

**Elmer Eggleston  
Veteran**

**Britney Haygen  
Interviewer  
Hudson Falls High School  
Hudson Falls, NY**

**Interviewed on  
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**BH:** My name is Britney Haygen and I am here at Elmer Eggleston's home on January 12th, 2008. Where were you December 7th, 1941?

**EE:** In high school.

**BH:** What were your feelings on Pearl Harbor when you heard it had been attacked?

**EE:** Well, I figured we're in it, we're going to have to go after them.

**BH:** When did you join the army?

**EE:** February 8th, 1943.

**BH:** What did you join as, what were your plans? Did you plan on going straight over?

**EE:** No I didn't plan anything, it was all planned for me. Well, we went in and they told us we were going to get thirteen weeks of basic infantry training and going right overseas. No passes, no visitors, nothing. So we went to Fort McClellan, Alabama and took my basic training. It was six weeks of basic infantry and went to radio school. Shipped right overseas; North Africa

**BH:** Were you scared when you got on the ship?

**EE:** I wasn't scared—I was too sick to be scared.

**BH:** You were sick?

**EE:** [chuckles] Yeah. Yeah I was pretty sick — sea sick.

**BH:** What major battles were you in?

**EE:** Well from Sicily—we went to Sicily, I joined the division, First Infantry Division. Went to Sicily and from Sicily went to England to get ready for D-Day. Because we were going to be the assault division—well one of them. It took quite a bit of training, you know, on the beaches and stuff. Then when they decided they were going to go into Normandy they told us we were going to be one of the lead outfits out on that beach. So, that was it.

**BH:** So you went to Omaha beach?

**EE:** Yup

**BH:** Can you tell us about what you did over there?

**EE:** Run like hell. [Laughs] When that door went down we took off and darted just about as fast as we could.

**BH:** What was going through your head when you were there?

**EE:** I was looking for a place to hide.

**BH:** Really?

**EE:** Yeah

**BH:** You were scared?

**EE:** [smiles] A little. A lot of noise.

**BH:** What were your feelings on the enemy back then?

**EE:** Had a job to do, Had to do it.

**BH:** You didn't agree with anything they were fighting for?

**EE:** Not all the time. I used to get in a lot of trouble for speaking out. Something I didn't like I used to talk about it.

**BH:** What was the most trouble you had gotten in?

**EE:** Oh jeez I can't remember. Got a lot of guard duty. Yeah, then I learned to keep quiet.

**BH:** What medals did you receive while you were over there?

**EE:** I'd have to read it off to you. [Chuckles] I got a silver star.

**BH:** silver Star for what?

**EE:** Gallantry in action they said — Bronze star with oak leaf cluster, that's meritory service. Purple Heart, I got nicked once. — European African Ribbon with six battle stars. Bronze Arrowhead for spearheading Normandy. —I got to read all this stuff, I haven't been over it in a long time. I have a whole list here somewhere. Don't tell me I can't find it. I had it right in my hands the other day. Better shut your camera off, it's gonna burn up. What the heck—here it is. Now I'll read them off to you, it's been a couple of days you know: European African Middle Eastern medal, six battle stars. French, [unclear] battle, Central Europe, Normandy, Northern France, Sicily, and Rhineland campaign —those were the campaigns. Bronze Arrowhead for spearheading Normandy, Victory medal, Good Conduct medal —don't laugh, Army of Occupation medal, New York State Conspicuous Service Cross, Veterans Foreign War medal, Presidential Unit citation. French Fourragère, two citations for Kasserine pass and D-Day in Normandy. Colors of the Croix de Guerre and Belgian Fourragère - two citations. Battle of [unclear] and Battle of [unclear]. Then sent off to Battle of the Bulge. That's about it...combat infantry badge. That's it.

**BH:** That's a lot of medals. You were in the Battle of the Bulge?

**EE:** Yup, all the way through.

**BH:** Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**EE:** Well it was fought in the Hurtgen Forest and we got the hell knocked out of us but anyway some us survived. I was sleeping next to this big ol' cow in a barn one night — four legged cow I guess [chuckles] — and they come in and say, “Eggleston where the hell are you?” And I say, “Right over here” and he says, “Aren't you afraid that cows going to roll over on you?” And I said “I don't care its warm” so [chuckles] — anyway, “well pack everything up” they said, “we're moving out” and I said, “where are we going, to the rear?” and he said, “I think so”, so after we're on the road for about an hour I say to the lieutenant, “I don't think we're going to the rear” and he says, “why not?” and I said, “well see all those flashes up ahead of us? That's the shells going off or bombs or something.” So anyway we got down there about daylight and he told us what was going on, that the Germans had broken through and we had to stop them. Find a place to get some rest he said. He had to go back to the battalion to check to see what was going on. So I found a nice little spot under an old shed that got wrecked — of course there's snow on the ground. So I got my blanket and I got in there with this other guy and I'm just getting ready to take a nap and he says, “You got to roll your stuff up, we got to go. K companies coming through and we got to join them — they're going to move up, got to get this town” — we had to take this town before the Germans got to it. That was the start of it so 38 days later we got relief so we could go in and attack again so we could move out of there. They moved another outfit in and replacements and we had to attack.

