

Interviewee: Henry Buczynski

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date: 21 September 2002

Location: Buczynski home in Cloquet, MN

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, October 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, November 2002

Henry Buczynski was born 27 October 1917 on a farm near Gilman, in Alberta Township, Benton County, Minnesota. The youngest of ten children of Polish immigrant parents, he attended a local school and helped his parents on the farm. Henry's mother died and his father sold the farm just prior to Henry's induction into the US Army in January 1942.

In the Army, Henry attended a school for bakers and cooks (1942), then completed a course in mess management (1943). He then served at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, in a training unit (1943-44) before being shipped to Europe in February 1945 with the 413th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 20th Armored Division. This unit saw very limited action in Germany during the war's final month. Henry's unit was in the US, preparing for deployment to the Pacific, but V-J Day in August 1945 made this unnecessary. Henry remained stateside until his discharge in January 1946 with the rank of lance sergeant.

A civilian once again, Henry worked in Chicago as a meat cutter (1946-47) before returning to Minnesota and settling in Cloquet. He got married (wife Marion) and raised a family, and worked at Northwest Paper (now Sappi) and later Diamond Match, both in Cloquet, before retiring in 1979.

Interview Key:

T = Thomas Saylor

H = Henry Buczynski

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 21st of September 2002 and this is the interview with Mr. Buczynski. First, Mr. Buczynski, on the record, thanks very much for taking time this morning to talk with me. I know from a little bit of the conversation we had before the tape that your parents both came over here from Poland and that you grew up on a farm in the area around St. Cloud. Is that right?

H: Right.

T: Did you go to school in that area, too?

H: Yes.

T: How long did you attend school?

H: About five years.

T: About five years. Did you work on the farm then?

H: On the farm as I went to school.

T: That means you were out of school and working on the farm with your folks on the 7th of December 1941. I'm wondering if you remember what you were doing when you first heard that news.

H: Really I can't tell you what I remembered but I know it was a bad thing. I've seen it on TV and didn't think much of it. It was just rough to look at.

T: You were about twenty-four years of age, because you were born in 1917, right?

H: Right.

T: So you were about twenty four years of age. You were someone who was draft material, shall we say, for the service. Did the United States becoming involved in war worry you? That you would now become involved yourself?

H: You mean right here?

T: Yes. I mean you were someone who was probably going to be drafted for service once the US got involved in the war in 1941. Were you worried or concerned then that suddenly the war was going to mean something personal for you?

H: I'll tell you, if we had to go through it again I'd be right there to go if I was able to.

T: Did you volunteer or were you drafted for service?

(1, A, 39)

H: I was drafted.

T: Do you remember getting the letter from the government saying it was time to report?

H: Oh, yes. I still have it.

T: Do you still have it?

H: *(laughs)* I still have it.

T: How did you react when that letter came in the mail?

H: Actually it was just me and my sister and my mom and dad on the farm. I said, "Well, I'm going to go anyhow. I know I'm going to go. I'm going to go up there and do the best I can and we're just going to have to get rid of the farm." So that's what we did. We just sold our cattle and the machinery and all the rest of the stuff that we had there. My mother passed away just shortly before that. She passed away in 1941.

T: Was selling the farm hard for your dad?

H: Yes it was. But when there's no alternative, you've just got to do it.

T: Do you feel that perhaps selling the farm was a response to not having you as the only son around anymore to work there?

H: Not really, because I felt that I was going to go out there and do something for my country anyway. One way or another.

T: So had you not been drafted, do you think you might soon have volunteered?

H: At that time I couldn't tell you. I got my letter to go to up to service and I went to work and they told me that I was going to get a job on the side. They told me I was draft age so I could come right back to the recruiting station, and I said, "When do I go?" And they said, "Pretty quick." That started real quick from then on.

T: And you were in service in January of 1942 so you were pretty quick. