeing what you saw?
- Tell me a little bit about what life was like after the war. Did you have a hard time talking about your experiences?
- What are some of the things that you hope this generation never forgets about your generation?
- Have you been back to Normandy since? What was that like?
- 75 years later, what are some of the things that you look back on?
- What were some of the more difficult times for you throughout the war?

Appendix B: Terms/Definitions

Package – A package will contain a written introduction for the newsreader, the reporter's edited report, complete with vision and sound and an *out-cue* for the end.

B-Roll – Supplemental footage that provides supporting details and greater flexibility when editing video (Hayek).

ISO – Camera setting in the digital cameras that changes how sensitive the sensor is to light (Hayek).

Lavalier Microphone – Small clip-on microphone that attaches to the subject's clothing (Hayek).

DSLR – This is a type of camera that uses a mirror to reflect the light coming through the lens onto the viewfinder (Hayek).

Viewfinder – the part of the camera you look through to see the image from your lens' field of view (Hayek).

Oral history – is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies (Oral History: Defined).

Appendix C: Tennessee Veteran Photographs



Ivy Agee Jr. – WWII Army Air Force Veteran & D-Day Survivor



Bill Allen – WWII Navy Veteran & D-Day Survivor



Ed Covington – WWII United States Army Air Forces

Appendix D: Anchor Script

[INTRO]

ON JUNE 6TH, 1944, 73,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS STORMED THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY, FRANCE ON A DEADLY MISSION. THOUSANDS OF MEN DIED ON THOSE BEACHES AND FOR THOSE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE... THEY HOPE THAT THEIR STORIES MAY NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME FOR THIS VERY SPECIAL DOCUMENTARY OVER THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY ... REMEMBERING THE STORIES OF THOSE WHO GAVE IT ALL ... I'M MEGAN COLE.

I ALONG WITH SIX OTHER REPORTERS FROM MTSU RETRACED THE STEPS OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM ON D-DAY AND THE LONG SUMMER THAT FOLLOWED. WE TRAVELED FROM LONDON, TO PORTSMOUTH, CROSSED THE ENGLISH CHANNEL INTO CAEN. WE WALKED ALONG THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY AND VISITED THE FINAL RESTING PLACE WHERE SO MANY GAVE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

WHEN WE GOT BACK... I SPOKE WITH THREE MIDDLE TENNESSEE WORLD WAR TWO VETERANS... THESE ARE THEIR STORIES AND THEY ARE LIKE SO MANY OTHERS WHO STILL HAVE TROUBLE SPEAKING OF WHAT THEY SAW...

WORLD WAR II CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY IN SO MANY WAYS. IT ENDED THE AMERICAN DEPRESSION, CREATED JOBS, IT STARTED THE UNITED NATIONS AND LIBERATED COUNTRIES. SO NOW WE LOOK AT WHY THE WAR BEGAN AND WHY IT ENDED IN VICTORY.

[WORLD WAR II & ED COVINGTON PACKAGE]

OMAHA, UTAH, JUNO, SWORD AND GOLD, THESE BEACHES WERE WHERE THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS GAVE THEIR LIVES AND WASHED AWAY INTO THE SEA. WHILE THESE BEACHES MAY HAVE LOOKED HORRIFIC 75 YEARS AGO, THEY ARE NOW A SYMBOL OF HOPE AND SACRIFICE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

[BEACHES PACKAGE]

HIS PRAYERS AND THE PRAYERS OF MANY OTHERS ARE WHAT HAPPENED ON OMAHA BEACH WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

EVERY SINGLE DAY, MEMORIES OF THE WAR, FROM THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS TO THE VICTORIES AND DEFEATS... DISAPPEAR. THOSE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORKED TIRELESSLY IN THE 1940S ARE NOW IN THEIR 80S AND 90S... AS OF 2019, ROUGHLY 400,000 OUT OF THE 16 MILLION AMERICANS WHO SERVED DURING THIS TIME ARE STILL ALIVE. AND ACCORDING TO THE US DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS...

348 OF THOSE VETERANS DIE. EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. IVY AGEE JR... ONE OF THE FEW SURVIVORS OF D-DAY... GREW OLD IN HIS HOMETOWN OF GORDONSVILLE, TENNESSEE. AGEE WAS A TENNESSEE WAR HERO AND HE PASSED AWAY LATE LAST YEAR. I HAD THE CHANCE TO SIT DOWN WITH HIM BEFORE HIS PASSING AND HEAR HIS INSPIRING STORY.

WHILE EVERYTHING WAS AT STAKE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, MOM AND APPLE PIE, A 21-YEAR-OLD WOULD PICK UP HIS LOAD AND STORM THE OMAHA BEACHES.

[IVY AGEE JR. PACKAGE]

22 YEARS OLD... THAT WAS THE AVERAGE AGE OF WWII VETERANS WHEN THEY WERE SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES AND SENT OVER SEAS. BILL ALLEN ... A MURFREESBORO NATIVE ... WAS ONLY 19 WHEN HE WAS ASSIGNED TO DEATH DETAIL IN THE US NAVY.

