

Dr. Brian N. Beaudin Interview, NYS Military Museum

**Dr. Brian N. Beaudin
Veteran**

**Interviewed at the Herkimer
Fulton County Historical Society
on 15 May 2003**

[Video begins with Brian holding up a handwritten sheet of paper with his last name and first initial. Off screen voice asks him to hold it up for a minute as they set up camera.]

BB: My name is Brian Beaudin and I come from West Warwick, Rhode Island. It is a small town South of Providence. I was born there in 1917.

Off camera voice says “You are doing very good”

BB: Brian repeats his name and begins with – I was called to Active Duty in August of 1943. I had already been to Georgetown Medical School and graduated and had a year of Internship. I was ready to go into the Army because I was a member of the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps). In fact, I’ve got twenty nine years with the ROTC.

When I was called, I didn’t like the Orders at all. The Orders were sending me to Camp Lewis in Washington and I didn’t want to go there because I figured they would be going to the Pacific. When I went to the Medical Field Service School about that time, about a week after I got called, a Parachute Medical Officer came to all the classes. There were sixteen hundred doctors there. He came to all the classes looking for volunteers. He told us he would be at the gym that night and he would see anybody to explain, and that there would be a film and everything else. Out of those sixteen hundred doctors, four hundred showed up.

Then they had the film, and there were about one hundred left after that. After he showed all the paraphernalia for jumping, it left twelve. Out of those twelve, four were taken, and I was one of them. But because I went there on that night, my Orders were changed completely and I was sent to Parachute School which was in Fort Benning, Georgia and I was there for four weeks.

From there I was sent to the 508th Parachute Infantry in North Carolina. Not Fort Bragg, but Camp Mackall, North Carolina. From then on there was regular training and everything else. We were slated to go Overseas and I knew that so I spoke to a lot of the old boys who’d been on Tennessee Maneuvers. In fact, when I got there at four o’clock in the morning they issued me an old bag that was covered in mud from the Tennessee Maneuvers. (laughs) I didn’t like that too much, but anyway, we were called and went to Camp Shanks, New York. On Christmas Eve, and the night before, we were allowed to go downtown and we wanted to go in our boots. But we had to go and buy pants, blouses with no insignia or anything like that, which was fine.

We went by boat to Staten Island where we took a ferry to Weehawken, New Jersey and then took a boat to go Overseas. We landed in Belfast, Ireland nine days later. From Belfast we went to a place called Portstewart, Northern Ireland near Portrush. We were stationed there about six months or so prior to going to England.

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We were stationed at Nottingham, which is real close to Sherwood Forest, and we trained there for about six months or more. We had two Training Jumps, both at night getting us ready for D-Day. One night we went to the field and it was raining so we could not go up right away. We had some C-rations and got as sick as could be on them. When we got up in the plane I threw up in a can! (laughs) Then I laid down on my back and a guy hit me saying "We're going out!" I usually went out as Number Two Man, however, this time I found myself about Number Thirteen. When I went out, my legs were all over the place.

Usually you count to three and by that time your parachute should open. You go down about seventeen feet per second, so that's pretty fast. Well anyway, I landed pretty hard and I had pains in my calves right away. I started walking and met another guy and we are walking ahead. All at once, he disappears and I wondered where he was. Well, he was down in a hole because its a bombing range they dropped us on. I get him out of there and a few minutes later I get bounced on my back because I hit into a wire fence.

Then we met more of our men and we and began to get all of those who were hurt and take care of them. Pretty soon a man, a tall fellow who looked like he had a First Lieutenant's Bar, comes up to me and asks "How did you make out?" I tell him I what I thought about anybody who would drop us in a place like that, our Chaplain had a broken leg.. He was accommodating, he had one of those phosphorescent things like he was a referee. So I told him what I thought and he disappeared. I saw him again at 5:30 in the morning. He didn't see me. He was the Commanding General Lieutenant, not then, he was the Brigadier General Gavin (James Gavin, one of the youngest Army officers to become a general in WWII) So that was the first one. The second one wasn't bad at all. I didn't get hurt, except to get some strained muscles, that's about all.

When D-Day came we went to Folkingham Airbase and everybody got ready there. We put black soot on our faces, and loaded up the planes. By the way, one plane exploded because a bundle exploded and killed a few of our men. That was a bad set back.

