

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series
Richard Bailey Interview
Conducted by James Newberry
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Born in New York in 1922, Richard Bailey worked as a toolmaker's apprentice for General Electric before enlisting in the Army Air Corps. He served as a B-26 pilot during World War II, leading crews of six on pre-invasion bombing missions. By the end of the war, Bailey had flown 65 missions including three on D-Day. He recorded his oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in March 2017.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: So, uh this is James Newberry and I'm here with Dick Bailey at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University, on Monday March 20, 2017. And uh Mr. Bailey do you agree to this interview?

Bailey: I do.

Interviewer: Can you hear me?

Bailey: I can hear you.

Interviewer: Okay. So Mr. Bailey Could you state your full name for me?

Bailey: Richard S. Bailey. B-A-I-L-E-Y.

Interviewer: Okay can you tell me what the 'S' stands for?

Bailey: Samuel. Or Sam.

Interviewer: [Laughs] So, what's your birthday?

Bailey: 31 July 1922.

Interviewer: Okay, and uh where were you born?

Bailey: Upstate New York. In a small town called Johnson City. Which is part of a triple city complex of Binghamton, Johnson City, and Endicott. I lived there for the first year of my life, I'm told-[laughs] And then we moved to Binghamton. That's where I grew up and went to high school.

Interviewer: So, what were your parents' names?

Bailey: My mother's name was Louise. Do you want her maiden name? [Continues] Feidler. German name. [Spells out] F-E- I-D-L-E- R. And my father's name was

Samuel Bailey [Inaudible 1:30]. unfortunately, that's my last name also.

Both: [Laugh]

Interviewer: Why do you say unfortunately?

Bailey: [incoherent mumbling 1:42] Because there's, uh, a lot of common ones including in England, the Old Bailey Prison.

Interviewer: Oh, that's true!

Bailey: [Laughing]

Interviewer: And what did your parents do for a living?

Bailey: My mother was a housewife. And my father worked for Endicott-Johnson, a shoe manufacturer. He was an operator of machines for Endicott-Johnson, making women's shoes.

Interviewer: And did you have any siblings?

Bailey: I have four sisters, all younger than me.

Interviewer: What was it like to be the oldest child and the only boy?

Bailey: It was difficult. [Laughs] The girls, my sisters, we all got along fine but they always accused me of being granted more favors and privileges than they were.

Interviewer: Do you think that was true?

Bailey: I don't think so, I don't like to think so.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me, Mr. Bailey, how did the Depression affect your life and your family's life?

Bailey: How did what?

Interviewer: How did the Depression affect your life?

Bailey: Oh. Uh, have you read the greatest of Generation? The book.

Interviewer: By Brokaw?

Bailey: Yeah, Tom Brokaw.

Interviewer: I have not.

Bailey: I suggest that you read it. Anyway, I am a child of the greatest generation. A child of the Depression and it was in hindsight it was difficult. We were poor but everybody else in the neighborhood was poor also. So, we didn't recognize that as being a factor in our lives. Uh and at age 13 I got a paper route and was delivering papers 6 days a week for which I got the generous sum. I had in my total quantity of papers each day was just over 100; six days a week. No paper on Sundays. My delivery payment was four fifths of a cent per paper. [Laughs]. So as a result, I made a few dollars each week which I turned over to my mother for buying groceries and so on. Because at the time my father was only working 2 or 3 day a week. And in the morning, I got a job delivering – working on a milk truck delivering milk. We put out 300 quarts of milk, the driver would pick me up, we'd go out to the creamery, load up the van or the truck and go out and deliver. That was when you delivered milk to people's porch or their door in quart bottles. And so, we'd put out 300 quarts of milk then he'd take me home, I changed clothes, had breakfast, and go to school. On the other hand, if the weather was bad, which it can be in that part of New York state, and we were running late because of ice and snow he would drop me off directly at school. And again, I turned my money that I got over to my mother. So all the way through high school I had both the paper route and worked on the milk truck and made between 10-11 dollars a week. Which was used for buying, well expenses plus mainly groceries for the family was my parents me and my four sisters.

Interviewer: So, was it necessary for you to work?

Bailey: Well I guess if we wanted to eat it probably contributed, it helped. Then on Sunday, since we had no paper—You want to come in here?

[break in interview]

Film crew: Yeah, fix your tie.

Bailey: Oh okay [Laughs].

Film crew: I'm here to make sure you look the best you can look [Laughs].

Bailey: [Continues] Since we had no paper Sunday was—After I delivered milk I went and hitchhiked down to the local airport. I'd always been enthusiastic about airplanes. In fact, Jimmy Doolittle was one of my childhood heroes and hanging around the airport one of the instructors approached me and said 'do you want to work for me? Wiping the planes off, catching the planes, helping sell rides, and just general doing general handiwork around.' He said 'I can't pay you any money but I'll give you flying time—flying instruction as payment.' So as a result I ended up soloing at age 17, and got my solo license.

Interviewer: So, it was already something you were doing before the war?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me what do you remember of the election of President Roosevelt?

Bailey: After president Hoover, he was going to help pull us out of the Depression. In hindsight and reading about it, Hoover was probably blamed for more of the Depression than he was actually responsible for. But anyway the— FDR's promise was to pull us out of the depression and at the end of his second term he felt the need for supporting England in their battle with Germany. On the other hand he was fighting the isolationists, including Charles A. Limburg, and other strong isolationists factors in history and in Congress. But they did end up with 'Lend Lease' sending a lot of material to Great Britain to support them prior to our getting involved via Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: But as a teenager were you aware of that information? Did you keep up with that stuff in the news?

Bailey: Yeah.

Interviewer: As a teenager?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. What was your interest in it, why were you interested in world events at that age?