[BILL ALLEN PACKAGE]

[OUTRO]

STORIES LIKE ALLEN'S ARE BECOMING FEW AND FAR BETWEEN AS EACH ANNIVERSARY GOES BY. I WANT TO SAY THANK YOU TO THE VETERANS,

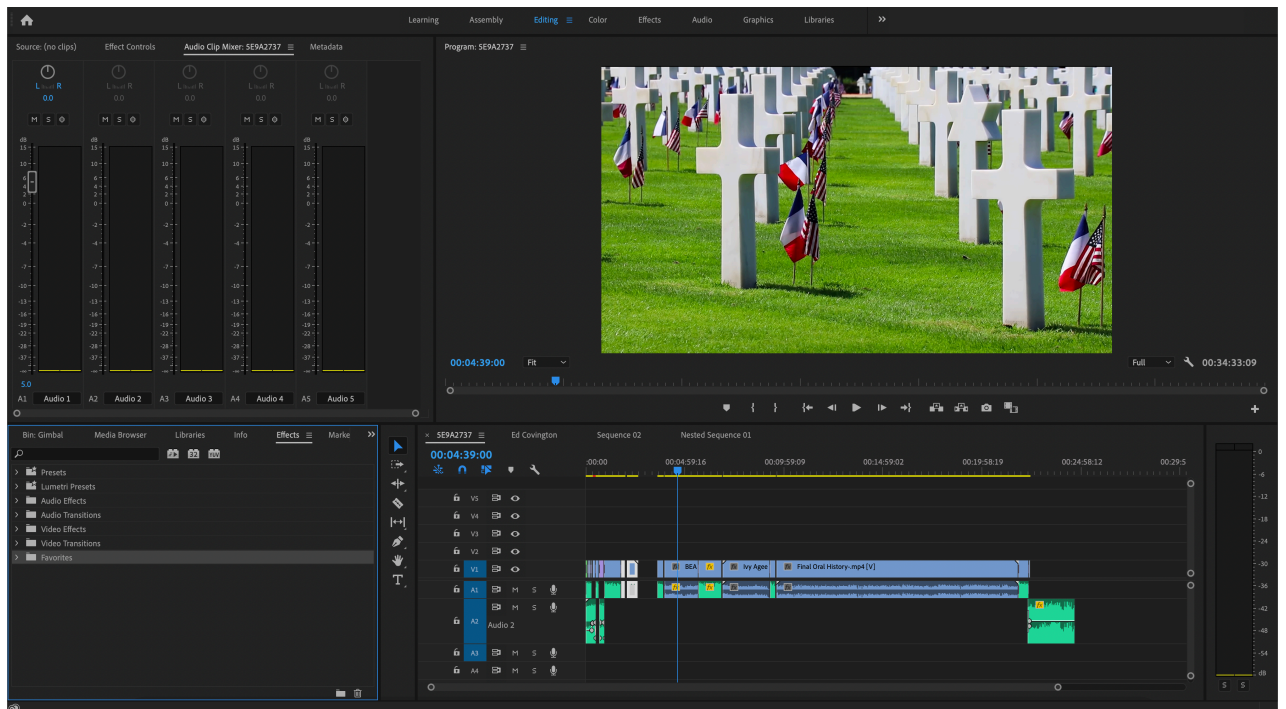
ED COVINGTON, IVY AGEE JR. AND BILL ALLEN... THANK YOU FOR
TRUSTING ME TO TELL YOUR STORIES.

IT'S BEEN MY PRIVLEDGE TO BRING YOU THE MOMENTS OF BRAVERY...
FREEDOM AND HONOR FOR THOSE WHO GAVE ALL OF THAT AND MUCH
MORE.

I'M MEGAN COLE... GOODNIGHT.

[ROLL CREDITS]

Appendix E: Sample Premiere Pro Timeline



Screenshot of Premiere Pro Editing Timeline

Appendix F: Transcripts of Interviews with Veterans

Bill Allen Interview

MEGAN:

“So tell me a little bit about your role in World War II, what life was like and what you were doing.”

BILL ALLEN:

“I went into the Navy when I was 18, just straight out of high school. Went to boot camp with hospital Corps school to make a medic graduated from there. Went to Memphis, worked in hospital Naval hospital out of Millington, Tennessee for two and a half, three months, maybe. And then left. We went to Lido beach, New York, waiting on a ship to go across a LST 523. It was a brand-new ship, had just been made the previous October, November, uh, in the fall of '43. It was cleaned. LST is different from most ships due to the fact that it has a flat bottom, goes into the beach out of the land, 328 feet long, 50 feet wide. We had 145 total Navy personnel. We went aboard the Bay on New Jersey. Took off up through New York, stopped in Boston for a couple of days, on up to Halifax, Nova Scotia was there about a week. Main convoy was following that. We left out headed to England. Some four weeks later we landed in Plymouth, England, worst four weeks I think I ever spent my life bouncing around in that flat bottom boat. But we kept going and finally we made it there, Oh six, eight weeks before the invasion. We went to chemical warfare school there for a couple of weeks, back to the ship where we were stuck at. In first aid or sterilized all of our instruments. We didn't have throwaways back then. Then we sterilized, reused everything, but we have syringes needles and

