

## Transcription: Emiel Owens

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*Today's date is January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It's a Friday and I'm the interviewer. My name is James Crabtree, and I'll be interviewing Mr. Owens.*

**Emiel Owens:** Right.

*This interview is taking place by phone, and I'm at the General Land Office headquarters in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Owens is at his home in Houston, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board's Voices of Veterans Oral History Program, and so we really want to thank you for volunteering to do this today. I know you've got a lot of memories from your time, and WWII, and you even wrote a book about that, and I had a chance to read a little bit of it and I guess my first question for you is how did you come to join the Army?*

**Emiel Owens:** I uh, I finished high school in uh, Smithville, my uh, home town.

*Yes sir.*

**Emiel Owens:** And uh, uh, I went to uh, college, it's Prairie View. And after about a year in college, uh, that was the uh, beginning of WWI, WWII, and so I uh, I joined what they called it the Enlisted Reserve, Reserve Corps, and that's where college students were asked to really join the Army, but they stay at the university and still continue to get university training. But after about two years in uh, in May 1943, uh, they inducted me into the Army, and uh, at that time, I uh, went to Fortsville, Oklahoma and \_\_\_ started my basic training. But that's how I got started. I got, I was inducted into the Army, but I volunteered early on as far as the enlisting in the Reserve Corps.

*Do you remember, sir, where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed?*

**Emiel Owens:** When \_\_\_?

*When Pearl Harbor was bombed?*

**Emiel Owens:** Wait, wait, wait, hold a second -

*Were you a student at that point, in college?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes, I was, I was a student at, at Prairie View.

*Yes sir, and were you already involved with the ROTC?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes, yes, yes.

*And what were your memories of that? I mean when that happened, did you think that you were going to be called into active service at that point?*

**Emiel Owens:** I uh, I thought so. I, at uh, I thought, for some reason I've never had a real uh, interest in becoming a part of the military, that is at that point of getting uh, commissions and,

and the like, but when time came, when I thought I was gonna go in, we were in a war at the time, so that's why I volunteered because I was willing and ready, you know, to go, and, and uh, so uh, at Prairie View, I'm saying you had the opportunity to almost not man-, it was almost mandatory that you uh, join the Enlisted Reserve Corps, and, and in January of '42, I joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps, and in uh, May '43, after a little over a year that's in college at Prairie View, they called me into the Army.

*Yes, sir. And where did you go for your first initial training?*

**Emiel Owens:** OK, I left uh, I left Smithville and went over to Fort Sam Houston, and this was over in San Antonio, and that's where I was inducted into the Army. After I got uh, my induction for in about two weeks, I was sent to uh, Fortsville, Oklahoma, and that's where I was told that uh, I would be part of a, of a field artillery unit. So uh, in uh, I took uh, 13 weeks of basic training at, over at Fortsville, and after that time, uh, we trained on what we call 155 Howsers, but uh, when we completed our basic training, the Army made, had completed a brand new gun and it was called a 4.5, 4.5 gun, and uh, and they gave us this, this new gun, in \_\_\_\_\_, California, up to Camp Beale, California.

*Camp Beale?*

**Emiel Owens:** B-E-A-L-E. That's near Marysville, California, and this is where we took a year of uh, of advanced training, and uh, this is where we really learned to uh, shoot uh, big guns, the 4.5's and the 155 Howser, because at this time, I were, I were in a \_\_\_\_\_, but my primary \_\_\_\_\_ was the, the German tank corps, and so it was gonna be our job to confront them, protect them from \_\_\_\_\_, but protect them uh, from uh, German tank corps and then 15, 188 millimeter guns. But we trained for that, and after a year and a half, while out at Beale, over at Camp Beale, uh, we went to uh, we shipped to the East Coast, and uh, and there we, we uh, we, we was, we were actually made ready to go across the Atlantic.