Then we got going, it was eleven o'clock at night. We went South to the Guernsey and Jersey Islands. We saw a submarine light which turned left when it crossed the Normandy Peninsula. We were dropped about two o'clock. The big problem was that we were dropped as one of the later Regiments that were dropped. So when the first ones dropped, they were not expected. When we were coming, we were expected. And believe me, we were hit by everything else but the kitchen sink.

You can't imagine the maelstrom of activity when you are dropping out of a plane about five hundred feet at seventeen feet per second and you don't know where you are, or what's happening. But you see planes crashing down, psychotic rhythms from the cannons and everything else.

You know, I wasn't afraid, I was just apprehensive that's all. I could see these blue and tan bullets coming by. I can't remember what they are called now, but I was moving my feet to get away from them! I went right through an apple tree. It was a lousy way to land, but I landed on my feet, my rear end, and my hip. I couldn't get out of my chute because the grommets were so tight. I had already put a knife in a little pocket over here (points to his chest). I took it out, opened it up and sawed my way out.

That was in a hedgerow, it was about two o'clock in the morning. Everything was as dark as could be. I didn't know what to do, so I took out my compass to get my directions. I went in one direction and going along the edge of the hedgerow. By the way, we were told not to fire. It was pretty hard to shoot my morphine syringe- I didn't have a gun, but I did have a dagger.

I started along this hedgerow, it was about a quarter moon and it was over there (points off), so nothing could be seen in my direction. But I could see this guy coming with his rifle and going slowly you know. I said to myself, "I better do something about this. If I don't protect myself and kill him, he is going to kill me and there are a lot of people depending on me." So I put the knife down to my boot and waited for him to get there and I gave him the password. Then he started to back up so slow and I nearly was coming up on him. He was a new replacement and seemed to be awfully nervous, so I told him to follow where he was going, and I would take care of myself.

The next time, I went through a really big building where the cows were in. It was so dark I couldn't even see my hand in front of my face, couldn't see a thing. So I backed out of there and went down another side of the hedgerow. Suddenly I heard this heavy boot sound coming (Brian pounds his fist on table) like that. So then I set my knife and said "flash" the password was "thunder" but there was no answer. So I hit out, but hit nothing. To this day, I think I challenged a cow! And the cow was so nervous he couldn't move...(laughs)

Soon after that, I got challenged by this fellow who jumped out of the plane ahead of me, so it was (@10:53 spelling of Layman.) He's right here (Brian seems to point to a photo on the table), right next to me. He challenged me and we got a few men together, a few Aid-men and Infantrymen and he told us "When you hit the ground and get shot at, fix bayonets. When you hit the ground, make sure you have plenty of room!" Well, we got shot at, of course. We hit the ground and this guy put his gun in this direction and caught (@11:22 spelling Layman) right here (points to his neck and a photo on table). That's why he's got a bandage on him, it severed his facial artery, the big carotid artery that goes to the brain. So he was losing a lot of blood, we put a bandage on him but it wasn't enough. I had a clamp at first, it was a two-part clamp and when he moved his head, the clamp split and in the darkness I didn't know where it went. But I did complain about that to the Army afterwards and we didn't have any more clamps like that, they were just one piece.

Anyway, we had to give him plasma so a Corporal and a Private and a group and I went in different directions and found a unit of plasma and brought it over. I gave it to him and, of course, you had nothing to hold it up, so I had to hold it and was standing up. I got shot at by a guy up at the top of the building. But I had to give him the plasma! So I got down on my haunches and put my arm up. I thought he was going to shoot the darn thing out of my hand but fortunately an Infantryman or somebody went after him and killed him.

Then we went to an area we thought we belonged to but we couldn't find anything there. So we found a farmhouse that had a barn. But the barn was one level below the farmhouse itself that had a big stump and we put all our wounded in there. We were given plasma and things were getting better. But then I looked out the door and out comes a bunch of Germans about three or four hundred feet from us, but they knew somebody was there.

They came down, and before they came in opening with "Schnellfeuer"(rapid-fire) using a little machine gun. Then I took my hat, which had red crosses on it, and stuck it on a pitchfork

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and put it out there. They shot again, and then stopped. They said “Hande hoch” (hands up). They came in and took my razor, that was all they took from me. (laughs) They knocked on the door of the farmhouse, nobody answered. They figured somebody must be in there so they threw a Potato Masher (stick bomb) and killed both women that were in there.