**BH:** Did you lose any of your friends in that battle?

**EE:** Quite a few. The cold in fox holes in weather like this —snow two feet to three feet deep.

**BH:** What was your longest in a fox hole?

**EE:** 38 days straight. Not in the hole all the time I mean. We lived in it, that's how we lived. There's no buildings there, no barns or anything like that.

**BH:** Is there any time you second guessed why you were there?

**EE:** No. I didn't second guess it. That was it.—[chuckles] there's no second guess, you just do with what you got.

**BH:** Where were you when FDR died?

**EE:** Jeez I can't remember that. All I remember is he passed away and everybody felt bad.

**BH:** What were your feelings on that?

**EE:** Just felt too bad to lose a guy who's a pretty good guy.

**BH:** What did you think about the atomic bomb?

**EE:** Beautiful, got to use it more often.

**BH:** Never heard that one.

**EE:** Why? Why should everyone get killed for those jerks over there?

**BH:** That's right.

**EE:** Blast them. After the smoke clears they'll know what they did wrong.

**BH:** Where were you when the war ended?

**EE:** Czechoslovakia.

**BH:** What were you doing there?

**EE:** Well that's where they told us we had to go, they got us all together, one night and said the wars gonna end on May 11th, —May 11th?— something like that. But we're going to attack tomorrow at 3 o' clock in the morning. We got to get to this checkpoint before the Russians get there. So I told my lieutenant, "the hell with them, I ain't going", and he said, "You're going." — [chuckles] —so we went. That's where we stopped.

**BH:** When did you go home?

**EE:** Well that was '45. I couldn't go home because the guys that were in the division were overseas longer than I was. They had more points because they were the first troops overseas in 1942. A lot of old guys left, so they had to let them go home first which is natural. So I didn't get home till —the war ended May 11th I think or something like that and I didn't get out till I think September when they said it was my turn to go

**BH:** You were pretty happy to go home weren't you?

**E:** Oh yeah.

**BH:** How hard was it to not talk to your family and friends while you're over there?

**EE:** All you could do was write letters. I got a box full of them, my mother saved them all.

**BH:** Really?

**EE:** Yeah.

**BH:** That's great. Well do you have any war stories or anything you'd like to share?

**EE:** War stories? Yeah [chuckles] I got a lot of them. [Looks off camera] Should I tell them about the toilet? —[chuckles]— anyway the lieutenant comes up to my fox hole one day and says, "come on Eggleston we're going to go back and get some hot food and clean clothes." I said boy that sounds good so we get back here and the building we were going to stay in had been hit. The men holed up down in the cellar, and we had to stay up above because there wasn't room for us down there. So got in the bed, had my clothes on, we didn't take our clothes off at night. So I got up in the morning and I had to go to the bathroom so I put my helmet on and it was on the second floor so I walked in the bathroom and look at the toilet and it was full. So I said to myself jeez I don't know if I should flush it or just do what I got to do and then flush it. Well I'll just sit down and do what I got to do. So there was a window just like that one next to me and I was looking out the window and I finish and I figure well I better flush it, and the whole room went up. Exploded. Funny huh?

**BH:** [laughs] Yeah

**EE:** So they had the bottom board off the window and they packed the charge in there. —the Germans did— and they wired it up somehow to the plunger on the toilet, the flusher. So when I flushed it, it blew up. So when I had got out of bed that morning and put my helmet on, why'd I do that? I don't know either but I had two nice dents in it right there [points at his head]. Slapped me up against the wall and I couldn't see for half an hour, forty-five minutes. Blinded me you know? Concussion. Everybody's coming in and laughing at me having a hell of a time. I didn't think it was funny [chuckles]. If I had stood up the way they figured somebody would come in and see the toilet like that, they'd stand up and flush it and it would have got me right through the stomach and hips.

**BH:** You'd have been dead.

**EE:** I'd have been hurt bad.

**BH:** Oh boy

**EE:** That's one of em.

**BH:** Anymore?

**EE:** Yup, lots of em. I can't tell you all of them but anyway another time we were getting dive-bombed. I was sitting on my helmet when the bomb —when I heard the bomb coming. So I got up to run and I kicked my helmet well I chased my helmet trying to get it back because I figured maybe I could get under it or something. So I went back to where I was after everything cleared up and there was all these slits in the ground where the bomb, the shrapnel from the bomb, had tore the ground up. Had I sat there and not chased my helmet I would've got hit. All this stuff happens but you don't know why.

**BH:** Well that's all of the questions I have for you.

**EE:** Good.