*Do you remember where you left the East Coast from?*

**Emiel Owens:** Uh, and uh, on the East Coast?

*Yes sir, do you remember like what base it was where you were?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, we were at the uh, we were at, well, we were at base, uh, Boston. We really went to the Boston for the invocation on the East Coast. See, when we left Camp Beale, we were really headed overseas, and so when we got to uh, Boston, they uh, you know, a lot of papers and like it was that time when I come to realize that, you know, I was really gonna go to war because they were taking all your possessions, everything that you, and records that you need just in, in case you didn't make it, see. So I recognized at that point – I guess I first recognized it in crossing the Atlantic that there uh, you know, that you could get killed, and uh, but uh, it hadn't, it didn't occur to me that closely until uh, you know, I got in that situation. But uh, I expected that. Uh, I figured I had the best training that a soldier could get, and uh, you know, really I was willing and, and really ready to go.

*Yes sir. But were you in much contact with your family back home before you - ?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes, I was in con-, I was writing my uh, see I wasn't married at the time. I was uh, and uh, I was at home, so I was writing my mother, uh, at least uh, once, about once a week,

see, and I was in contact with her. Then my mother and father, uh, had, had about two years earlier had, had divorced, and so I was living with my daddy, but uh, made contact, well, you know, with my mother when I was in the Army. So that was the contact we had, and uh, and I continued to, to uh, correspond with her throughout the time that I was in the Army.

*And when you were getting ready to go overseas, were you married or did you have a girlfriend at that point?*

**Emiel Owens:** No, no, I uh, I was in college and, and uh, I think I may have mentioned I had for the first time at Prairie View, I had found a little girl with me, and uh, she was the first little courtin' I had done, uh. See, I was, I was F-A-T, and uh, but uh, there was no intimate relation or anything like that. I uh, was single and, and was into the academics. Let's see, I was valedictorian of my class and, and I was really into the academics, and, and when the time, when the Army came up and the Germans declared war on us, uh, you know, I was really ready to, ready to go, see. And so that's when we got, when we left Beale and uh, and, and off of Boston, Miles Standish is, is the port that we went to, and uh, and then we boarded there and, and then uh, ten days, about almost two weeks later, we uh, landed in uh, Liverpool, Liverpool, England.

*Sir, in your unit, did you have any close friends, anybody that you'd grown up with or had gone to college with that - ?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, yeah, that, that was fortunate. When, as a result of going then through the Enlisted Reserve Corps, uh, see in a battery, they, they have five batteries in a battalion, and we had a battalion, and I was in Battery C, but uh, it just so happened that when we went, when they inducted us into the Enlisted Reserve Corps, I would guess about out of the 500, probably 200 of them was, was from Prairie View. So my uh, classmates and all were all around, see, and uh, and they had a little problems because all of the, my classmates were, by and large were, uh, big, high in the Officer's Corps at Prairie View, and by that uh, a few of 'em they sent to officer's \_\_\_ school because they got the commission right there through ROTC. But uh, it never occurred to me that uh, and uh, they put me on a gun, and uh, I, they made a gun out of me, and, and uh, I don't know, I, I enjoyed being on the gun and, and uh, that's, that's about the way I spent the war. And uh, it was, you had challenge after challenge, and, and uh, bell after bell, and uh, I was learning, I got to be very skilled, and, and uh, and so on the most encounters, uh, came out in front. But I were, we had cases where the entire gun crew was destroyed. But somehow, uh, of the prayer I guess, but uh, I was able to manage to come through, and when I got out, uh, when I came, uh, in May, uh, uh, '46, I came back to Fort Sam Houston, and uh, and when they discharged me, I went on outside and I sat on the same bench that I sat on when I went in six years, I mean three years earlier, and uh, and then I started to thinking, you know, how fortunate I was. I had been around the world. I had been all through Europe. One day I woke up and, and looked around, I was in the Panama Canal. It was after we beat the Germans and we, they sent me directly to uh, to Asia, so when I looked up one day, I was in the Panama Canal, and, but about three days out of Panama Canal, the Japanese surrendered. So they sent me on to the Philippines, and uh, in the uh, Philippines, this was about September '45, and uh, and uh, and my observations roundup in January of uh, '46, uh, they shipped me back to uh, back to San Francisco, and then on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January '46, they discharged me. And, and uh, and I went back to the same bench and, and found her just thought of uh, where I'd been, what I'd seen and what I'd been through and how fortunate, and, and I said, my mother must've prayed for me because I managed and here I am now.