Bailey: Well since I was part of the world [laughs] a very small part. I was—I felt it was gonna lead to war, which obviously it did. I had thought that I had want—would like to become an Army Air Corps Pilot. However, at the time the requirements for pilot was a college graduate and considering our economic status as a family, there was no chance of my going to college. So, after I graduated from high school, I ended up going with General Electric company in Schenectady, New York. In their tool maker apprentice course and I was there at the time of Pearl Harbor. In the meantime, the air force or army air core saw the need for pilots and they lowered the standard requirement from a college graduate to two years college or equivalent so I took the equivalent exam and I'm not sure what my mark was but apparently I passed it okay. But after I took it, what was supposedly the equivalent of two years in college, I said 'is that all they learn in college in two years. [laughing] So I was accepted in the aviation cadet program for pilot training.

Interviewer: Okay so I want to go back to the apprentice course with General Electric.

Bailey: Okay.

Interviewer: What exactly were you doing in that course?

Bailey: Well since I had, in high school, taken a course that included machine shop I did not have to go through their familiarization or introduction to machine tools.

They put me directly into one of the tool rooms that built production tools for the factory. It was mainly punch press work, die, forming dies, cutting dies, and so on. That's what I was working on using the various machine tools to create the tools. As I said it was a toolmaker apprentice course.

Interviewer: Now was this in like a defense plant?

Bailey: General Electric company, they were mainly defense. Had many divisions, urban division, transformer division. They had 40,000 people there in Schenectady, all on defense work.

Interviewer: Did you have to wear an ID badge?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay were you working with a group of people or on your own?

Bailey: Yes. [laughs] We had 4 or 5 of us apprentices were working under the supervision of an experienced toolmaker. We had our own projects but if we had questions or once in a while, he would oversee and say 'why don't you do it this way or that way and whatever' so it was a building / learning experience.

Interviewer: How many hours did you work?

Bailey: Various over time. The most hours I ever turned in one week was 48 hours of overtime. The standard week was 40 hours plus going to school 3 days a week, after work for two hours. Classroom work, cutting speeds and feeds and metallurgy and alike subjects. Then I enlisted right after Pearl Harbor, in the aviation cadet program. The cadet roles were full at that time, so they wanted me to go into the military, unassigned. Even at that age I didn't have complete confidence in the promises the recruiters were making. 'I said well okay what will I learn in going in unassigned?' 'Well, you'll learn military procedures and you'll learn how to march up and down, and how to salute and so on.' and I said 'And?' 'Well, until your turn comes up in the aviation cadet program.' I said 'okay, I'm working in the defense industry I feel that would contribute a lot more to the country than learning how to salute or do close order drills.' So, I declined their offer and then they finally called me into the aviation cadet program in November of '42.

Interviewer: So, where did you have to go after that?

Bailey: After I was called by the military?

Interviewer: Yes.

Bailey: I was sent to Nashville, Tennessee for classification. The cadet program had candidates for pilots, navigators, and bombardiers. On every occasion where I

could state my preference, I put pilot. In Nashville we went through classification: Physical exam, mental exam, and additional classes, so on. Then after that we were issued our first ill-fitting uniforms [laughs] and then sent to Maxwell Field in Alabama for basic training where we learned engines, and aircrafts, meteorology, and Morse code, which we never used [laughing]. And heavy emphasis on physical conditioning, training, exercise, and so on. That was two months. Want me to keep going?

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Bailey: After Maxwell Field we went to, were sent to, in my case Lakeland Florida for primary where we flew the PT 17 Stearman biplane and that was for two months. That was a civilian flight school. So, in flight structures but they had military check pilots. they would do progress checks on you or if the instructor recommended you be washed out you'd get a check ride from the Army, check pilots to either agree with the recommendation or give the guy another couple additional hours and see if they can pull him through. I never mentioned to the instructor that I had already soloed, had my solo license. I didn't want him to think he had a smart-ass kid [laughs]. So, I never mentioned it but I soloed the PT17 in 7 hours and 40 minutes where the recommendation was at least 8 hours of dual instruction.

Interviewer: Can you explain that to me? You say 7 hours and 40 minutes.

Bailey: Of dual instruction time.

Interviewer: Okay so you didn't quite meet the recommendation.

Bailey: He turned me loose, he soloed me at 7 hours and 40 minutes rather than going through the full 8 hours.

Interviewer: Was that because you were clearly skilled?

Bailey: At least in his opinion I was.

Interviewer: I see.

Bailey: Our next two months was in Courtland, Alabama, flying the BT 13 of Vultee trainer. It was commonly called the Vultee vibrator because when you pull it up to stall you get severe vibrating of the shock mounted instrument panels. It would really shake, so they took on the name of the Vultee vibrator, but that was a good airplane, Fixed landing gear, all metal, low wing, fixed landing gear. Then the next one was through Stuttgart, Arkansas. I was flying the 8010 twin engine Beechcraft for advanced. That's where we got our Commission as a second Lieutenant, and our Wings.

Interviewer: How did it make you feel to receive the wings?

Bailey: Well, that was my whole goal and well I made it. I mean I felt happy. I guess I was all elated would be an overstatement, but I was most happy that I had made it through and received my wings.

Interviewer: Did you contact your family to tell them?

Bailey: Yeah, I let them know.

Interviewer: So, was there anything in your training that you did that that scared you? That seemed like you wouldn't be able to do it. Was there ever a time you felt a great fear?

Bailey: No.

Interviewer: Did you see things that happened? Any accidents?

Bailey: We killed a guy once in a while. Not we, I. The trend in the training program there's always casualties.

Interviewer: What's the reaction from the other trainees? If they see somebody you know get injured or accidentally you know killed?

Bailey: Basically was 'C'est la guerre'. French for 'such is war'.

Interviewer: So you got your wings there in Arkansas. Where did you go from Arkansas?

Bailey: From Barksdale Fields in Louisiana, Where I went through B 26 twin engine bomber transition.