Then they took us to a German Collecting Station. I had to carry myself, I'm one hundred and sixty five pounds – twenty five years old and another guy who was much younger than I (@14:08 spelling of Private Grupie?) over hill and dale, over walls and everything else to this place. As soon as we got there one of the men saw me and said “Freunde, Rotes Kreuz... we are friends, we are Red Cross” wasn't that nice?

Well, we got everything over there and got our men down and then they brought trucks and took us to a Field Hospital they called (@14:39 unclear 91st South unclear). They took us over there and put us into a wooden building. We got into this barracks that was full of double bunks, about forty or fifty double bunks with a straw mat.

I had three Medics with me and we took care of the men and where they belonged. Then the casualties began to come in. I was working for three days and two nights without stopping. Carrying litters, taking care of the wounded, all kinds of wounds. I laid down at four o'clock in the morning on the third night and they woke me up again at two because so many other casualties were coming in and there was no other doctor. The only other doctor was from my Regiment, but he had a wound in his hip and he could not help at all.

So we started to take care of them and as I said, I just laid down and they woke me up again. I tried to get up, but I could not get up. I could not hold my head up. I had to roll off the bunk, grab the end, and then bring myself up. To this day I have fused vertebrae in my neck. (laughs)

Anyway, we took care of all those men for that period of time. I really needed to have a German surgeon that had a hospital there and had surgeons who operated all the time. I had to have a man come over and do what they call a Triage. To see the men that they couldn't possibly help for me with bad chest wounds, whatever. So this doctor showed up. He was a Captain, Captain Huffman. I was telling him about different people around, one guy was shot in his lung and he was laid down and his chest was all swollen because air was coming out. He is still living by the way, his name is (@16:54 unclear)

Then I got to this Captain, he was from Headquarters, the 82nd Airborne, and both his legs were all swollen and blueish. He could not possibly stand up, he was in pain and we gave him morphine. That was all we could do. I told him “I would like you to take x-rays of this man so he could have a cast put on.” He looked at me and said “Nicht gebrochen” meaning not fractured. I said “How do you know, do you have x-ray eyes?!” He said “I do not need x-rays, I am German Medical Officer.” I said “Bullshit!” (Brian says as an aside..you can't put that in). He turned to me and asks “vahs ist bullshit?” I don't know what I answered, but I had a few nervous moments there. But he was cooperative and did get quite a few of our men in there and it was very helpful. He even got a laymen in there also and sewed up the wound. After that the layman was very helpful.

[@18:10 Brian is holding up a black and white photo and says]: About the third day I had been there I wanted to check on some of my men who were operated on so I approached the chateau where their surgery was. This was maybe one hundred feet away. As I approached it I

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thought I heard a shell coming and it exploded. I dove behind a sheltered wall and a German Medical Officer was killed outright. And how I got this picture, I mean this German Cap, I don't know. (He is wearing it in the photo) But I took it and have had it all this time. I did turn it over to Fort Bragg in North Carolina with a lot of other stuff.

I kept on telling my Aid Men, especially two of them, this was a chateau which had at least three floors, I said "go as high as you can. Leave only one at a time and see if you can see American activity." So they did report to me they had seen a soldier there with a 300 Radio there. (SCR-300 US Signal Corp walkie-talkie) They could see the antenna so they knew we were being surrounded. I told them okay and went to.....

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm ahead of myself. They were trying to evacuate all the people to Germany because they saw they were being surrounded. They had an ambulance that took only four litters, about ten men sitting. When I saw that, I sent my Medics out to pick up all the wood they could and if they could strap it on a guy's leg, they did that. So instead of getting rid of ten men at a time, I would make it only four.

I sent four Officers out at first, including the Doctor because I really wanted them to get definitive surgery, and they were not going to get it there any more than they had. After that, I made splints on these people so they were evacuating four instead of ten so I had more able-bodied men left that they did not know about. But I wanted to let the 82nd Airborne, or at least let the Army know, that we were there.

I went and collected a lot of sheets from the hospital from this German Medic friend of mine (@20:58 spelling) Frank Ruby. We went out maybe two hundred yards South of the hospital into a field and we set up sheets like this, layers of them making two like this at the peak with the mark down the middle. Two A As and put bricks down and made a cross. Then another two A As which signified "American Troops, 82nd Airborne Medical Installation" And believe it or not, a plane came by, a P-38 (Lockheed Lightning) and we waved at it and it dipped its wings.

Three years after I came back, I was in the Army and met a fellow, a lawyer who was going to take care of my business and I mentioned that to him because he had been a flier. He said "That was me! I saw that! I'm the guys who dipped the wings!!" His name was (@22:10 unclear) or something like that. I think he is still alive.

