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### Earl Blassingame, Oral History Moment Script

Earl Blassingame

Michelle Hodge

Allan Folsom

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## Earl Blassingame

Interviewee: Earl Blassingame

Interviewer: Michelle Hodge (ETWMP)

Technical Support: Alex Darschewski (ETWMP)

Others Present: Brittany Walker (ETWMP), Dennis Donald (ETWMP), Earl Blassingame's Daughter

Location: Earl Blassingame's Residence

Date Recorded: October 20, 2016

Duration: 1:02:02

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Indexed by: Michelle Hodge (ETWMP)

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Script Author: Michelle Hodge

Script Date: November 22, 2016

- 0:00-0:09      NARRATOR: On today's Oral History Moment, Earl Blassingame discusses his time as a soldier in the European Theater during World War II.
- 0:09-0:23      NARRATOR: Earl Blassingame joined the Army in March of 1942. After basic training, he was shipped to North Africa where he volunteered to join the 4th Ranger Battalion, an elite infantry unit.
- 0:23-0:42      BLASSINGAME: We had some tough training over in North Africa. We would go on long marches at night and we even lost a couple of people, believe it or not, during the training there because a lot of that was done under fire you know, they would fire overhead with actual bullets, the real McCoy. It wasn't a nice affair that's for sure. But I wouldn't change it, really, if I had a chance.
- 0:42-0:57      NARRATOR: Blassingame landed in Sicily after training in North Africa. He then invaded Italy at Anzio Beach. Blassingame later joined the 1st Special Service Forces as his unit advanced towards Rome.
- 0:57-1:54      BLASSINGAME: And we were the first allies that the civilians had seen. As we went in there you couldn't hear a dog bark. Just in silence. In fact, it was empty. They didn't want to come out before the Germans were ahead of us, falling back. Thousands of them. Here we were, eight or ten people. Our objective was the Victor Emmanuel Monument, not too far from the old famous colosseum. And after our own company came in behind us, I was up on the top of this building there, and I could see the top of the Colosseum, the Roman Colosseum. So I went over there. I was the first allied soldier to look down into that thing. Well I've always been a history type guy. I love old history, you know. I said, "Well, I'm not going to leave here until I see the Colosseum. And I did. I was the only one, that

first one ever who looked down into that thing. And in this story that I wrote about it, I said that I felt like a country boy first time he went to the big city, you know. That was odd. That really was.

- 1:54-1:59 NARRATOR: Blassingame was in Rome for three or four days, but was then sent home.
- 1:59-2:11 BLASSINGAME: Just before the southern France invasion, that's when we were training for that, that's when they called me up and said, "You've had had enough. We're sending you home." Which was nice of them. I didn't want to carry that rifle anymore at that time.
- 2:11-2:33 NARRATOR: After leading the first allied troops into Rome, Blassingame changed his MOS or Military Occupational Specialty. He trained as a S2G2 Sergeant and served an administrative role during the Korea and Vietnam Wars. Blassingame describes what it was like to transition to his new role in the Army.
- 2:33-2:39 BLASSINGAME: I threw the rifle down and picked up a pencil. It was better than carrying a rifle. You don't get killed that way.
- 2:39-2:49 NARRATOR: After serving over twenty-eight years in the Army, he retired from military service in 1971. Blassingame reflected on his time in the service.
- 2:49-2:58 BLASSINGAME: I'm proud of it. I am very proud of my units I was with, and it's just a sorry thing that we lost so many men. But, it couldn't be helped.
- 2:58-3:19 NARRATOR: Members of the East Texas War and Memory Project at Texas A&M University-Commerce completed this interview. Today's interview was conducted by Michelle Hodge, Alex Darschewski, Dennis Donald, and Brittany Walker, edited by Michelle Hodge, and produced by Margo McCutcheon. I'm Allan Folsom. Thank you for listening.