instruments, things of that type. But we loaded up a couple of times practice, go out to the channel and come back and unload. But we loaded up one night or one day and we didn't go out and channel until that night, but we kept going that time. We knew we were headed into a war zone, but we got into the beach on D-Day. They were still trying to get possession of the beach, the fighting right there on the beach. And we could not hit the beach if it was supposed to. We had to anchor out in some three or four feet of water and, uh, open the bowel doors, let the ramp down. And, uh, the army personnel tanks and equipment began to unload. Uh, we saw foot soldiers with those heavy packs on the back, go down the ramp, lose the foot in drown right there at the end of the ramp, uh, saw soldiers made it to the beach, uh, eight, 10, dozen steps, stop or give them a step on a land mine. Life ended right there, uh, terrible sight. There's a bunch of boys became men overnight that night. We loaded casualties all night long that night and, uh, left out early the next morning, coming back to England with loads of casualties. We hadn't gone, but just a short way until one of them died. One of the boys we had aboard was a license film director anyway, uh, he was from Murfreesboro and we were very close friends. He picked me to be his helper, which I didn't like that, but, nevertheless. We cleaned up, up those that died. Most of them were muddy, bloody, dirty. We cleaned them up best we could, search for dog tag. Most of them had the dog tags around the neck, identified who they were, wrapped them in a blanket, put them in a cooling unit there to hold until we got back to England where they were removed to the morgue. We made three trips in successful, our fourth trip in we were loaded with, uh, 300 combat engineers, 300 battalion combat engineers. And, uh, we got in there just before lunch 11:30, I guess, something like that. But we couldn't hit the beach until about one that's when the tide was

in and we had to go in when the tide was in. And then when the tide came out, it would leave us on dry land, and we could load and unload. But, uh, we had about an hour and a half, I guess. So, we anchored out about five miles off the beach there, Omaha beach and had lunch. And I got through eating lunch. I came out up on top side and was walking down the rail there and towards the bow, and walked up on two soldiers standing there talking, and I just stopped. We started conversation. I don't remember what it was about, but I'm sure it wasn't too important. But anyway, we talked a few minutes, but one of them said, this is our truck right here. I said let's just get in and sit down. So, we did, and we hadn't much more than got in there, got comfortable and started talking until we hit a big swell, went out, we just dropped right down on a mine and it blew us out of the water. Everybody was jumping over boards that could, a terrible situation, but, I'm a poor swimmer and I stood there debating whether I should have tried to jump in and drown or stay on ship and go down with it and drown. That was the only future I could see. Just about the last chance the ship was going down, so it was a matter of something had to be done pretty quick, whatever. And, uh, just about last chance, I heard somebody holler bill, bill, and I looked at him, I guess maybe a hundred, 125 feet. And another medic had managed to get a life raft loose. He said, you can't jump out here. He says, you can't swim. It's rough water. He said, I believe I get in there to you. So, he took the risk of losing his life too, to come get me because when that ship went under, it would create a suction and pull everything in with it. But he never slowed down. He never, he started padding and he came to me and he got, uh, Oh, I guess, I don't know, 20 feet I guess, 25. And I said, Jack, I believe I can jump that far and almost did, but it was got on the life raft and then trying to get away we picked up four army personnel. Two of them wouldn't

hurt too bad, but two of them was hurt very seriously. We had to get them out of the water, on to the raft, which was a pretty tough job. Good thing happened then instead of now I wouldn't be able to do it, but, uh, anyway. As soon as we got them, we began to get back away into a safe area. We rode that life raft till we were picked up and, uh, by a small, what we called LCVP. It was about a 25-foot-long, I guess, maybe 10 foot wide, I think 25 or 30 people. But, uh, it was so small then it was no competition for those swells that had built up. And, uh, it was a rough storm. It was having. And, uh, the, and he tried every way he could, he had said to the beach at first aid station, but it just wasn't possible. So finally, after a long struggle, he said, let me see if I can get a ship that will pick you up. Say I can't get into the beach. It's just impossible. So, it put up alongside of this Liberty ship, that skipper stand up there on the fan tail. We asked if he take any survivors. And he said, yes, I'll take all his bring me. So, with that, they dropped a wire basket over the side with the rope on each end, we loaded the army personnel and we would come up and they'd pull them. Yes, I'll ever though, but they dropped a cargo net over for the medic and myself. And, uh, we had to shift would come up both of us are so small and stature and we had a ways to jump, to catch a bottom at net. And course you had one chance. So, you either made it good or you didn't. And Jack said, you want to go first? I said, Jack, it doesn't matter. We got one chance. He said, I'll go first. I said, okay. So, it we saw a swell pull up. And he jumped, caught it and went up. So that left me, I watched another swell building. And when it came in, I thought was the right time. I jumped caught the bottom at net now went up, we both got on. We didn't think we were hurt. And, uh, as far as shedding blood we weren't, but, uh, he told us, said you boys was going down to the gala there to get you a cup of coffee, something to eat, if you want to. So, we