*Sir, I know you said when you got to England or Liverpool, how long were you there for before the invasion?*

**Emiel Owens:** We uh, we got to, we got to England, I mean at Liverpool. We stayed in, we stayed in England about uh, oh, two weeks, three weeks at the most, and the biggest thing there, we pick up our guns, see they shipped the guns directly to England – we picked our guns up, we got out of our winter clothes, and, and the like, so the biggest thing was preparation for, for going to Germany. And uh after that, about uh, ten, oh let's see, maybe, maybe three weeks, uh, we shipped, we shipped across the canal, and I had an unfortunate cir-, uh, condition. I was a, we were practice firing there on, on Omaha beach, and uh, my gun trail slipped, and when it slipped it closed in, and, and uh, it almost bent my leg in two. And uh, they uh, sent me to the, they had a little clinic, a hospital there, and they weren't been, they weren't able to, to improve it, so they, they sent me back to England, and uh, and they were ready to ship me back home from England. And you know what's a funny thing, uh, my crew was uh, just sittin' there and prayin', was ready to go up, and uh, and I had had all that training, and, and the, and they were fixin' to send me back home, and I, I considered that unacceptable. So I told 'em uh, the, I told 'em that uh, I could, I could manage and my, my uh, you know my medical condition, it was, it warrant attention, so what, so when, when they shipped me back to England from France, uh, when I, when I got there, there were two brilliant doctors they were, they were waitin' for me, waitin' on me, and when I walked in, uh, they asked me are you uh, Mr. Owens? I said, I said yes, and so uh, they uh, they examined me, and, and they were sayin' that your condition's of such nature that you could go back home. He says there's a problem that you could have in uh, Germany is gonna be the coldest winter of the decade, this winter, and uh, and your mobility will be of such a nature that you could easily, you know, not make it. You, the problem is not makin' it there, but this would add to the problem. And uh, so they uh, so we, they concluded that, that I would be better off uh, going, preparing me and shipping me back to the States. And you know, I, I wouldn't accept that. And uh, I told 'em that uh, for some reason, that there, I didn't, I didn't think like that, and I, I had too, too much involvement in it, to come back without involvement with this, and, and so what happened, they gave me the latitude and the next evening I was on the, on the LSC boat headed back across the, the English Channel, and uh, I caught up with my crew about oh, about uh, about ten days later. And then from, from Omaha Beach, France, we, we rode uh, we drove our \_\_\_ tractors, from there to uh, Aachens (sp. ???), Germany. See, all of our fighting was in Germany, as they prepared us to fight the Germans, and the Germans, uh, the Germans' mechanism. And so they, it took us about two weeks, uh, to go from uh, Omaha Beach to Aachens (sp. ???) Germany, because we could make around 300 miles in a day, and then you would drive right straight on through the night, but uh, your speed slowed up, see. So anyway, it was about two weeks when we got to uh, our, our position in Germany, and uh, we went right, we went right to work. So I uh, I had a good career. Uh, I lost good friends. I uh, uh, I was pleased that I had been, I had the opportunity to, to do all this. I met a lot of new people, and it, I'll tell you one, one couple that I met, uh, uh, I met a German couple in a house that we had taken over, and uh, it was so funny, and but the war was almost over at that time, but I just, you know, just met them. And, and about uh, oh, five years later, I went to uh, the University of Minnesota as a business \_\_\_\_, and when I got there, and they started introducing me to the new people, and the same German was there. Yeah, yeah, he was there as a visiting professor from one of the uh, universities in Germany, and uh, we got to be uh, we got to be good friend, and uh, uh, he uh, he and his family, uh, they visited us here at Houston, oh, three or four times.