Interviewer: Can you describe the B-26 for me?

Bailey: Well, I'll start out with a couple nicknames it was given. It was the hottest airplane in the inventory at the time and the original quotes were kind of broad. In which the Air Force, Air core, who was still the air core at the time wanted a twin-engine bomber. They already had the B17 four engine long range strategic bomber and the B24 strategic bomber. They wanted a medium bomber, so it was two engines with the specs of carrier at least 4000 pounds of bombs, have a range of 1000 miles, and as fast or faster than the fighter planes of the day. So, it was a kind of a broad open spec for a capable designer. They had a young designer for Martin Aircraft in Baltimore, MD named Peyton Magruder that designed it and without having to meet the specs he designed the B26, which is I said was the hottest airplane in the inventory at the time. And he brought about a number of innovations that later got adopted. As in general instead of construction by overlapping aluminum, instead of overlapping them, he buttered them together. Developed a flush rivet to minimize drag. He went to the automobile industry to learn about stretch and forming of metal and most of the fuselage was complete

wrap around based on what he had picked up from the automobile industry rather than being build up a series of smaller pieces and a patchwork type of construction. He picked the probably the best rotary engine at the time. The Pratt and Whitney R-2800, 2000 horsepower with four bladed propellers on it. The top turret was the original one they had was made by Sperry and it was unsatisfactory. So, he went to General Electric Company in Schenectady and laid out what they wanted and worked with them.

[Break in interview]

Bailey: Do we have time? Do you want me to keep going on and then you can edit later? Or what do you wanna do?

Interviewer: Yes, this is fine. I am interested in the detail.

Bailey: [Resumes] Okay, so he paid my router, got on an airplane from Baltimore, Maryland to go to Schenectady, New York, to have an interview for checking the progress for the top turret that they were building. And so he got on the old DC3, which is what the airlines were flying at the time he sat next to a guy. And the guy says, "Hey, I'm Charlie." At that time, people on their airlines were a lot more friendly than they are today. And he said, "I'm Peyton" and so they got done talking, and Charlie says "where are you going?" he says, "I'm gonna fly up to Albany and go over to Schenectady and find out how GE is doing on my the top turret for my B26 Bomber." Charlie says, "oh I gotta go, I'm going there too and I'm having my car meet me so you can ride if you want" he said "Okay." So they went to the gate to go into GE and the guard the gate says, "Good afternoon, Mr. Wilson." He says "Charlie Wilson? That's the name of the President of GE." So, Charlie says, "Come on up to my office." They went up and the secretary says, "Good afternoon Mr. Wilson" and Charlie says, "Come on in." and he went in and he told his secretary "Get my engineering staff in here immediately." And they came in, and he says, "this is Peyton my router at modern aircraft and I understand that you're designing a Top Gun turret for his airplane." The guy says, "yeah." and he said. "Well, what's your promised due date, he says "Six months." He turned the bay, and he says, "when are you going to have a model plane ready to accept the top dirt?" He says, "six weeks." he turns to the engineer and says "You heard him. You've got six weeks." then I said, "But, but, but, but, but." he said, "You heard me, six weeks. Get outta here and get going." So that was one of the things. Peyton Magruder also worked with the designer of the nose, which was- were talking now about the start of the plastic molding industry in this country. And he won the plastic bullet nose on the thing. He was told, "We can't do that." He said, "Yes we can." And so he worked with him and it was a breakthrough for designing a bullet nose plastic. The plastic to give full streamlining to the nose on the B-26. At the same time he also developed self-sealing gasoline tanks that it would re-seal themselves from small punctures of Flack. Yeah. So anyway, it turned out to be a good aircraft. Had a high accident rate, it was known early in the game as the flying prostitute.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Bailey: The wings were so small they said it had no visible means of support. [Laughs] I went overseas and was assigned to the original B-26 group of the Ninth Air Force. So, I went in later on as a substitute or replacement, but the original group trained Andrew and Rainfield in Florida near Tampa. They had runaway propeller problems. They were using the Curtiss electric propeller and said they couldn't get the Hydromatic because they're being used on so many other airplanes. So they had to use the Curtiss electric, and unless the batteries were up to full charge as the result of starting airplane on the batteries. They get a flattening of the pitch with a century amount yet a runaway propeller with no thrust so out of that they've developed the "A plane day in Tampa Bay" because you get up in the air and the props flatten out and you don't get any thrust. There's only one direction you're going to go. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Well, tell me how many crew members on the B26?

Bailey: Lead planes would carry 7. A bombardier and a navigator, then pilot and copilot. But the rest of us carried 6, pilot and copilot, bombardier. Top turret gunner, who is also the flight engineer. Waist gunner, who is also the radioman. And tail gunner, which was the armor. So ordinarily it was 6 people except for lead planes who carried the extra guy who was also the navigator.

Interviewer: So, as the captain you were in charge. As the pilot.

Bailey: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you remember some of the guys in your crew?

Bailey: Yes, although unlike the 8th that apparently had a more closed group, they would vary. We always had somebody in the spot, but because of sick leave or three-day pass for the weekend or something. It would vary. Chuck Freeman was my copilot for most of the time, but not always, and the same way with some of the other guys.

Interviewer: Where was Chuck from?

Bailey: Can't remember.

Interviewer: Was he a good Copilot?

Bailey: He was a copilot, yeah.

Interviewer: Was he a good one?

Bailey: I guess I was too selfish; I didn't give him that much chance to fly.

Both: [Laughing]

Interviewer: You like to be in control?

Bailey: Yeah.