did. Couldn't, couldn't swallow, couldn't swallow a thing. I don't remember what I ordered, but that was good, good food. Wasn't a thing wrong with it, but just couldn't swallow. Jack was same way. And uh, the skipper came in a little bit, laid his hand on my shoulder. And he said, you boys have had a hard day today. I've cleaned out a compartment for you down the passageway. He said, go on down and go to bed. Maybe that'll help you. We did, but we rolled in tumbled and if we closed eyes, we relived it. And if we didn't, we'd relive what happened that day. It was sometime after midnight, I rolled over and Jack said, bill, you awake. I said, Jack, I think I'll never go back to sleep. He said, I can't go to sleep, let's just get up. So, we did, we went out on the open deck there, back on the fan tail. We took our seats on that black dark night. Every so often battleship out here in the channel goes firing over they'd fire back. We'd sit there and watch the tracer bullets. I got to thinking why had my life been spared? I was single. I didn't know Idalee even existed. I had parents, but I thought about. I slept in the bunk right here. 18 of us slept in the same compartment there. He was married. I knew he died. I thought about the boy over here. He's married and had a child. That child grew up, never know his father. My life had been spared. It's hard for me to understand things. I'd been raised at Sunday school and God was good. God would take care of you. And you know, but that was hard to believe at that time. I thought, well, I believe I'm atheist. I can't believe it. If what I've been told about God, he would allow something like this to happen. But I think about the life raft appeared right at the last minute. Was that luck? Well, you believe whatever you want to, getting in that truck, in the falling debris I wasn't crushed to death. Was that luck? Every time I think about another one that had died, I'd think about some way I had been protected. Sometime before daylight in the early hours

of June the 20th, 1944. I finally convinced myself that luck hadn't carried me that far. It had to be God. We stayed on that ship., I don't know, close to a week. The next day was able to drink a little coffee and swallow a little bit, just from exhaustion. Sleep few minutes to wake up just as if you're in a nightmare, but we've recovered pretty fast. Went to R and R camp in England spent about eight, 10 weeks there. Navy came out after it had time to search for everybody, 117 had lost their lives that day, 28 of us got off. They was just the Navy. I have read reports where we had 150 army personnel. I had read reports where we had 200. So, I really don't know how many, uh, but I'm sure the ratio of death was somewhere about the same. So, it was a pretty costly day in lives and that we've lost. But we came back to States then and got our orders to go to the South Pacific, we'd been taken out of the Navy and put in the Marines. Well, we got came back into Norwalk, New York and then down to Norfolk, Virginia a doctor there at Norfolk examined us and blocked the orders. He said we were unfit to go see duty. So, we wound up at Chicago, uh, great lakes actually. They was a hospital at that great lakes. Uh, I left there, we went down to St. Louis for about three months at Lambert field. It's the airport there in St. Louis. The Navy had a dispensary out there, but at that time they decided to large and go to a small hospital. And in the shuffle, I wound up going back to great lakes, but it went back to main side and stood up to the hospital and wound up at the indoor rifle range. In the case where the boots were firing 22 rifles and I used to put a band aid on or call an ambulance or whatever needed if we had an accident. So, I wound up there at the great lakes, came home, worked at Woodson funeral home, for about three to three and a half years. I guess, something like that, made a change that it was 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Slept there. Lived there. But as I began to get a little bit old at that time and

made a change and wound up meeting Idalee in the meantime. We married. We're both Proud of both of my daughters, but anyway, life went along until 2013. August of 2013. I was home by myself that morning. Idalee had gone to church to a watercolor class. Phone rang, and I'm bad about answering the phone. So, I just let it rang. But I answered that morning and a voice on the other end of identified himself is Doug Hamilton with PBS in New York City. But my first response was, yeah, I'm Donald duck, what are you selling? But I didn't. I treated it very decent. And uh, he wanted to know if I was in the 300 battalion of the combat engineers. I said, no, sir, I was not in the Navy. Oh, you were in the Navy? I said, yes, sir. He said, but "Were you any chance on the LST 523?" I said, I was. He said, "Were you on it when it was sunk?" I said, I was. He said, "You're the one I'm looking for." He said, "We're making a documentary for the 70th anniversary. We'd like to invite you and your wife back for a few days to do some filming and some interview." And I said, my goodness, I can't give you a decision right now. I said, I don't make decisions like that without consulting her. He said, "I'll call you 11 o'clock tomorrow." He called back 11 o'clock and we told him that we would accept it. So we left out. It took about 10 days to get reservations and itinerary all worked out. We left on Saturday morning, flew from Nashville, flew to New York, had a short layover, caught a plane, flew all night into Paris that afternoon got in there early Sunday morning. Went to the hotel, slept two, three hours. That afternoon had a, a guide and she carried us all over Paris. I tell you we covered more Paris than most people covered in a week. But anyway, uh, spent the night in Paris, got up the next morning drove down to Omaha beach, Normandy. About two and a half, I guess maybe three hours' drive down to the countryside. Had beautiful countryside, uh, got in and had lunch in a restaurant that had