The following day a German Field Infantry Officer, called me and wanted me to speak on an American Field Telephone and tell them to stop sending shells over there. I refused. I was pretty cocky then. But I couldn't do it anyway, I didn't know how to use the telephone. I said "There is only one reason why the shells are coming here, you have a battery of big guns right outside the perimeter of the hospital and you are getting counter-battery fire. If you get those out of there, you won't get any more shells." Maybe five or six hours later, they were gone.

About eight o'clock the following morning, I went to the German Officer who was left. Most of the big surgeons were gone but they left one Medical Officer and about sixty men and Aids. I went to the Medical Officer and asked him to surrender because I said "You are being surrounded by American Troops and it would be to your advantage to surrender now." He refused.

There was so much evidence later on that we were being surrounded that I went back to him and I insisted that he surrender. He did, he gave me his gun and his Aid gave me another gun and not knowing this, our men had as many guns as the Germans had because they were helping the Germans take care of the wounded Germans and in doing so, had slid their weapons in the pockets. So we were pretty well-healed.

Anyway, the next morning we saw some men coming down the road. I stepped out of the chateau and I put my hands up like this (Brian holds both arms up in the air in the universal surrender pose). It was the 4th Infantry Division coming from the beach. So actually, we were not relieved by anyone else, they were coming anyway. We just happened to be in charge at the time.

From there we went by Jeep, we had seven men on a Jeep I think and were going to a place called Saint Sauveur-le-Vicomte, which was about three miles away. Before we got there we were strafed. We saw American planes flying over us and suddenly one of them detaches itself, dive-bombed and blows up a truck. We all jumped out of there, how we got out all in one piece, I don't know. But it was a German who had captured the airplane and got into the Formation. I never knew what happened to him, but I'm sure he did live that day.

Before we got back, I was stopped. This is where this picture was taken and this other picture right here. (@25:42 Brian holds up two black and white photos of soldiers holding a German Swastika flag) Both these pictures were taken by Acme Photo.

After that was done, we went and reported to our Parachute/Infantry Units. The next thing that went on was we were sent across the river, the Douve River, in rubber boats. We were glad to get across because if you were shot at, those rubber boats don't stay up very well. We went to this place and set up camp there and maybe two hours after we got there a spotter plane came by, an L5 Spotter Plane, and unfortunately it came by at the same time that this friend of mine told the 81^{mm} Mortar-Squad to send up some mortar shells. I have the plane picture here (@26:58 Brian holds up a black and white photo of a crashed plane). I simply ran to it, I was so close, and found that both men were dead.

Three or four years after that I went to a funeral in Fall River and I was talking to my cousin who was also a Veteran and I was telling him about this, I don't know why, he said he wasn't in the Air Corps and do you know he was the man who ordered that plane up?!These two coincidences already.

The day following that episode we went into a town called Pretot. I had no Aid Station, I simply had a bunch of men in the gutters alongside to road going to the town and General Gavin went by with his rifle upside down on his shoulder and he came back and waved and everything else and nothing happened but every time I got on the road I'd get shot at and I was wondering why. And so was this Major who came down the road from my own Unit and he said "What are you going down there for?" I said "Put my helmet on and you'll see why." So he put my helmet on and he got shot at. (laughs) There was a sniper who was shooting at the red cross. They had orders to kill all the Medics. The Germans had given orders to kill all the Medics that you can because then you deprive them of their Aid Men.

The day after that we went to a place called Hill 131 which was where Leighton (@29:08

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spelling?) was killed finally. I was called to send some Aid Men there because they were getting a lot of casualties. It was a very difficult place to assault. I looked around, took my mirror and looked at myself and said "You will go!" I was the only one there.

So I left and asked where this certain Officer was who was shot and he was waiting for me. I went down this road and then into a field. I was crouching and running until finally I found myself between the Germans and the Americans. I was in an untenable position, I had to get out. So I threw myself to the ground and I started to crawl back to where I came from. Believe it or not, I could see the blades of grass falling. They've been cut by and I was so afraid my rear end was the biggest part of me that I was afraid I would get hit. Luckily I did not get hit, but then just as I came out of the field a man going by me was wounded in his head. Blood was all over him. I hit him head on and knocked him off his feet. I knew that was not the kind of First Aid that he wanted, but all he had was a bullet wound that just touched the tip of his head. But the veins bleed, you know like that old paint ad, well he was covered with it.