Interviewer: So-

Bailey: [Interrupting] Well I-

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Bailey: Well, we flew on small targets; like bridges and crossroads. We flew a very tight formation. And I had a reputation for being one of the better formation pilots. The operations officer told me, He says "I always like that our 6-ship formation is: lead ship, number two, number three, four, five, and six." And so, operation would put me either number one or number two or number 3 and he says, "I really like to have you up there because you're a good example to the rest of the flights to pack it in." because on a bridge or highway intersection you want a compact bomb strike and so all six planes in tight will give you a tight bomb pattern. So, I flew since I like to fly and I enjoyed the challenge of flying a real tight formation.

Interviewer: So where were you posted in England?

Bailey: Town of, well the small town of, Great Saling. The nearest city of any size was Braintree, about 30 miles north of London.

Interviewer: Did you ever get into London. What did you do when you went on leave?

Bailey: Well, we'd only get a two- and three-day weekend pass. So, we go into London, go to some of the entertainment. I remember going into the theater and seeing Bing Crosby in the *Bells of Saint Mary's*. Which is where he introduced the 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas'. And they were on rationing, so they had very limited beer available and or mixed drinks. But we did get it, could get a drink or two in the bar of the hotel in London. Yeah, and then went to some of the other sites in England or in London. The London Bridge and I can't think of the name of the Castle where Henry 8th had there in England, and so on.

Interviewer: Was the German Air Force still bombing London at that time?

Bailey: Most of it was over, but they were still bombing it. I remember one night they were bombing and we were in the hotel. And I went outside was watching all the shells bursting up overhead, but almost like fireworks and where they were shooting it, the Germans, I was outside looking at. An air raid warden come up

and he says, "Oi you crazy yank, get inside all that stuff is coming back down. It's going to kill you!"

Both: [Laughing]

Interviewer: So was there a blackout at the time?

Bailey: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay wow. you said your initial duties were in these formation flying missions to attack intersections and bridges, and that was mostly in Germany or occupied France?

Bailey: France.

Interviewer: Okay.

Bailey: Yeah, we were tactical as opposed to the Air Force which was strategic. strategic being the German factories in towns and within Germany, long range. we were preparing- our overall assignment was to isolate the battlefield. So we had had many facets to it, but isolated battlefield meant we had to take out every bridge. The length of the Seine River from Paris to La Havre to separate North France from South France to basically disrupt the German transportation system. And then we had Churchill, it was the early '44, the Germans started sending over their V1 buzz bombs. And a little bit later on their V2 rockets against England, particularly London. So Churchill got ahold of Eisenhower and asked him if we could bomb the launch sites for the V1 buzz bombs. And so they would PR, 'Photo Recon', would spot the launch sites and give us a target position which would be couple crossroads out in their country or the corner of a woods and so on. Kind of in a very ambiguous, ill-defined target, and we would bomb it. But since the launch vehicles were mobile the Germans would launch from what we heard. Like 2, 3, 4 launches and then they moved to some other location. So I suspected by the time we got around to bombing them they had already moved, but anyway, if nothing else we kept them moving, because I'm not sure whether we ever hit any of the launch sites or not.

Interviewer: So, tell me about an average mission, would you? From getting up in the morning and figuring out what you're going to do to bring the plane?

Bailey: I'm going to back up just to tell you the structure. Each group had four squadrons, and we would fly for the average mission three of the four squadrons. So, one of those squadrons they take turns but one of them would be stood down for a particular mention. The other three would be on the alert list and as a result for the average mission, we put up 36 airplanes, 12 per squadron, from the three flying squadrons and the other one would be non flying. They play rotation so that next time will be the next one and the other three, and so on. The alert list would be published at the 'Ready Room' and we'd check it late

afternoon of the day before and see if our crew was listed because every crew in the squadron did not fly every mission so 'yeah, I'm on the alert list.' So then it was a meeting depending on weather and so on. Ordinarily give me anywhere from 7-8 or 9:00 o'clock in the morning for briefing and then again depending they said, "well if the weather is bad, it'll be clear by 11:00 o'clock." OK, so you would aim at takeoff time with the weather clear, clear enough so that you can see.

Interviewer: What'd you have for breakfast?

Bailey: Well, number one was square eggs. Powdered eggs and toast. The British were great on with marmalade so no butter. Then just put marmalade on toast, coffee, and square eggs.

Interviewer: So on these missions was there antiaircraft fire? Were there German planes that you came into contact with?

Bailey: When I got there most of our offense- defense against us was flak. I can't remember the German words for, but the British and Americans, abbreviated the long German title to FLAK flak. There's a piece that went through the side of my plane and landed between my feet, laying on the floorboard smoking.

Interviewer: Could you hold that up?

Bailey: Yeah, if this hit you it would probably take more than a Bandaid to fix.

Interviewer: I would say so.

Bailey: But it was almost spent when it came through the side of the plane and it kind of rattled around a bit and dropped on the floorboards.

Interviewer: So it cooled and then you saved it?

Bailey: I'm sorry.

Interviewer: So did it cool off and then you saved it?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: So you said Flak was your biggest enemy?

Bailey: Yeah, the whole French coast was quite heavily defended by German anti-aircraft flak guns. Basically their 88 millimeter, which was an excellent gun. The German radar was not all that great. If we were flying over the clouds and dropping on Pathfinder and our Pathfinder was not all that great, either accurate. As compared with the GPU today. But we would bomb through the

clouds on Pathfinder and we never really got feedback about whether how effective we were, but where it was. As I said, the German radar was not act all that accurate and once in a while one would 'puff' but not really near enough to be effective. But then what was visual for them and visual, obviously for us, also in the bombing they were very, very good with their aiming and timing on the things. So under visual conditions, the lead bombardier in the lead ship would be looking down and he could see the flashes of the flak guns firing. And he knew that they, the projectiles, were coming up about 1000 feet a second. So, let's say we were at 12,000 feet. He would stop-watch and he'd see flashes and at 10 seconds he would say to the lead bombardier, the pilot of the lead plane: turn! And a number of times I remember we would turn and right down the track that we would of been flying there was:

*poof poof poof. * of the flak and then take it back again. Until we hit the IP: the initial at that point the pilot, the control of the plane was taken over by the bombardier via the Norden bombsight. The pilot's responsibility was to maintain steady playing attitude, constant speed, and flying a straight line. We have found good lead pilots could go from the IP in 15-20 seconds at the most to bomb release. We would fly in tight formation when he opened his Bombay doors, we do the same thing. When he dropped our bombardier would drop also. So, we get all six airplanes dropping at the same time. Flak was more of our threat than German fighters. Because at that time they had pulled most of their fighters back to fly against the 8th Air Force which were was bombing the Homeland rather than France.