been built back away from the beach, but still right there, close to it. Then went to American cemetery that afternoon spent that afternoon there. As we were talking beforehand, I don't believe I've ever been to a more sacred place that was quiet, reverend, a beautiful place. Uh, one of my doctors, we had two doctors. One of our doctors was buried there. We spent quite a of time there at his grave. Uh, they kept the cemetery open 30 extra minutes for people to speak to me when they found out what was taking place. But, uh, then the next morning we got up, had breakfast and caught a boat, a small boat. I guess a hundred-foot-long riding down the channels, beautiful day channel was just as smooth as it could be. Went back, Utah beach just had a nice cruise down the river actually. And after a while we slowed down and came to a stop where the cook fixed some cookies and punch. And we were staying in enjoying that and then Doug Hamilton, said, "Bill, we're right on top of what's left of your ship. Now see, we have a little submarine on the back, would you like to go down and see it?" I said, sure. So the pilot and his assistant and myself got in that submarine and Oh, it was tight. I tell you. It is sort of egg shaped. And at the longest dimension, I guess six or seven foot. And the pilot set back here with his legs down between us and the glass at that end of the sub. Well they lifted us over into the water. We began to go down, went to the bottom of the English Channel and sure enough there was our ship at about a 45-degree wedged right into the sand. Just the way it went down that day. It was still there and just like I left it when I jumped, except for a couple of tanks had fallen off. I don't know where the chains weakened from age or got damaged during the blast. But anyway, a couple of tanks had fallen off. One of the bowel doors had fallen off. But other than that, it was just like, when I left it, I saw where I jumped from. Seaweed was all over and the algae, the

number, I couldn't see the number, but I saw enough that I was convinced that it was our ship and, uh, we just kept riding around and up and over. After a while, I said, well, I believe we've seen the same thing over and over and he said, yes, but he said, "Now this was your trip. We'll stay as long as you want to stay." Well, I said, I believe we've seen at all. I'm ready to go up. I thought we'd be down 30 minutes, maybe an hour at the very most, but when we came up it had been an hour and 15 minutes, right on the bottom of the English Channel. It was quite an experience. Then we spent the next day on another ship that same size, but a sonar ship. It looked at the bottom of the ocean and the channel. But, uh, then we left out that night, to Paris to catch a plane back next morning and back home. And here we are."

MEGAN COLE:

"Wow. Well, thank you for sharing your story with me. I really appreciate that. Whenever I was at the cemetery, you were like you were saying earlier, every blade of grass was perfect. It was somber. No one was speaking loudly. I think that cemetery was a very special place."

BILL ALLEN:

"Well, everything is a cross either or a star of David in just straight lines, but I've seen the cemetery at Pearl Harbor, and it's maintained the same way. And maybe some of my veterans are not treated like they should be, but they maintain the cemetery, those that I had seen. But it's a very, very sacred experience to go and spend an afternoon there."

MEGAN COLE:

“What is one thing that you want people to remember about that time period? What do you think is the most important thing for people to remember?”

BILL ALLEN:

“Well, I think the most important thing is to remember the price has been paid for the freedom we have today. We think of the cost of a ship or the cost of a plane, and we lost several and ammunition in this, but the real cost was the blood and the pain and the grief it's been paid by the American people, the mothers, wives, uh, other members of the family and have lost, loved ones. I've figured that cost in freedom is the most important thing we've ever bought in this country. Not that I paid such a large price. I never pulled time in a concentration camp. I was never a prisoner of war. I never made a death March. So it was like a piece of cake compared to what a lotta men went through.”

MEGAN COLE:

“What was the importance of that Bible study that you had with some of your other shipmates before your ship went down?”

BILL ALLEN:

“While I was in corps school, there was about a dozen of us, all Southern boys, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, just got to be very close friends and stuck together all the way through. But the first Sunday out one of the boys said, you know, I miss going to church. We had no chaplain, no chapel, no facilities for religion

whatsoever, but we had no facilities for recreation, either. It, we had what we had to have. But, uh, another boy said, well, I got a little New Testament here. I said, let's just read a few verses of the scripture. Well, three or four sat down and the next Sunday, three or four more, we built up, I guess most we had was 10 or 12, but every Sunday we'd have a little simple chapel, last five, 10 minutes at the most. But when we got hit and they found out who had been killed or not, everyone I've said that attended that little simple church service got off. So out of the 28, those others attended that church service. Every one of us got off. Now, some of us hurt very seriously, but, uh, we all survived and got back home.”

MEGAN COLE

“Okay. Well, I think that's it. And thank you so much for spending some time today and getting to tell your story again. I think it's very inspiring and that's kind of the purpose of why I wanted to delve into Tennessee veterans and people around here to capture those stories. So, thank you.”

BILL ALLEN:

“Well, you are more than welcome, and I hope you get a good grade out of it.”

Ivy Agee Jr. Interview

MEGAN COLE:

“What was your war experience like?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Well, you see dead people, they tried get past a certain point and they get mowed down.

You know, that was kind of hard. I always tried to stay away from that port where I wouldn't be in limelight or something else where people could get a shot at me.”

MEGAN COLE:

“When did you know that you were going to be involved with D-Day? And how did you feel?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Oh, I remember that a while back. Eisenhower said God is with me. God is with me.

Who could against me? I went with that through the war all with that said that.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Why, why was faith so important to you?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“I've always tried to be a Christian, you know, knew what's right. I just kind of look up to God for guidance. To tell me kind what to do, which way to go.”