*That's amazing.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, yes, it's absolutely amazing, and the like. So I'm sayin', you know, you meet new people and, and uh, you know, your world just turns a bit bigger, and, and uh, so I'm a better person now.

*Sir, could you tell us a little bit about maybe some of the friends that you lost over there in Europe?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes. The, the most important was uh, was six people, six of my gun crew \_\_\_\_, and, and my gunner right from right here in Houston, and uh, he, he got on the, on the uh, trail, and uh, they had made me at the time chief of section, and by chief of, chief f section, they give you one gun and 13 people, and uh, and, and then this battle, and this, this morning, uh, the Germans, uh, we saw the uh, tracks of them coming in, but had no knowledge that they had positioned themselves right around our gun, see. And they did it through the night, and uh, and the next morning when we knew anything, they were firing and they killed my gunner, my uh, first two loaders, and, and uh, and my chief, my section man. He's the person that brings the ammunition up, and that was six people. And uh, I hadn't experienced anything like that. Uh, we had, we had, we had walked over and killed plenty of mostly Germans, but I'd never experienced anybody right next to me or anything like that, and I tell you it took me a little time, but in time, it was, it was just after that, and you know, life went on. And uh, I uh, I made contact with all of his relatives, his parents in particular because I had to let 'em know what took place and how it took place, and, and uh, you know, they were, they were good soldiers. And uh, that was the biggest one time uh, occasion. See, in field artillery how it differs from infantry, in infantry with a single shot, you kill one at a time. But artillery, usually if you were hit, you killed half a crew or two or three people at the time because you usually kill from shells, not from a single, single instruments. So it was all just, it was really sad, but you know, you get through it and, and when you know anything, uh, you, you move it on, see.

*When that instant happened, was that part of the Kohlscheid Penetration that you wrote about?*

**Emiel Owens:** That was part of it, that was the heart of it, right, and then, and uh, it went ahead and, and uh, most of us saw this, it would make a, and included in that, I had a cousin. Uh, you, you, did you see in there Zelmo, in my book?

*No sir, I don't remember that part.*

**Emiel Owens:** OK, whatever. I, I wrote a little, Zelmo, Zelmo was my cousin, and uh, we were you know, between my mother and father separated, when we were about 12 years old, and so we lived with our grandmother, and Zelmo lived out in the rural and he lived with her to go to school. She lived right on campus just by the high school. So he lived with her. So we discussed uh, the Army, and instead of, we were the same age, instead of my going directly, my going to the Army when I got 18, uh, I, I went to Prairie View, and that delayed my going a little while. But he didn't go to college, so he went straight. When he got 18, they sent him straight to the Army, and, and uh, he was, they put him in an artillery unit. And uh, you've probably heard Battle of the Bulge.

*Yes sir.*

**Emiel Owens:** Well, he was a weighing component of that, and uh, they, they allowed Battery C, which was his battery, and he's a gunner, uh, he, he, they fought off the Germans to allow Battery A and B to, to escape. So one battery had to pay a price to do that, and, and it was

Battery C, and, and Zelmo was a gunner on that, on that, so that was the last I had heard from Zelmo, and, and uh, when we got back, and finally found the guns and found the uh, people, the soldiers, but we never found Zelmo. We never, didn't even know what happened to him, but uh, we knew that he was with the group that stayed and fight the fight for A and B. And about uh, this is about eight or ten years ago, it was much later, I was uh, in Houston, and uh, I was down on Dowling Street. You've probably heard of Dowling Street. That's one of the main streets in the Black community in third ward, called it Dowling, D-O-W-L-I-N-G. And I was walking across the street on Dowling, and I, I saw this person and uh, he looked like somebody I knew, and when I got real, right up on him, come to find out he was Zelmo.