Again, that day we were advancing a little bit further, too fast in fact, because the Germans were raining cannon shots on us and the Americans were dropping their shells also. We had with us a First Lieutenant and a Sargent. The Sargent had on his Field Radio with a big battery. The Lieutenant called back to Headquarters "Lift your fire! We are ahead of the other Troops that should be even with us." They did, but unfortunately, the Germans were listening. And when they saw that, they knew where we were and an ADA (Air Defense Artillery) Shell dropped among us.

I was flat on my stomach trying to dig under myself with a couple of other Officers and Enlisted men. The shell exploded and right after it did, I looked up and I saw a head within a helmet going up in the air into the next field. It was the Sargent who had the Field Radio. The Lieutenant was dead and a good friend of mine, Captain (@32:06 name unclear) was saying "How can I live with my guts hanging out?"

I crawled over to him and examined him. I could see that he was spurting blood from his left thigh. I put a good-tight bandage on that and I said "Mel, you are not bleeding from your abdomen." I looked at his abdomen and he was all contused from the big battery that hit him in the abdomen. So he thought his guts were hanging out. He had his hand over it like that. So we fixed him up and we got it going out of there.

This went on and on. The following day was a very sad day for me because I had left the man I had made a good friendship with. He is the man in this picture (@33:00 Brian holds up a black and white photo we had seen prior. Two men in uniform, one drinking from a bottle. Text says "R.I. Officer Captured – Freed- In France" Lieutenant Leighman? He was hit by shrapnel, and dropped to the ground. The Battalion Commander picked him up, put him on his shoulder and was trying to get him out of the way when a sniper shot (@33:17 Brian's friend name unclear) on the Colonel's shoulder. (Brian slams down photo and camera close-up catch's his sad face as he pauses speaking then tape goes black @33:34)

[TAPE BEGINS AGAIN AT 33:43, HOWEVER WE SEE BRIAN IN A DIFFERENT SHIRT AND WITH A DIFFERENT BACKGROUND. THIS APPEARS TO BE A NEW INTERVIEW AND LEARN IT IS JUST THAT.]

BB: Hello, my name is Brian Beaudin, formerly of the 508th Parachute Infantry, 82nd

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Airborne Division. I have already appeared before the camera on my experiences at Normandy. Now I would like to take you to Holland and talk about General Montgomery's grandiose effort to turn back the Germans by going to Holland. And then going to the top of the Holland area, to the right if you are looking at a map, and going down into the Ural Valley to destroy the Germans there.

Unfortunately it was a failure because when the British landed in Nijmegen, Holland (@34:30 unclear) they were right among two SS German Divisions that began to decimate them. They really never got a chance. They were some of the best Troops. They were all heroes and real fighters. They killed an awful lot of Germans, but they never could liberate the bridge so that the British forces coming up from Eindhoven, Holland and that area could come out through Nijmegen and take that bridge and go up. So the British and Polish had no chance at all, and that is why the whole thing failed.

Out of the ten thousand British Troops, only two thousand, three hundred and twenty-three survived. I met a few of them and they were really pathetic. I may have mentioned it to someone else, but Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands was also in the Army and in spite of that, he was never asked for his advice on the way the Troops were supposed to go. He would have given them a better chance.

So what happened is that at 13:30 hours on September 17, 1944, a beautiful day with a lot of flak, but a very nice trip which took about three and a half hours to get there. The 508th was one of the first ones of the 82nd to go down. As my chute opened and I was able to see where I was coming down, I noticed a big flak battery down below surrounded by wire. There were three of them grouped together.

To this day, I don't remember whether I actually heard the fire, but I know that when I was getting ready to land they were not firing. I maneuvered my chute so that I could land right outside of the wire and I did. And as I landed I stood up and touched the wire and about five guys approached me surrendering. (Brian holds both his hands up in a universal "surrender" pose) Of course, we were swarming all over the place and they could see they would never survive. They would be decimated or captured or whatever, so they had to give up.

Oh, I would like to tell you about when we left there, but I wanted to also tell you a very sad experience that one of our Officers had, a Lieutenant Mitchell, he was shot, but the bullet entered the phosphorus grenade on his belt. And the phosphorus began to come out. You can imagine what happened there. He died an awful death.