MEGAN COLE:

“If you're comfortable. Can, can you describe it if you're comfortable with it, would you be comfortable with describing it Omaha Beach?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Oh, it was awful. There's a lot of bloodshed and that was hard for me to, especially to see all that blood. Uh, it just did something to me inside that I couldn't get over it some way, some reason. And, uh, I don't know.”

MEGAN COLE:

“When did you know when allies had won that battle?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Yeah. When did I know? I forgot where I was when I heard it, but I know everybody was rejoicing and glad, you know, celebrating. They celebrated life; you know.”

MEGAN COLE:

“When you returned to civilian life? What, what was that like?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Well, it changed a little bit. Uh, I don't know why, but had changed a little bit, uh, from what I had been used to, you know. I don't remember what it changed to, but it did

change a little bit. It was hard to get used to it at all.”

MEGAN COLE:

“What's that button you have on right there?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“It's blue and gray for the army for the blue and gray division. That's what that is. See the blue and gray on it? That was their song. You know, their motto. I guess you can all it. 29 Let's go!”

MEGAN COLE:

“Your wife said that it took a very long time for you to talk about it again. Was it hard on you to talk about it again?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Yeah. Yeah. I tried to forget about it all the time. Sometimes something would come up that would remind me of it.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Is it something that still happens? I talked to a World War II veteran last week and he said that sometimes still while you know, like at night or whenever he'll still he'll still think about it. Are you the same way?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Yes, I am. Kind of. Yeah.”

MEGAN COLE:

“While we were over there, a lot of people we talked to used the words, never forget.

What do those two words mean to you?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Well, it means that you never forget that the people we lost over there. Some of them were for you and some of them were against you and you had to watch about it, about that though.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Can you tell me a little bit about the star you have in your hand?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“This is a silver star, a bronze star. This is a good conduct medal. And this is a D-Day medal.”

MEGAN COLE:

“We're coming up on 75 years since the day. What is something that you want younger people to know about that time period? That they may not know.”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“A lot of people sacrificed the whole lot. Not just fighting but taking care of the other

thing. You know, the family at all. But I'm proud of all these medals.”

MEGAN COLE:

“What do you want people to remember about you?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“I don't know what people would want to remember about me. If anything, people should want to remember about my dear wife. She's been my whole life. She's been with me all the time that she stayed with me, helped me at all, all my life. I couldn't have made it without her.”

MEGAN COLE:

“We've seen a lot of American flags or American stuff around, around the room here. Why do you keep so many things with the American flag on them around you? Are you proud to be an American?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“I guess I want everybody to remember that many people. But oh yeah. I'm proud to be American. I'm glad I did what I did, I'm not sorry about anything I did. Cause I was doing it for my country and for God, I think God was with me all the way through it or I wouldn't have made it.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Did you see people in concentration campus?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Oh yeah. It was pitiful. I didn't get to see them too much, but I did see some that they had their heads down. They wouldn't look up; it was just site for sore eyes. Really. All of that stuff I've tried to forget it.”

MEGAN COLE:

“I see you have some sand here from 2004 from Omaha Beach. What makes this sand important to you?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Well it was part of what I was over there for. Of course, I was on the sand a whole lot, the beach you know? And uh, I kind of liked the beach. I'm just glad it's all over with.”

MEGAN COLE:

“At the sand, does it, does it take you back? Does it remind you?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Yeah. Back to the beach.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Would you be comfortable sharing about it?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Well, there were dead soldiers everywhere, on the beach and that's what hurt me so much of my comrades being dead. I'd have to pass over them and leave them there. I couldn't help them anyway. I couldn't get them up and move them or anything like that. It was all kind of a fairy tale, I guess you'd say, that it happened. It was all just one heck of a mess.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Okay. Uh, I know I've asked you a lot of questions. Okay. Um, is there anything that I have not asked you that you would like to talk about?”

IVY AGEE JR.:

“Oh no. I don't but thank you.”

Ed Covington Interview

MEGAN COLE:

“So tell me a little bit about life before you went off and joined the military. What was life like?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well, I lived in Meridian, Mississippi, which is a town of about 30,000 at that time. Then of course, we were close to the country. So, I hunted and fished with my dad a lot. And of course, I had to go to school, and I went to school through Meridian high school, graduated from there in 1942. And of course, we played baseball in Sandlot, Sandlot ball. We didn't have a high school baseball team, when I was in high school. And then after I graduated from high school, I went to Meridian junior college for a year. I graduated when I was 17 and a group of us from Meridian junior college, went out to key field and got a little physical and a little test and we wanted to join the air force reserve army air Corps reserve, I should say. And, uh, I was too young at 17. Interestingly enough, after I turned 18 in January of 43. They started taking people into reserve at 17, but I ran across a little article in the paper that said that if you had not, if you're registered for the draft and had not been called up, that you could apply for take a physical and a written test and apply for entry into the service as an aviation cadet candidate. So, there was, we were given a special classification for that. And that's the way I got in, I volunteered through the draft board, which they instructed us to do, but I went first and asked him if I was going to be called up before may the first. And they said, I wasn't. So, I just, I said, well, I'll be back after the 1st of May to see you. And that's when I went and joined in. And

then I got sworn in July, right about the 7th of July in 43 at camp Shelby, Mississippi. Then I was called to active duty then about August the 28th of that year. So, I actually showed up for basic training at Miami beach somewhere around the 1st of September and from 43. So that's the way I got it.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Were you close to your parents? What was your family life like?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Family life? It was great. I had a brother and a sister and my father and mother, and then my grandmother lived, my mother's mother lived with us and that's where I grew up. Well, I grew up and spent most of my early years as all my early years for that matter. And they had built a home in 1926, so I was just a year when they bought it but moved into that house. And so, I lived there in that same place too. I went in the service.”

