

## Elson Daggett, Jr. Biography

### Pre-WSC Years

Elson Cameron Daggett, Jr., known to his family as “Cam,” or “Cameron,” was born on July 16, 1920 in Portland, Oregon to Elson Daggett, Sr. and Olive Jane Guy Daggett.<sup>1</sup> He had an older brother, William, born in 1918, and a younger brother, Robert, born in 1924, and a sister, Olive, born in 1928.<sup>2</sup> Elson, Sr. and Olive were both born in Canada, and at the time of the 1930 United States Federal Census the former worked as a plumbing salesman in Portland.<sup>3</sup> The younger Daggett grew up in Gladstone, Oregon and graduated from West Linn High School in 1938.<sup>4</sup>

### WSC Experience

Daggett attended Washington State College (WSC) from 1938 through 1943, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in 1943.<sup>5</sup> He was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity during his time at WSC, as well as Crimson Circle. He was also a three-year letterman on the WSC baseball team, playing third base during his freshman season and moving to various

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<sup>1</sup> “Elson Cameron Daggett, Jr.,” *Ancestry.com*, [https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/26549503/person/352109443093/facts?\\_phsrc=ixh814&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/26549503/person/352109443093/facts?_phsrc=ixh814&_phstart=successSource) (Accessed August 6, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> “1930 United States Federal Census for Cameron E Daggett,” *Ancestry.com*, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4547515\\_00321/109697453?backurl=https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/26549503/person/352109443093/facts/citation/1002149790390/edit/record](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4547515_00321/109697453?backurl=https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/26549503/person/352109443093/facts/citation/1002149790390/edit/record) (Accessed August 6, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from E.C. Daggett to T.S. Meade, September 6, 1948, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

positions such as centerfield and second base in his sophomore year and beyond.<sup>6</sup> This earned him membership in the Grey “W” Club reserved for lettermen.<sup>7</sup>

Newspaper records from WSC show that Daggett was involved in several campus activities either through his military training or in conjunction with his fraternity membership. He was part of the yearbook staff, serving as Men’s Group House Representative, during the 1939 to 1940 academic year.<sup>8</sup> In October 1942, he was noted to be a second-year advanced military student for the 1942/1943 academic year, having achieved the rank of Cadet Captain.<sup>9</sup> He served as chairman of the decoration committee for the formal invitation Military Ball, held on April 30, 1943, and was a campus guest representing Sigma Chi for the Tau Kappa Epsilon “Kid Party” hosted the same month for local children in Pullman.<sup>10</sup> A September 28, 1943 article in *The Evergreen* revealed Daggett and Mary Lou Ford were a couple.<sup>11</sup>

## Wartime Service and Death

Daggett registered for service on April 16, 1943, and he entered the United States Army following his graduation from WSC. He completed his basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; “Strong Cougar Nine Stops Whitman With Pitching, Hitting,” *The Evergreen*, April 15, 1940; “Bushman, Chambers Pitch WSC to Double Wins Over Huskies, 2-0, 10-3,” *The Evergreen*, May 28, 1941; WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreen <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>7</sup> *Chinook*, 1943, pg. 305, WSU 46, WSU Publications – Chinooks at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>8</sup> *Chinook*, 1940, WSU 46, WSU Publications – Chinooks at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>9</sup> “Military Department Appoints,” *Washington State Evergreen*, October 13, 1942, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreen <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>10</sup> “Military Ball Set For April 30,” *The Evergreen*, April 2, 1943; “Little Kids To Be Prominent In Weekend Campus Functions,” *The Evergreen*, April 9, 1943, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreen <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>11</sup> “Dan Cupid Busy During Summer,” *The Evergreen*, September 28, 1943, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreen <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupublist.htm> at Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

where he received his commission. He served with the 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 383<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, Co. H.<sup>12</sup> The 96<sup>th</sup> trained in the Hawaiian Islands from July to September 1944 before participating in the assault landing in Leyte Gulf, Philippines Islands on October 20, 1944.<sup>13</sup> They faced heavy resistance on the island and it took over two months to secure control, which occurred by Christmas Day, 1944. The division spent the next three months providing security duty, training, and loading for the coming invasion of Okinawa. Daggett was promoted to First Lieutenant on December 9, 1944, at which time he also received the combat infantryman's badge.<sup>14</sup>