From there we walked about two miles to a place called (@37:49 unclear) which is really a resort area for the people from Nijmegen and I found a house there. It was very nice with trees all over the place. A good place to have an Aid Station. I was greeted by the people who lived there. The man who owned it was a banker and his oldest son was in the Dutch Underground. After we got our stuff out there and got ready to receive casualties, I said "we have no transportation." He said, "Well, there might be some cars around that people have left." So he got on his motorcycle and I got behind him and we went down the road looking for a car. And sure enough, within a matter of twenty minutes, a few miles away, we found a late model, four-door Oldsmobile. It was ideal. But how do you get it started?

Well, he fiddled around and crossed two wires under the dashboard and started the car! I

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don't know where we obtained gas but with that car we managed to pick up some casualties that the Aid Men put by the road.

Then there was a Collecting Station not too far up the road. In fact, it was a Field Hospital. One of my friends was in that hospital and saw my name come in on so many dog tags. But I was wondering, it can't be that guy because he never talked to me, he was a quiet fellow. That was a surprise, but I never did get to meet him there.

I was with Lieutenant (@39:53 name unclear) my Assistant Surgeon, and he wanted to drive that day so we went from that Dutch area where the Nurses were. We were going down the road and suddenly I noticed we were passing Outposts. We went past our last Outpost and entered Germany. So I said "Turn around.!" So he turns up this hill (@40:17 name unclear) and the car stalls. We rolled backwards and we are trying to get the wires together but we're so damn nervous we couldn't get them together very quickly, but we did and we got out of there okay. (Brian laughs)

Now the night prior to the next attack, we were walking through the woods. Of course its dark and we don't see anything and we are walking on little branches and all that and we see these white-robed people walking towards us. We wondered what they were and they told us they were members of an insane asylum. They had gotten out and were walking around, so that really scared us.

Then, you will get a kick out of this, we had a Collecting Jeep. I got in it with a driver and we went up on the dikes. We went up on the dikes in a place called Erlicorn (@41:14 spelling?). Now a dike as you know, is a very much raised area that water may come in between. Some of them are parallel, but others may come at an angle.

We were coming on an angle and were going to turn on the next one and right on the corner was a house. As he made the corner onto the next road we were facing a German tank! You could see the gun rising. He put the Jeep in reverse so fast, moved back and into the driveway of the house and went the other way. We got away, but that man never drove again! We got word that he was so scared that he refused to drive. (laughs)

Now a few days later, being in the Aid Station, I was a few miles back or a half mile depending on the fluidity of the battle I thought I better go and see how things were going medically so I walked about three-quarters of a mile. Then I began to cautiously go towards the battle. By the time I get another three hundred yards I noticed that things were flying around me so I was sort of hugging the ground and sometimes crawling up. On this last crawl I'm looking under a tank and there were two Britishers there having tea! I crawled a little bit further and came upon my Commanding Officer and discussed the situation with him and went back.

A little later, well quite a bit later I would say, after the bridge was taken we went to a place called Bommel and became attached to the 50th British Division. I had already settled my Aid Station in the barn.

The barn had about six or seven feet of potatoes gradually going down this way where I had slept the night before. It was nice and soft. All at once there was a furor and this British Officer comes in with his swagger stick (short cane) and says "I'm so and so and I'm taking over." He came to me, and it was cold at that time and my insignia wasn't showing you know? I said "It's okay fella, don't get your water warm." He told me not to talk to him like that, I am

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First-Left End! (@44:09 Guthrie name unclear) I say “Well I’m Captain Beaudin, Get out of here!” That’s the last time I saw him.

That’s about it for Holland except to say that it was entirely different than Normandy. And when I begin to talk to you about the Bulge, that will be very much different also.

@44:38 UNIDENTIFIED INTERVIEWER: In reference to those aircraft and your invasion of Holland, about how many G.I.s were in that airplane, each aircraft? How many did they have?

BB: Well, about twelve to eighteen, depending on what kind. About eighteen, but in Jump School, it was never more than twelve.

I: I thought in battle, it would be more than that for some reason.

BB: If forty-two planes went together, that’s quite a few. Especially if you are lifting with gliders you know.

I: Did you experience any of the Germans shooting up at you during your parachuting descend?

BB: During the parachuting descend in Holland, no. But before we got there the flak was terrific. We were being buzzed just like bees by the German Fighters.

I: But you weren’t being shot at by ground fire?

BB: Oh yes, flak, that’s what I meant by flak. Oh yes.

I: That’s in the air, right

BB: A few planes were knocked down. Not as many as at Normandy, but quite a few were knocked down.