*Wow.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, it was a, and what had happened, he, he, he had on uh, pajamas. He had on veteran's, disabled veterans pajamas, but he was on the street. And uh, come to find out he survived that December 16<sup>th</sup> assault, but his mind never came back, and they sent him to the Veteran's uh, Hospital. He was in the VA here in Houston, and, and uh, nobody knew where he was. Nobody, he didn't, he knew nothing. He was just, he was just in there as an individual, and, and uh, and when I saw him and recognized who he was, well he turn and ran, and uh, and that's when we followed him, you know, followed him then down to recognize he had veteran's uniform on. But even when you got there to see him, he knew nobody, and what I'm saying, the Army spared his body, but took his, took his mind, and he had been in that state since the end of WWII. He couldn't, he couldn't, and uh, he passed oh, three or four years ago. Uh, you know, finally uh, pass up, uh, but he spent over 50 years in the VA Hospital. He was from the time he was out of the Army because nobody knew who he was, nobody knew where he, nobody in the family knew where he was. Yeah, so it was really a sad case, but you know, that goes, that's the way it goes.

*Yes sir, so he never did, I guess he recognized you in the sense he ran away from you, but - ?*

**Emiel Owens:** He ran, he ran away from me, of course you give me the notion that there was some feeling that he had that he knew me, but, but uh, his mind was of such nature, he turned and ran, but I'm sayin' uh, weeks later, I made, I checked the VA, and, and found out from the VA his name, and uh, and found his room, and, and uh, he didn't recognize anybody, and he didn't recognize himself. And I think about three weeks, to four weeks later, he passed. But uh, he uh, he, he was in that bed at the VA Hospital for almost, almost 50 years, with, with a, with a sound body, but, but no mind, and it all happened the morning of December the 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945, when the Germans attacked and killed part of my crew, and uh, and he was spared, but how and where, nobody knows. And that's the way, that's the way things goes. In the Army, people disappear and never come back, and uh, but, but Zelmo's problem was nobody knew, nobody knew who he was. And they're usually, the Army is pretty good at, at locating family members, but uh, there was no knowledge until uh, uh, I saw him in, you know, on the street, and then I found him through the hospital and recognized that's where he had been for the last 50 years, see.

*Sort of to change topics a little bit, could you talk a little bit about your experience with the Army being segregated at that time and maybe what that was like compared to how the British troops were?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes. Well, you see, segregation at the time was ingrained in the system, OK. My being reared in Smithville, which is a small town and we, and uh, we had colored school and

we had white school, so I hadn't had any, any dealing with white people at all until, until I got in the Army. OK. So, ask that question again. Let me get the \_\_\_\_.

*Well, I was just wanting, sir, your, maybe for you just to tell us a little bit about what it was like serving in the segregated Army.*

**Emiel Owens:** OK, yeah, yeah. We, you see, I guess had a background where life itself is segregated. Uh, it didn't strike you as \_\_\_\_, I guess it, the biggest way it struck you was that the Army broadened your base. The Army made it possible for, for me to look differently, and it made it possible for me to think differently. Now I always knew I was a, a good student. I always knew that, that I had objectives and life objectives and my mother had these. But the point I'm trying to get to here was, was a difficult one. And uh, what I'm sayin' is that the segregated Army depressed you at the beginning, but not to the extent that you would think because your life had been segregated all along anyway. But what I'm sayin' is that no, let me see how can I put this, uh, segregation, see, all the officers in our, in our battery, and in our battalion, of all the officers, I think there must have been 55 or 60 officers, and, and uh, two were black, and, and they weren't uh, what you call real officers. They issued blacks a, you know there's a, there's a position they give you in the Army, I'm tryin' to think of the name of that position –