MEGAN COLE:

“So whenever you first went into the service, were you in Mississippi?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Yes. Well, I was sworn in at that camp, Shelby, Mississippi.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Could you talk to me a little bit about like your first experiences in the military? What

did you think it was going to be like and what was it actually like?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well, I'm not too sure. I'm not sure I had much of an idea of what it was going to be like, and it turned to be fairly strict, uh, but fairly loose too. Cause we were at Miami beach and staying in a hotel. And so, you know, one like being in a barracks and off in an isolated place. So, when we weren't on duty, we could rattle around Miami beach. And that was quite an interesting thing. Took calisthenics and PT out on the beach, in the sand and then swam then got back in town with our feet covered with sand and ran back to a hotel, that's some experience. So, it wasn't too bad though. I mean, I anticipated that it would be some things like, you know, pulling KP and that was a thing. Everybody got stuck with it sometime or another and uh, just generally, uh, generally live in.”

MEGAN COLE:

“Did you have any like hard experiences whenever you first joined the military?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well it was pretty rigorous. When I went through first, I went to college training detachment, they called it and I went to that at the university of Syracuse. So, we were on the campus and lived in a dorm that the military had complete control of. And so, it wasn't too big, a shift in life for me through basic training or, and through the college training detachment. And there, we started in math with fundamentals of mathematics, with addition and subtraction and multiplication and division, and then worked on up

now, I had a year of college mathematics. And so eventually they took me out of the math class and put me in a coercion in camouflage detection. And it was a special course. And, I learned a little bit about color combinations and that type thing, but it wasn't anything that was too earth shaking."

MEGAN COLE:

"What was your main role throughout the war? Like your specific position whenever you were active during the war, what did you do during the war?"

ED COVINGTON:

"I went through college training detachment, and then we came to Nashville to the classification center and they decided whether you should be a pilot or navigator. Well, of course I think everybody wanted to be a pilot. And I had some problems with my eyes, I had little muscular imbalance and I also didn't do as well on the psychomotor test. I guess this would have been acceptable at that time because they had raised the standards back up to prewash standard level. So, I got classified as a navigator and I was the only one out of my flight of about 30 guys that had gone through together that was classified as a navigator, the other pilots were bombardiers. And then we were sent to pre-flight school at Montgomery, Alabama, which was getting back close home. I was able to go home once in a while on the weekends. And so that was, that was before I really started the training and flying part, they decided that, uh, they didn't have space for us in navigation school. So, we started pre-flight over and then they said, Oh, well we'll just let you take PT a couple of hours a day. And so, we did that a little while and then finally they

decided, Hey, we'll just send these guys to gunnery school. And so, I got sent down to Harlingen, Texas to gunnery school. There, we were taught to assemble caliber 50 machine gun, uh, to disassemble it and blindfolded and put it back together and make it shoot. So, and then we, later on, we went into the firing aspects of it. And at first, I guess we were shooting from a turret that was mounted on the back of a B 24 tail turret. And so, we were able to get to feel of leading something shooting at a target, it was attached to a Jeep. Now the Jeep went behind the dirt wall, so we wouldn't shoot it and just shooting it to target that was above it. And that was one interesting part of it. And I hit about 66% of my shots on that, I think. We were fired skeet from the back of a truck moving 30 miles an hour. And I got about two thirds of that. So that was about my score. And then later on, we flew, and we'd tour a target for another plane, and then they had turned around and told a target for us. So, we did air to air firing and all this was sort of laborious, but we sat around waiting a lot and I read it *Gone with the Wind*. The thing that I remember about the range where we were, it was outright at the tip of the, of the river Rio Grande river, where it ran into the Gulf. And now camp was out there. We stayed there several days, and the mosquitoes were something terrible at night. And then we also had a lot of cockroaches in the barracks. It would run over you at night, wake you up, running down your back or getting your shoes in the morning, almost kick you back out of your shoes. They were so big. Those are some things that I remember about that part of it. That's about the sum and substance of it. And we got Gunner's wings, Danville having completed gunnery school. So, I was also able to fire machine gun and navigated airplane. Eventually after the gunnery school, we went to where I was sent to navigation school at Hondo, Texas, which is 40 miles West of San Antonio. If you've ever been out

there, you know, it for, to me, was major coverage, just a scrub Bush and stuff out there. But I survived that graduated in October of 44. And I joined up with a crew that I had the picture of here.”

MEGAN COLE:

“What were some of the hard times in the war? Did you lose any close friends or anything like that?”