I: Now we are going to go to the next one, right?

BB: Yep, the Battle of the Bulge. Actually it was The Ardennes Battle in Belgium. Now the 82nd Airborne had been back a very short time. Six weeks or so. Went off on furlongs and didn’t expect anything like this. But on the 17th of December we were alerted at two thousand hours, eight p.m. at the Officers Club to report to Headquarters immediately.

On the 16th, the day before, the Germans had counter-attacked the whole Line. Of course, our Line was very thinly held by the 106th Infantry Division, and the 28th Infantry Division, and the 7th Army. The Germans went right through them, they could not stop them at all. So we were called to get over there and get there quickly.

There were twelve German Divisions attacking. We were packed like sardines in these big trailer trucks. And I mean like sardines. We were so packed that we could not sit. We were all standing for nineteen hours. We were very tired, so much so that this one place, Luflee, Belgium (@47:40 spelling?), one of the men fell asleep standing up. And as he did, some way or other, it was so tight he had a grenade which flew off. It was caught practically in mid-air and a guy closed it and another guy and I picked him up and put him over the side so they could throw it off into the woods!

That was the same thing going on for the 101st Airborne. They were following us and they stopped where they did as you remember, where the nuts reply came from. (it unclear what

this reference means)

We went from there to a place called Werberlat (@48:26 spelling?) way over in the hills. It was really very, very, very cold. One of the First Aid Stations was a place called Garon. It was snowing heavily and very difficult to take care of casualties there because of the deep snow, which was going to get deeper. But I had an Aid Station there and I had a German Medic helping me.

At about nine o'clock at night there was a knock on the door. So I said, "Fritz, answer the door." He opens it, and there is a guy standing there with a sub-machine gun. He lifts it up and I said "Hold it!" Geeze-Louise! I didn't expect to see a German there, you know? So I said "Who are you looking for?" He said "Captain Beaudin." I said, "That's me." He said "Well, I have been on leave in West Warwick, Rhode Island and I met your father in a clothing store, where he had been working all these years and he said to look you up!" Imagine that!! (smiles)

Three years later, I met him coming out of a bank in West Warwick. We'd never seen each other since and we looked at each other and he said "Beaudin?" I can't remember his name, he was an Italian fellow, but it was really something!

Oh, this is really interesting, on the 24th of December we got word to get defensive with the whole 82nd Airborne. We were too far forward. The other Division could not keep up, so that we were a threat. So we did withdraw on the 24th. It was difficult because we had to leave a Platoon from each Battalion to watch out and make sure they didn't trail us. It worked out very well. We walked for quite a few miles, I don't remember how many, but it was very cold.

We set up in a place called Vilette Eeria, up on a hill and they were waiting for the Germans. It's very difficult in sub-zero weather to dig holes. But the guys did the best they could. They had a very nice series of holes there with mines being laid at the same time, waiting for the Germans to show up.

On the 25th, Christmas Day, there was a battle. But not that close to us. We did get some casualties. We had captured a German ambulance, and besides that we had our own Jeep. We picked up the casualties and brought them to an Aid Station at a house which had a wood stove. And that day, for Christmas, the men could not believe what they were getting to eat. They were getting fresh eggs from the chickens outside there. And they were getting an ice-cold fruit cup. We had put the cans in the river. Also a few other things they never expected to have. It was a real feast for them.

Now this you will find most interesting. We will talk about a man from Gloversville. On the 7th of January, the 3rd Battalion advanced against very tough German Troops. They got through with the help of Staff Sargent Frank Cerravica (@52:40 spelling?) from Gloversville, New York. He got the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross). He was killed on that day. They had been fighting all day, but still had enough gumption to overcome the Germans, and it was largely due to this guy.

In Holzheim, a place three or four miles from where we were, we got word that they needed Medics. But we were in two feet of snow and had no way to get a Jeep there or anything like that. We followed a tank for a while with a snow plow and then we took off. We had prisoners. We had an Aid Man with a .45 and a prisoner carrying a litter and some supplies. Then another Aid Man with a .45 and another German, and so on and myself behind them with my

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Bowie knife. (laughs)

We walked for five miles, we were exhausted. We practically fell over on our faces. We were really exhausted but they needed us very badly up there. If you left the men lay there in the cold, within a matter of minutes they may freeze. And if they froze, they died. They wouldn't bleed as much because of the cold, but they could die from their hypothermia condition.