Okinawa was the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, located 350 miles south of Kyushu, and it offered a strategic location for Allied troops in the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands.<sup>15</sup> Known as "Operation Iceberg," the 60-mile long, 20-mile wide island was fortified by a 100,000-strong Japanese garrison commanded by Lieutenant General Ushijima Mitsuru. Air and sea attacks against Okinawa began as early as October 1944, and a more focused, sustained air attack carried out by Allied air operations in March 1945 destroyed hundreds of Japanese planes.<sup>16</sup> Despite this, the Japanese were still able to launch successful suicide attacks on Allied naval vessels. American underwater demolition teams and minesweepers worked through the end of March to clear obstacles from the landing beaches, and under the leadership of Pacific theatre commander Admiral Chester Nimitz, Fifth Fleet commander Admiral Raymond Spruance, and

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from E.C. Daggett to T.S. Meade, September 6, 1948, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>13</sup> "96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division," *history.army.mil*, <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/cbtchron/cc/096id.htm> (Accessed August 7, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Letter from E.C. Daggett to T.S. Meade, September 6, 1948, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>15</sup> Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Battle of Okinawa," *Britannica.com*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Battle-of-Okinawa> (Accessed August 7, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

U.S. ground troop commander Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., the invasion was launched on April 1, 1945.<sup>17</sup>

The 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division left the Philippines on March 27, 1945 for Okinawa and participated in the assault landing on April 1, 1945.<sup>18</sup> Their landing went unopposed and they established a beachhead near Sunabe. However, resistance increased as they advanced to Gakau Ridge, and fighting was fierce between April 7 to April 16.<sup>19</sup> It would take until June 22 for all resistance to be declared at an end. The Battle of Okinawa claimed the lives of more than 12,000 Americans and 100,000 Japanese; these figures included the commanding generals on both sides.<sup>20</sup> Civilian casualties were also high, with 100,000 losing their lives in combat or by suicide at the order of the Japanese military.<sup>21</sup>

Cam Daggett was killed in action on April 8, 1945 near the village of Uchitumari, Okinawa.<sup>22</sup> In a letter written to E.O. Holland, former president of WSC, by Daggett's father, Elson C. Daggett, Sr., on July 17, 1945, the younger Daggett's death was described, in part, as follows:

*At the time he was killed, both his company commander, Captain Wm. H.*

*Vanderlinden, Jr., and his battalion commander, Major Clark, were wounded.*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division," *history.army.mil*, <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/cbtchron/cc/096id.htm> (Accessed August 7, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Battle of Okinawa," *Britannica.com*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Battle-of-Okinawa> (Accessed August 7, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from E.C. Daggett to T.S. Meade, September 6, 1948, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

*The three of them were walking from the Battalion Headquarters down to inspect a cave on White Ridge, which Cam's unit had captured the day before, and in which he had placed one of our heavy machine guns. They were preparing for night defense. The enemy artillery opened up and caught them at about 12:35 p.m.*

*We can only hope and trust that the loss of so many of our fine young men will not be in vain.*<sup>23</sup>

## **Postwar Legacy**

Daggett posthumously received the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his “heroic service on Okinawa,” and the commander of the 383<sup>rd</sup> Infantry of the 96<sup>th</sup> Division, Colonel Edwin T. May, stated that Lieutenant Daggett’s “every action during the Philippine and Okinawa campaigns evidenced outstanding courage and leadership. That he was in every sense a true soldier.”<sup>24</sup> He was buried on Okinawa in the 96<sup>th</sup> Division Cemetery – Grave 169, but his remains were later interred in Lincoln Memorial Park, Portland, Oregon.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Letter from Elson Daggett, Sr. to E.O. Holland, July 17, 1945, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from E.C. Daggett to T.S. Meade, September 6, 1948, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; “U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963 for Elson C. Daggett,” *Ancestry.com*, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2375/40050\\_649063\\_0401-02305?pid=907357&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D2375%26h%3D907357%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_phsrc%3Dixh823%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=ixh823&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&\\_ga=2.36680096.18504031.1565326267-934170779.1561481608](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2375/40050_649063_0401-02305?pid=907357&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D2375%26h%3D907357%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3Dixh823%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ixh823&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.36680096.18504031.1565326267-934170779.1561481608) Accessed August 7, 2019.