ED COVINGTON:

Uh, the Bombardier that we had that I told you earlier. We left him in the States after we went through operational training. This is to learn to fly in the B 17. My pilot and copilot were getting additional training and we flew over various parts of Texas, New Mexico, and I don't know where else, maybe Georgia. And the Bombardier made bomb runs on him, took pictures. So, uh, that was that part of the training. That was pretty interesting, but the Bombardier was kept in the States and he got killed. So he wasn't really a close personal friend but we were friends, but we had no problem with each other. We got along good, but I hated losing him. I was pretty lucky. I didn't lose too many people that I, that I knew closely. However, as crews, we knew other crews and all of the crews went into the, as I recall, the 96-bomb group and the 100th bomb group and eighth air force in England, were either shot down or had men killed wounded and missing. I flew two missions with another crew and well actually flew three. The second one we had to abort because when the tail got charged around into his gun, the round jammed, and he was trying to get it out so he could operate the gun and he hit a little sear that stuck up there

and fired the, fired the caliber 50 round and open breach of his other gun and took off his thumb and part of his finger. So, we had to return to base in the military mission.

MEGAN COLE:

“Was it rough on some of the other people that you've met, like throughout your military service, a lot of people passed away during that time. Um, how do you think a lot of those people like families back home dealt with such grief that was happening during World War II?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well, it was a rough, rough thing. I think the thing that helped most people because I was very regularly in attendance at church and, and a good Christian person. And I had faith, that things would be alright. Eventually my, my brother was an engineer and officer, you know, they 26 outfit and they went into France, uh, shortly after they landed at D-Day. And he ran a Jeep into a bomb crater in had a cerebral hemorrhage and was unconscious for 30 days. He came back home, went through a lot of rehabilitation. And then he came back, was able to, to go back to college and he had a master's degree in agronomy, but he was a nearest fatality that we had. I had 10, at least ten first cousins that served in World War II.”

MEGAN COLE:

“I saw that you have a purple heart in there, on the table. How did you get that?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well, it was the last mission I flew, and we were flying a mission to Dresden in Germany. Dresden had been bombed and bombed and bombed, but we were bombing railroad yards and we're flying in, in the flack was always popping around us. And I was watching, had my head turned to the left, watching the left wing of the plane, go through the smoke burst of, and then I got hit by the flack. It hit my flack helmet, which was steel and bounced off it and came right down the side of my neck. And I have the leather flying helmet that has a hole about that big around in it. And I showed I'll show that to you later on. That's right. That's the leather helmet. Of course, I had a flat helmet. Actually, I had two flat helmets. I had one that was ordinary, regular type, like a field helmet. And then one that was called a turret helmet. Somebody stole my, my flack helmet that had a good, had good straps and stuff in it. So, you could put it on your head, and it stays in place. Well, they left one that didn't have any straps in it. So, I flew three missions holding that thing over my head. And the good Lord told me, he said, Hey, do you need any more protection than that. You need to put a regular flack helmet on. So, I couldn't find one regular helmet, this little tail turret helmet fit right across the head, just bring steel. And I thought, well, that's, if I get hit on that, that doesn't really do me some damage. So, I put that one and then put the other helmet on top of it and the perfect fit. And that's what I was wearing when I got hit by the piece of flack. God told me, take care of myself better. So, I was knocked down by that piece of flack and on my knees. We had a little step in the front of the nose. My desk was on the left side and I could sit on this step at work. So, I got hit by that piece of flack and knocked me down. I felt it hit me across the side of my face. And I had, when I was playing baseball, I used to catch

sometimes, and I've been hit by tip balls. And that's about the same way I got hit. Then I, it felt the piece of flack is that size. Uh, and I've got, I can show it to you, I think, in there. And so, I was amazed at what it did. And then to tell you a funny story about it, I push my talk button on my throat, mic and couldn't hear anything. And I thought, well, I'm deaf. And then I looked down and saw that my headset was unplugged. I had rolled enough that I'd unplugged that. So, I'm still trying to call a pilot. Then I saw that, it's well, first the throat mic, and then the headset was pulled loose. And I plugged him back in and I was joyful when I could hear, but then I had punched the guy and said, I'm hit, am I bleeding? And he looked at it and said, yes, sir. Well, you know, you're up there, you don't have a mirror or anything. I said, what in the world? It was time for the bombs to go away. And so, he had to turn away and take care of that. And then I found out that it was hole, I did get a little blood on my finger and I thought, you know, it's 40 degrees below. I'm bleeding to death and it's freezing. It's strange kind of thoughts you have under those circumstances.”

MEGAN COLE:

“How did it feel to get that purple heart afterward?”

ED COVINGTON:

“Well, I didn't know whether I'd get a purple heart or not. You know, it kind of irritated my copilot because I didn't get hurt bad. And I still got the purple heart. They made the decision, that the surgeon flight surgeon made the decision about whether I got the purple heart. Now I didn't have anything to do with that. Except I had to turn in my flight

records, you know, the record we kept over flight because I written on there was hit by flack. And so, he kept that for records. And it showed up as one wounded man or on the record, they had a tally of the missions and one, a wounded person. And that was me. So, and that was only one I ever got like that.”