Interviewer: Right. I want to transition to the D-Day invasion and your participation in that. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Bailey: OK, we took off at. let's see, 5:30 in the morning the weather was absolutely terrible and headed out through rain, yeah. We were supposed to bomb on Pathfinder, and so we got up above the clouds. And we dropped on Pathfinder, ee didn't know because it was dropping through clouds, we didn't know how effective we were. Supposedly the Pathfinder, as I said previously, was not all that accurate. It consisted of from England, sending out a beam here and another beam here and we would fly one beam and where they cross the other beam, that would be the drop point. They were, coming in, dropping through the clouds and we never really knew how effective they were. In the first 2 missions of the day, I flew three missions that day, the first two we were dropping on Pathfinder. So we don't really know how much good that we did, but then the third mission, late in the late afternoon, the weather had started to break and we got word that the Germans had a Panzer tank division on flatcars; a few miles South of the invasion beach in Normandy. So we were assigned to bomb and take it out. Well, we went in at around 10,000 feet couldn't see a thing, so we circled back out over the ocean. Come back around 5000 feet, still couldn't see anything because it had to be a visual. Went, came back once more, around 2000 feet couldn't see anything. We went back once more came around and skimming just underneath of the bottom of the

clouds at 500 feet and we went across the rail yard and dropped. The real the placard train with the tanks on it either had not made it into the rail yard, or as they call it the marshalling yard, or they had backed it out. We never did find out but we did not get the train with the tanks on. We tore up the rail yard pretty good by dropping our bombs at from a 500 feet. In fact, a number of our planes came back with holes in it from our own bombs. And so they notify, the lead plane notified, we didn't get the target. He's about 3 miles South of the railyard and so we suggest, they suggested to send in the fighters with bombs and rockets. Whether that happened that we never did hear. But all I can say is our third mission on D day was to tear up the railyard pretty good.

Interviewer: So how long after the D day did you sort of move over to Beauvais, France?

Bailey: September.

Interviewer: So that was several months later.

Bailey: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what were you doing in the meantime?

Bailey: We continued to bomb, bridges, rail yards, ammo dumps, and so on.

Interviewer: OK, so once you transition to Beauvais. You said you were sort of in support of Patton's troops at that point?

Bailey: Uh, I would say maybe 50% of our missions after were in Beauvais that allowed us to be close to Patton and his guided tour through Europe. And we could get into Germany a short wage with our range and so on. We continued to, well, more of our mentions were support of the troops so on. Just as a kind of a side comment. One of the missions was after our troops work their way in Normandy through the hedgerows. They were able to start the break free and to facilitate the breakout they called down the Air Force both 8th and 9th Air Force to bomb. To let the troops go ahead, particularly at the town of St Lô. Which was the breakout where Patton started after we bomb saying St Lô. That was when Patton had been moved from England over and headed up the 3rd Army, but the highest ranking officer that was killed was General Leslie McNair. Initially they blamed the 9th Air Force for killing him by bombing earl, then dropping on American troops. I'm not sure how they resolved it, but they later found out it was really the 8th Air Force that did it. they bombed at a much higher altitude than we did. We would bomb, typically eight, ten, or 12,000 feet where the 8th Air Force would be bombing from anywhere from 24 up to 30,000 feet. So their accuracy was not nearly as great as ours was. But anyway, their General Leslie McNair got killed.

Interviewer: Right.

Bailey: I guess when they drop bombs on you get seriously killed.

Both: Laughing

Interviewer: So tell me about the base there in Beauvais. What were your quarters like there?

Bailey: Naturally, when we got there we were given the so called pup-tents. The little things where two guys could. Each guy had 1/2 of a tent and you put them together and slept in them and then they came in with a bunch of pyramidal tents. The big tent with side curtains on them. And in exploring the area we found up in there was some German barracks. And so we said boy if we can get these down there, we take them apart and set them up you could make good sidewalls and we'll just use the canvas for the center pole for the roof. Then also give us a wooden floor and that thing. So, our flight surgeon Dr. Wheeler says ordinarily you get four guys per-tent He says, 'You can use the ambulance if I can live with ya.' 'Okay.' So we went up in the woods and got these things down and brought them all down. And really, we had the best tent on the whole line. We felt, 'Hm did we make it so good that the CEO is going to take it away from us?' but he didn't. But he said, "where you guys get all this?" Oh up in the woods in a German barrack." "Well how do you get it down here" "We used the ambulance." He turned the Dr. "You let them use your ambulance? "No, no, they must have stole it!" But that was the end of it.

Interviewer: Did you have any special privileges as a pilot?

Bailey: No, as an officer we were allowed to use an officer latrine set up in inside a tent with three or four holes in their boards.

Interviewer: That's your privilege. [laughs]

Bailey: One of our guys. You like GI humor?

Interviewer: Yes please.

Bailey: Ted Bunn, was a bombardier and real character. He would wait till it was after dark, and when he knew that some guys were in the latrine, he would go in. He he'd have a rock about yabig, and of course it's complete blackout. He'd go inside, give all the necessary sound effects and then drop it down. Splash!

Interviewer: Did you have any interactions with the French civilians at that time?

Bailey: We had, on our base was a destroyed French castle. And so we converted part of it to a officer club, but it was some of them, and he was kind of the caretaker. So I'm not sure what whether he was just doing it because he didn't have anything else to do or what. But he would be around taking care of things and we got

along with him but we didn't have too much contact with the civilians in the area.

Interviewer: Did you have any communication with your family at home at this time?

Bailey: Well, we were letting, via letter writing, and they would write to so. It was the Mail delivery, I'm not sure, I guess the same was true. The ones that we letters we sent home, but they would be kind of intermittent that we get Mail call maybe once every couple weeks or so. Then you get 3 or 4 letters all together at the same time. So that was our communication. There was no phone like today, no phone communication. So, I was just like letter exchange type of thing.

Interviewer: But had they been through the sensor?

Bailey: Not the incoming, but the ones that we would send. Would go through the sensor.

[break in interview]

Film Crew: [Fixing mic]

Off camera: There's something I wanted to talk about.

Bailey: What happened?

Off Camera: Jack, you talked about getting back to the Normandy invasion. You flew in perpendicular to the beaches. Your bombs were supposed to drop on the beach or craters for the Incoming gis to get in as protection and if you dropped your bombs a second Later than you should. They went over the beach and 100 yards. Can you ask him about that?

[Resume Interview]

Interviewer: Could you elaborate on that a bit?

Bailey: Okay part of this what I'm going to tell you is based on talking to guys that were in the landing parties when I went over on the 50th anniversary of D Day. And so there was a bunch of at that time, guys that had been, who had gone ashore in Higgins boats and were in the 1st and 2nd wave hitting the beach. And the guy, a couple I've talked to, they said we were told that the Air Force was going to bomb ahead of us. We were scheduled to bomb at 6:30. They were scheduled to hit the beach at 7:30. And so we bombed on as I had said previously on Pathfinder. Hopefully they knew what where they were, where it was going, but they were not very accurate. If this is the beach here we came in this way across. Instead of going length way because the weather was so bad it was raining down on the beach. We have been lying in order to bomb visually we would have had to be under the weather and so the ceiling was very very low,

probably down 200 - 300 feet. So we flew across the beach and the weather was, the ocean was very, very choppy at the time. The Higgins boat was supposed to take waves up to six feet high. And they were running 10 and 12 feet high and coming over the side of the Higgins boat and so many the guys on- this is now talking to the guys that on the 50th anniversary that went ashore- Many, many, most of them were up chucking from seasickness cause the Higgins were just they said it was terrible rolling. They were told that when you go ashore, the Air Force will have cratered the beach and so you'll have lots of places to dive into and so. One and the guy says what a bunch of BS that was, because when we went in, I suspect, and I never heard this for sure, but I suspect that the guy leading the Pathfinder knew that we were flying over all the invasion Higginsville there was 4000 of them going in with 22-24 guys per boat and if we dropped early we'd be dropping among all the boats going ashore. Our speed is about 100 yards a second, so they probably delayed the drop. I'm not sure of this, but the results are we did not bomb the beach., we bombed anywhere from 150 to 200 yards in land. And one of the guys that with my host there and normally hired a light plane and we were flying over. You can see all the old bomb craters now grass covered, but they were in land from the landing beach. Anywhere from a couple 100 yards to a quarter of a mile. Real heavily bomb cratered which supposedly should have been on the beach. They weren't, so the guys I talked to said, oh boy, that was a crock. The other thing is the waves are so bad in coming over the side they had the ropes, boxes with a rope and the grappling hook. They were going to fire up the cliff at Omaha Beach and the Rangers were supposed to climb the rope. The rope was so wet that it only would fire halfway and they guys would get up there now they're on their own to climb up. The Germans are shooting down from the top of the cliffs. And then one guy says I really thank the Navy, the couple of Navy destroyers or cruisers against the orders, he found out came in. One of them ran aground and later had to be pulled back off then the other then he said they were firing. They saw what was happening with the Germans firing up from the crest of the cliffs. And he said they, with their five inch guns were firing' So that's a real thrill climbing up the side of a Cliff and having 5 inch guns, 5 Inch projectiles go over your, few yards over your head, But he says, we're really grateful that they took out many of the German firing positions on the crest of the hill on the crest of the cliff.

Interviewer: So do you remember about how many missions you flew?

Bailey: Excuse me, I flew a total of 65.

Interviewer: I want to ask you about. Completing a single mission when you got back and you finished and you've gotten through it, what kind of feeling did you have? What emotions were running through your head at that point?

Bailey: At the completion of a mission, of course, the first thing you do is go through debriefing.

And they have a whole bunch of questions. Did you hit the target? What was the defense? Any fighters? How was the flak and so on? It would take anywhere from depending on the length of the dissertation that you wanted to give or the information that you had anywhere from 1/2 hour to 45 minutes. And then if you were not going to fly another mission that day, they would give you a shot of whiskey to relax you. If you're going to schedule to fly another mission, you had to wait until after the next mission to get it. Yeah, but so just went through debriefing. And we went to the Chow Hall and got something to eat and said well we made it through another one.

Interviewer: And you said 65 missions. So did they have a minimum number for you to complete before you could go home?

Bailey: Well earlier had been lower numbers. Well, when I got there as a replacement, it was down in 25 about the time I got 15 - 18. It was up to 30 or 35 and by the time I got to 25 was up to 40 and I kept chasing it. Finally it settled down at 65 and that's where I called it.

Interviewer: And you were involved in the Battle of the Bulge as well.

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Bailey: Well. If you've read the history, you know that the bulge started on, the weather was real bad and then it started on the 16th of December. The Germans broke through and the Battle of the Bulge was a journalist name for really the battle of the Ardennes Forest and the Germans maintained radio silence came through the Ardennes forest in force through the impassable Ardennes forest with their armor and troops. Hit the American lines and the lines have been spread up to 200 miles on South with Patton and his troops. The 3rd Army being spread for up to 200 miles South and he had, his intelligence officer warned him. This is a mistake. The Germans are gonna, they know that we are very weak and thinly defended along most of the line. And they're going to come through the Ardennes. But I'm not sure who he told, but, but he was ordered to spread out for our defense for South of the Bulge for up to 200 miles and the guys that were directly affected by the Bulge was basically new troops, new replacements, and very few of them. So they just were no defense for the Germans on the 23rd of December the weather started to break and we got some fighters up and were able to drop with the C47 supplies. Into- what was the main town?

Interviewer: Bastogne.

Bailey: Bastogne yeah through the 101st Airborne. I'm sure you've heard the story of when McAuliffe was asked to surrender and he said nuts. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So were you piloting a plane to take supplies?

Bailey: No then our target for the 24th of December, which would take out to Bridge at Euskirchen. Which the Germans were using to bring up more armor and troops and so on. And so we were to take that bridge out. We were told that it's going to be heavily defended, then they're going to have fighters in the air as well as Flak. Ordinarily, the Germans air to ground communication was pretty good, and so at the time that the flak stopped that was the time to lookout, because that's when their fighters will be coming in. But in this case the flak was coming up, my tail gunner says 'here they come,' and uh, the Germans I found out later they had 20 to 25 attacking, not just those. There was a couple other groups in the area they were also bombing. So they had a total of 20, 25 German fighters in the air attacking. When the tail gunner says here they come, I'm again flying number three position. Three over here and looking out, I saw a German ME109 why he was in that close, I don't know. But he was in close enough. He couldn't have been more than, 30 feet away. My top turret gunner opened up and I could see his bullets puncturing the side of the plane went up along the engine. And it caught a large flame black smoke. Then he came back across the cockpit and he hung there and then was gone.

[Break in Interview]

Interviewer: Oh, there we go. We got it we got.

Bailey: Fire pilots have a problem talking with their hands.

Interviewer: [laughs] That was good timing. I like that.

[Resume Interview]

Interviewer: So he took him out your gun and took him out, your gunner took him out.

Bailey: The Tail gunner says he just blew up behind us and then the tail gunner opened up. The guy disappeared and well at that time and ME 109 pulled up between me and the lead plane and we're flying pretty tight formation. Nobody, intelligence could never explain why, but he pulled up between me and then you can see his face just as clear as I'm looking at Dave there and had square goggles and looked at me and back and forth. My Copilot, In hindsight, I wish I'd and I don't even know if he had his '45 with him, but it would've been interesting if he slid back his window and shot at him with his '45. But that's hindsight, but in just a few seconds, apparently, then he's gone. then very shortly after that I saw a ME 109 crossing from left to right out in front of us, 250 maybe 300 yards. I said to myself, if he turns into us our forward defense is not all that great. So I slid out of formation just a bit. And hitting my gun triggers now, the B26 has four forward firing 50 Cal, two on either side of the fuselage that we call package guns. The firing rate of the 50 Cal is around 12 rounds a second, so I hit the trigger just to get some tracer out there so the guy could see him, the German pilot could see him so I probably 2 seconds at the most. Which meant there was at least 100 rounds in the air. He, always in a puff of black smoke, and he started down and

disappeared in the undercast. And so I was given the credit for being the only bomber pilot in Europe to shoot down a German fighter. And we don't know whether he was able to nurse his playing back to his base whether it blew up or whether he had to bail out because he disappeared in the undercast so all they would give me was ME 109 damaged.

Interviewer: You never knew what happened to him?

Bailey: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You never knew what happened to him?

Bailey: No.

Interviewer: So you said you completed 65 missions and how did you get the news that you would be able to return home?

Bailey: Oh at 65, the OPS officer said- I'm going to back up just a minute. At 64, he said I've had requests from the inventory. For a guy to act as liaison with the ground troops. So do you want to go up front and spend a few days with the ground troops. Because he said you need one more to qualify to be sent home and at 64 missions, and then I didn't know when. The weather was still kind of spotty, bad. I wasn't sure when I get the 65th mission and I said, no Lou. My thinking was I'm not sure that I want to get up front and have some German sniper blow a hole through my head after 64 missions the thought didn't really appeal to me. With no defense against German snipers. So he sent somebody else up. Some other guy accepted and went and the weather was bad enough so that I didn't get my 65th mission. The guy went up for a few days to come back and brought back some souvenirs and so on. Which he handed to us and it was probably a day or two after that I finally got my final six mission, my 65th. And he says okay, pack your stuff, you're going home.

Interviewer: How did it feel to be going home?

Bailey: Well, the events that you had to put all that was just about as bad as another mission. Of putting everything all together and going over to England and then getting up. Getting transportation up to the Scotland and once we got there they put us on the old Queen Mary and I came home on the Queen Mary.

Interviewer: How was that trip?

Bailey: The war was still going on in Germany. Hitler had offered Any U boat commander, \$1,000,000 or the equivalent thereof. If he had sunk the Queen Mary. So we were taking evasive action from the time that we left first or fourth up in Scotland. And we had a British destroyer on either side of us for a day and a half, and they were going flank speed. I was told just over 30 knots. Doing evasive action until you got used to it, it was rather abrupt. It would throw you

until you got used to it, holding onto a near a railing or something to hang on to it. The British destroyers, about a mile and a half off on either side. The sailors says the old story of over one an under two at North Atlantic is rough, can be rough. So they they would disappear, you wouldn't see him. Then they come up again. So going at that speed, they had to turn back after a day and a half because they were getting low on fuel. And then we were for a day and a half just on our own doing, continuing to do evasive action. On the next day and a half we were picking up overflights of Navy patrol bombers out of New England or Labrador. They were circling overhead until we came up through Hells Gate in New York City. Pass the Statue of Liberty and docked Pier 88 in Manhattan.