*Perhaps a warrant officer?*

**Emiel Owens:** Warrant officer, yeah, yeah. We had two warrant officers. And uh, but you know, I guess I was so, I was so concerned about getting in and surviving, well, see, on the survival side, at that age, you really think, you get to feelin' that you can't be hurt, see, and that uh, and that you will, everybody will, everybody will get to be hurt but you. You will survive, that's what you, you think, and, and uh, but after you get so many of your people killed, your mind changes on it. So actually you're indifferent about everything, and, and uh, the, but I never took the segregated part of it differently from what I had been accustomed to, but I knew that uh, the Army had opened my, opened up things, and uh, that, that there would come a day when that situation would no longer exist, and I really believe that. And that was one of the things that, you know, that I was picking up as we went along, but I still don't at that time, you know, it was an obligation and your best way of going about it is do you a good job in terms of the obligation. And, and uh, but I was and, uh when, when uh, in the 60s, uh, that came out and came up with me, all that came up and, and uh, and you know, right in the middle of it, but it all came back from the segregated part of the Army, but I'm sayin' there are two phases of it. One had opened the eyes, it was something you hadn't been accustomed to, and the second, is that you recognized how indifferent and how terrible it was to put you in a position to where you were unequal or you're not as good as the next man.

*Sir, I was going to ask you, too, during your time in England and along with the British troops, did you notice much difference between the way they treated you as opposed to the way whites in the U.S. military treated you?*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes, yes. You know, I made that point in my book. Uh, for the first time, I guess it was \_\_\_\_, uh, I had any contact with, with a white female. Now here's what I mean by that. They, they would give, they would have a little social, uh, you know, they called it uh, I'm tryin' to think of what they called that where soldiers come in and they fix, they fix you a little, a few drinks, a little meal, and you know, for you to eat and, and uh, I'm tryin' to think, there's a name for that. And so when we came through there, bein' all \_\_\_\_ black, it was something that

the British hadn't been accustomed to either, see, and, and uh, but they liked blacks. Uh, the people there liked blacks, and they liked 'em for the simple reason that blacks were much more highly respectful for them, and see, blacks were just carryin' on what they knew bein' back at home. But in England, they would uh, they would give these little socials and have uh, have these little hors d'oeuvres and, and things like that, and I shall never forget the first female, white female I ever met. I walked in on one of those occasions one night, and uh, there was a little girl, well a woman, standing right by the door, and uh, people were going about picking out somebody to dance with, and uh, I finally uh, made up my mind to do that, and, and I went over and this young lady uh, standing by the door, and I asked her to dance, and she danced, and uh, she was very intelligent so we started talking. And see the first thing she wanted to know where you were from and how long you been in England, and you know, where you're goin' and all this, and, and so we talked right on through after we, after the dance was finished, and, and uh, so it was the first occasion that I had had, and in association, and, and uh, but the, the soldiers, the English soldiers were somewhat indifferent. But the female, a British female liked the black, and I think they liked it basically because blacks were highly respectful, see, and you know, they weren't accustomed to sayin' rude things and all that to, to a white woman, see. And uh, so they, they took on to them, and uh, it's a funny thing. Long after I got home, you know, I got letters, from one or two of the young ladies that I met that night, so see, you had, you had about maybe two hours or maybe three hours total in terms of a little dance, a little discussion, and then just, just left the association in terms of conversation. And uh, you found out that uh, they were just like everybody else. You know, you would look at 'em and think they were different, like everybody else, and as a result, you got to be, your conversations and all went well, and uh, but uh, I made this statement in my book that we were treated better by the British, uh, than by our own white troops that was right there. The white troops was goin' around sayin' you know, that we had tails and things like that, and I shall never forget one night, uh, one night uh, after we had practiced for that day, we went in a coal mine and to take a shower. Well you know, coal mine where three or four hundred can go in at one time, see. So we went in and uh, uh, in Britain, you still had uh, had to keep the \_\_\_ of light, because the Germans was still bombing the \_\_\_, see, and so I uh, as I'm, as I went in to shower, uh, there was a soldier uh, right next to a window and the one I had this black cloth over it. And so somebody said pull that cloth, you know, they can see through that cloth there. And so I went to pull the cloth, and when, when I got there and pulled it and could see on outside, I bet there was a hundred people out there lookin' to see us, and they had heard that we had tails, and uh, and they were standin' to see whether or not, you know, that idea I say about other things. But I'm sayin' uh, that for me, that on that part was just, was based on, on I guess ignorance because they were very friendly to us. You know, they were very nice to us. They, they \_\_\_ us for social things. They were, they were very nice and, and so when I left, I left with a very good, you know, a very good feeling in terms of the British. The British soldier was indifferent, but the British female, uh, tended to like you and, and uh, and wanted to talk to you, and what I'm sayin', I think it's all that uh, you know, you know, some \_\_\_ they talk about the ugly American, and, and uh, but the, the black American was a different kind and from which, what they uh, they were accustomed. I don't think they really meant that, ugly American, but Americans were a little bit more arrogant. You know, they, they got more. Yeah, and so, you know, that's they're not, you know, they're not like meager like most soldiers of the world, see. So that's, that, that's uh, the segregation. That's the segregation part, and, and uh, but it didn't, it didn't carry a real deep \_\_\_ meaning to me because uh, I thought uh, I thought that occasion, looking through the window, was an occasion of naiveness. I don't think they, I don't think they were doing it on, you know, really thinking that you were having tails, see. But you never know. See but uh, you know, life goes on. So you keep learning.

