

2015-07-03 SIDE B

Reginald A. Beverly

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Lael Morgan, interviewer

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Reginald Beverly said he was a member of the 95th Engineers. He was drafted into the service on December 5, 1941 two days before Pearl Harbor. He had been a high school teacher in Virginia. He was in the service for the duration of the war. He had a surveyor's course in Virginia. He was sent to his regiment in Fort Bragg, Virginia. They were sent to work on the Alcan Highway. They took a troop train and arrived in Dawson Creek. When they first arrived and worked all day they didn't realize it was 11:30 at night because the sun was still up. They gradually were introduced to the cold weather. They started building the road at St. John, British Columbia. He talked about seeing the aurora at night in the winter. His troop worked very well together. He talked about the survey work they did for the construction of the highway. They had trouble with muskeg. The ground would vibrate as the bulldozers went over it. They had trouble with some of the bulldozers getting stuck. They were in tents during the winter. As the temperature dropped they had frost accumulate inside the tent and it acted as insulation. They had enough clothing and equipment for the cold. They weren't exposed to the cold for more than thirty minutes at a time. They worked through the winter. The 95th engineers constructed 300 miles of the highway. They didn't leave until the highway was finished. People did get furloughs in December-January. He saw -58 in January of 1943. Some of the people were frost bitten. He was on furlough at the time. He went back to Virginia for his furlough. He talked about the route back home. He was home for 10-15 days then he returned to his camp. When they finished their part of the road they packed up and went to Camp Clayborn to qualify for rifles. He said morale wasn't bad on the highway. One time a couple of people got lost. They didn't find one of them for three weeks and he had lost a lot of weight. This kept people from wandering off again. He talked about the commanders in their unit. Most of the people had an education. They had five people in their surveying party. They polished up the initial work. After one hundred miles of building a road he was given some stripes for his good work. He talked about shooting the North Star with his transit to get the latitude. He said he is looking to go up to the highway this summer. There is a convoy going up the highway. After they worked on the highway they went to Liverpool, England and South Wales for training. They built camps for mobilization of D-Day. Their outfit went to Normandy Beach on July 1. The soldiers were thirteen miles in at that point. He talked about the time they were in Belgium and they were buzz bombed and telling the difference between American and German trucks. Their job in Germany was building railroad bridges. There were seven companies each assigned to a bridge. They surveyed for the bridges so the bridges would come out on an even grade. They also surveyed for other bridges. They went into Germany 12 miles from Czechoslovakia. The death of President Roosevelt lowered the moral of the troops. The English and French people mourned with them. After the atomic bomb fell they

had to wait three months for transportation. Some of the troops that didn't have 100 points were sent to the Far East. Their unit waited at Lucky Strike camp in France. He had his discharge on September 18, 1945. His superintendent at the school told him to take a week off and then he returned to his position as a math teacher in a high school. He got his thirty year pin in 1971 and then worked as a surveyor at nuclear power plants. They put stakes 255 feet above sea level. He talked about his other work. He was a college graduate of Virginia State College and started teaching in 1938. He comes from a family of educators. His mother graduated in 1905 and his father graduated in 1908. His parents taught in the same school for many years. Three of the children in his family were teachers. His brother went to OCS school, then Tuskegee and worked for Colonel Davis.

Beverly talked about his military experience. He considers himself lucky while in Europe. They were living one day at a time. It was a good experience for him to go to Germany and see their military technology. He said they had reason to be proud of what they did. Their officers were very considerate. They didn't have problems with discrimination while in the service. When he left the service he went to take an exam for being a certified surveyor. He thought it was discriminatory that he would be required to work for eight years to qualify to take the exam even after all of his qualifications, experience and education. He completed seven years and his surveyor died. He still works in surveying and still teaches home bound students.