A little later in the February mud, not too far from (@56:33 unclear where) the smell was awful because many animals, cows and horses were dead. They were on their backs and their abdomens would rupture. It was really rough there.

We had a barn with a protected cellar and this particular point. It had a window, but we had big logs at an angle so that if any shrapnel came in it would be deflected. We were in the barn off a house, by the way every time you were in a barn it was always located off the house. The kitchen was always right off of that.

This day, we were looking down towards Germany. Looking at the Cologne Cathedral, you could see the spires. Right outside our barn was a john, two posted. (laughs) I was washing and I could hear "pump! pump!" That was the 88th coming. So I thought we had better get out of there, since we were down in the cellar, and when we came back, the john was gone. They made a direct hit. (laughing)

A little later we were sent to a place called Dreux for training. We did quite a bit of training over there. It was rather difficult because we were always on hand in case we had to jump on a Prisoner of War Camp. We knew there were several of them. Every time we would get ready to go, apparently General Patton would get there in time. If we had gone on one of them that we were supposed to, we would have been decimated because so many German Troops were there.

They kept us busy at this camp in Dreux with athletic training too. I remember we used to play football. So the football for the Airborne consisted of a man putting another man on his back. They would give the ball, which was a white handkerchief or rag and he would get the ball and that guy had to go through the others. I have a picture of that and I know I'm there, but you can't see me because the guy on top of me had the ball. (laughs) I was one hundred and sixty five pounds and fairly rugged in those days and I could handle that. That day we were also playing baseball. I threw the baseball to the Colonel and he fell and cut his hand. I had to send him over to the Air Force Hospital to have it fixed.

So that was about the end of our combat. After that we went to SHAEF Headquarters (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) in Frankfurt (@58:05 unclear term). There must have been about one hundred and eighty Generals and as many Colonels. A lot of Brass, and awful lot of Brass. They had a Mess for Captains and Lieutenants and a Mess for the non-Generals.

One day, they had a big party there. I was with an Italian fellow, Joe Palladino (@58:33 spelling?) and had a couple of drinks under my belt. I was on my third one and I came to a doorway and stood there. There was a WAC (Women Army Corps) talking to an Officer.

I looked at him, looked down and he had five stars. I said "Joe, five stars!" The man looked

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up, it was Eisenhower! I just faded away. (laughs) That's about the end of it!

I: You mentioned something towards the end that you were in training after The Bulge. You went into training for what?

BB: Oh you mean at Dreux? Well, we were training for other Missions. To jump onto P.O.W. Camps.

I: Oh, it wasn't special assignment, just routine training?

BB: No, it was a special assignment at the time it came. We never knew when it would come. At that time, I was the only Medical Officer with the 3rd Battalion. I was getting ready for one of those jumps. I had one hundred cans of DDT (Dichloro-diphenyl-trichlorethane used to prevent malaria/helped against insects), all kinds of supplies, two Jeeps, two supply wagons that would come in by glider. I had to figure all that out by myself. I had nobody to help me. I had Medics, of course, but no other Officers. So it was a little tough in those days.

I: Also very interesting. Is there anything else that you can remember about your experiences there?

BB: No, right now I'm just out of experiences (laughs)

I: When you met Eisenhower, was it in a Mess Hall?

BB: Oh no, it was an Officer's Club. A two-story Officer's Club. Right behind the (@1:00:58 unclear) Building. Everything was spit and polish in those days. I got word that they were getting people out because of their Points. I had already had seventy Points so they assigned us to Camp Lucky Strike in Normandy and I took the boat back.

I: Well, very good. I want to thank you very much. It has been very, very interesting. I sure appreciate it and I'm sure the people in history will enjoy listening to it.

BB: Thank you, I hope so.

TAPE ENDS: 1:01:43

Transcriber Notes:

PAGE 3

10:53 and 11:22 and 29:08 and 33:16 name of Brian's friend Leighman?

PAGE 4

14:08 name unclear

14:39 hospital name unclear

16:54 man's name unclear

PAGE 5

20:58 name unclear Frank Ruby?

22:10 name unclear

PAGE 7

32:06 name unclear

PAGE 8

34:30 unclear

37:49 town unclear

PAGE 9

39:53 assistant's name unclear

40:17 unclear

41:14 town spelling?

44:09 name unclear

PAGE 10

47:40 spelling of town?

48:25 spelling of town?

52:40 name spelling?

56:33 town unclear

PAGE 12

58:05 unclear

58:33 spelling of name?

1:00:57 name of building?