*Do you think the war, with blacks and whites all serving in the same military, do you think that helped to bring about the end of segregation later in the 60s?*

**Emiel Owens:** I'm certain of that. I'm sure of that. Right, I'm positive of that. And that, that's on both sides. It's not on, it's not on the white or black, both sides said enough was enough, and, and uh, and see, and the biggest thing when uh, soldiers, when they're in, in a combat mode, and uh, and when he looks around, I don't care if he's white or black or, when he looks around with somebody over his shoulder, he's looking for support. He doesn't care where it's coming from. He doesn't care what color it is, and I'm saying that uh, they, the white soldiers uh, learned a lot about the dependability of blacks, and uh, and it helped a lot. White soldiers carried a lot of the movement forward, see, and uh, which was in, in good, in great assistance to the black pushing the movement, see. So it's uh, the war was a terrible thing, but the war made the world better I'm sayin', it did, and uh, Hitler was a terrible guy, but Hitler brought war, something to the world, and uh, and it's better, people were better. People understood people better, and uh, and here we are in the 80s and the like, and see, here I am 82 years old, and uh, but I'm very happy with myself, and I'll tell you I'm happy as I, as I wake up in the morning, and uh, and get in uh, you know, uh, you know, I think I told you I'm goin' to, up to, I'm goin' up to Ohio State. Did I tell you about that?

*No sir, you hadn't, but I know that you, you had gone there for school.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, yeah, well, on the uh, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March of '08, they are havin' uh, a single day of uh, of honors that they're givin'. They're givin' uh, outstanding awards, outstanding awards for leadership, outstanding awards for, for your academics and you know, different ones. And uh, I'm one of the, I'm one of the 80.

*Wow, that's awesome.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, and uh, I'm goin' there, I'm goin' there uh, I'm goin' really the last day of February because the incident takes place uh, March the 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Well congratulations, I'm glad they're doing it. It's something you've definitely earned.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, yes, well and uh, you know, I really appreciate that because of the many things that you can get, you know, you, you reach a stage in life where a nice word or a sign of appreciation means much more to you than money.

*Sure -*

**Emiel Owens:** That's the way I am now, and nobody, I tell you, nobody could've done anything that would make me happier than when I got this letter from Ohio State and they said that your work is over \_\_\_ your time has been outstanding and we want to show you how much we appreciate what you've done and we want to give you an honor for that, and so you come up on uh, March the 1<sup>st</sup> between uh, 11:00 and 2:00 and we have an honor day and, and we want to honor you.

*That's great.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yeah, yeah.