Interviewer: So how did it feel to be home?

Bailey: Yeah it was good. I said 'What's strange?' Yeah, it was good.

Interviewer: And that was still January of 45?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so about a few months later, President Roosevelt would be dead.

Bailey: Yes. He died when I was In Atlantic City for reassignment.

Interviewer: How did you hear the news?

Bailey: Two, three guys in the elevator in the hotel where we're staying. Said, you hear that Roosevelt died. So that's where I heard it was an elevator in a hotel in Atlantic City.

Interviewer: What did you know about Truman?

Bailey: Nothing, except that I had doubts because he had been a member of the Democratic machine in Kansas, Kansas City. I just had reservations about okay, yeah he was the vice president, now he's the president. In hindsight, he did a much better job than he was initially going to be given credit for.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Bailey: Well. His willingness to oppose the Russians and support the military. Yeah, he was an unknown quantity at the time. Those we really knew or most of us knew was he was a member of the Kansas political machine but it turned out he was his own man. Didn't listen to the machine. In hindsight, I think that he really did what was best for the country at the time.

Interviewer: So what are your memories of the end of the war in Europe?

Bailey: Well, of course I wasn't there.

Interviewer: Did you participate in any celebrations?

Bailey: No.

Interviewer: Had you been discharged by that time?

Bailey: No, I decided, half decided to go to stay in the service. My operations officer from overseas ended up being also assigned to where I was. My next assignment was Orlando, FL. I walked in the first day and major Saville was sitting there, 'Hey Lou what're you doing here?' He says 'I completed and bummed a ride back on air transport command so I flew back.' and so he was there. Yes, I knew Orlando. We got to be- We've had been friends previously but not to be better friends since we were assigned together there. And he said, 'you know, if we're going to stick in this man's army, we ought to get a little more education.' So we both applied for command General Staff School in Leavenworth, KS. And the fact that he was a major and I'm guessing. He was picked ahead of me to go, so then I was picked to take a staff school the class after him. and so when I got into Leavenworth he had already left. He had gone back to Florida. So when I got back to Florida I went to his apartment. His wife was with him. Went to his apartment in Orlando, and his landlady said 'oh major Saville got out of service and he's now flying with American Airlines oh that dog,' But they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and of course, Nagasaki, two days later, when I was in staff school. So they came around with a piece of paper and said the war was pretty much inevitable, that was going to be over, and so they were going to have major cutbacks. So they said sign that either you're gonna stay in. You're gonna get out or you're gonna stay in. But if you stay in you might get demoted to rank of Sergeant and with no flying. Most pilots loved to fly, so as a result I debated it and said that, I don't want that, so I signed to get out. When I got back, the adjutant met me and says. 'Your captaincy papers are in, but I don't think they'll come through before you get processed to leave.' And it did not happen. So I got out. And then I flew on the reserves up through 1947, when the Air Force became a separate service by flying it Stewartfield at West Point. They would send up a C47 weekends and take a number of us pilots from school down for the weekend to fly on reserve. So I flew on reserve up until '47. At that point when they became a separate service, they closed Stewartfield down to reserve flying. Moved it to Long Island or as Long Islanders say Long Island. There was no way to get there and they want us to buy the Air Force blue uniform. So many of us, including myself, got out.

Interviewer: And what school did you attend?

Bailey: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: And you went to school after that? You went back to school?

Bailey: I continued to go schooling and I ended up getting my engineering degree.

Interviewer: And you used the GI Bill?

Bailey: Yes.

Interviewer: Right, so you lived most of your career in California.

Bailey: I wouldn't say most not my working career, but I ended up there after I retired. My last job was in California and I ended up in an automobile accident in 1996 and that pretty much established my retirement.

Interviewer: So how did you end up in Georgia?

Bailey: Over five years ago, when I closed in California, I had a heart attack. The doctor I went through, they put in stents into my heart. Or the veins leading into the heart. And the doctors say you really should not be living alone then in your condition. In the meantime, my son went to work for the skunkworks of Lockheed in Burbank, CA. And when they got the F22 contract, he moved to Marietta or to Lockheed in Marietta. He had been bugging me to come and live with him because his two kids had grown up and left, so I called him and said Don is that opening still there? So it's at that point that I moved to Georgia to live with him and his wife.

Interviewer: Well Mr. Bailey can you tell me why it's important to you to share your World War Two service story?

Bailey: I'm Sorry?

Interviewer: Can you tell me why it's important to you to share your World War Two service story?

Bailey: Well along with Dave, we've talked at many of the schools and organizations in the area. Particularly talking to the schools and it varies with the school. But I am shocked, disappointed in the lack of knowledge of most of the students that we're finding in high school. and so I feel that it's important that they understand what the background is. What it means to read and understand the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, the importance of them to our form of government. I have told them a number of times that our generation, the so-called greatest generation, we did our part. If we hadn't done it, the chances are that if we hadn't helped England you'd be speaking German today. And so we did our part, but the future belongs to you, kids. You've got to understand the background and what brought us where we are, and the importance, total importance of supporting the government and the Constitution. A couple funny stories. I say funny, tragic. There was one of our guys from the American Legion who's giving a talk to a high school and when they had a young teacher introduce

him. We're very proud today to have so and so here to talk to us and relate his experiences in World War Two. I had another one got through and I said any questions. And a girl says well, how did we get involved in the war? And I said, well, there was a little incident called Pearl Harbor that where we were attacked by the Japanese and that precipitated us getting involved in the war because shortly after that the Germans declared war on us as part of the German pact with the Japanese. She said oh did we fight the Japanese and I see yeah. She said, so who won? So, like I say, it's tragic that the lack of understanding and knowledge of history by many of today's students.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Mr. Bailey and we'll end the interview there.

Bailey: Okay.