*Well, that's important and I think we should do more of that sort of thing and that's what this program is about, is to honor veterans and also to save their memories so that people will still have that years from now so they don't forget -*

**Emiel Owens:** Well, I never forgot that. You know, when you first called me, I know that was one of the noblest things that I've heard, getting the voices of veterans where uh, where people, you can tell people, and in particular you can tell young people life, life is, it's \_\_\_\_\_ and in life, and I think uh, I thought it was a noble thing, really, and, and uh, and so I really waited for you to call and, and then I read uh, you know the veterans put out the Veterans Call, and, and I read in there where uh, your organization was, was doing this, and so when you called, you know, I really, I really appreciate it because I think it's a nice thing.

*Yes sir, well it's our honor to interview you and it's something that, we have a web site that we can save these interviews to and put pictures on and have our archives here in the General Land Office. I don't know if you know, but we have literally thousands and thousands of documents that go back to when this state was first created, when it was a nation. We've got documents that belonged to Stephen F. Austin and Davy Crockett and so on, so all these interviews are saved by us and we put them in those archives with the same idea that you know, 150 years from now, they'll still be there as well.*

**Emiel Owens:** Well that's just outstanding.

*There's a lot of history books. You know, a lot of people can read about what happened in the battles and they can read about the generals and the strategy and all that, but what we're trying to do in this program is capture the spoken word, which you know, has not been done a lot before, capture the spoken word of those that were there, and their particular memories.*

**Emiel Owens:** That's just outstanding. Take it from me, that's just, that's simply outstanding.

*Well, that's a, it's a great program and it's an honor for us to, to be able to interview you and other veterans and, and really the way I see it is, it's our goal to get as many as possible you know, because I see this as being a tool that future generations can use to look back on, future historians, who knows, maybe 50 years from now there's somebody doing research on WWII and they'll listen to this interview and others, and be able to help them in their writing a book or making a movie or that sort of thing.*

**Emiel Owens:** Yes, and then uh, when I come, when I come back, uh, from uh, from Ohio State in March some time, I think I'll tell you about it.

*Oh yes sir, that'd be great. Another thing we'll do is we'll make copies. We'll send this to the transcriber so they'll get it all transcribed, but we'll burn copies onto disk for you and we'll send, we'll mail those to you so you'll have those to remember.*

**Emiel Owens:** Great, that's just great.

*Yes sir, and uh, we'll also eventually get it posted on our web site and that sort of thing.*

**Emiel Owens:** That's just great. Well see, you're bringing in the things that's most important to me now. I'm sayin' a kind word, uh, \_\_\_\_\_ commendation, at this stage of my life, that's a critically important, \_\_\_ money \_\_\_\_\_. You don't care about that. You know, you got to have it

to live on, but I'm sayin' from a standpoint of uh, of the things that you're sayin' your organization is doing in life, you hit me right on the head because it's most important to me.

*Yes sir, well it's something that I really enjoy, and a lot of us, I'm a veteran, and a lot of folks that work here are veterans and so I think it's something that is personal to us as well because we know where those in the military came before us and what they made possible and so it's definitely something that we enjoy doing.*

**Emiel Owens:** Well that's great.

*I'm really honored that I was able to talk to you today and interview you and feel free, you've got, I believe you've got my number as well, my phone number. Call me at any time.*

**Emiel Owens:** I'll do that.

*And what we'll do is, you know the next step here is I'll, I've got this all recorded, is I'll send it to the transcriber and they'll make a copy of the transcript and we'll get, we'll get the copies made for you and we'll send the copies to you.*

**Emiel Owens:** That sounds just great.

*Yes sir. So sir, again, I want to thank you and thank you not only personally, but thank you on behalf of the State of Texas and Commissioner Patterson in the General Land Office, for taking the time to talk to us today and more importantly, thank you for your service and what you've done and the sacrifices you've made.*

**Emiel Owens:** Well I appreciate you taking the time.

*Yes sir. So, all right sir, well have a great weekend and feel free to give me a call after you get back from your trip to Ohio State.*

**Emiel Owens:** I'll be too happy to do that.

*Yes sir, all right take care now.*

**Emiel Owens:** You, too, sir.

*Yes sir, bye.*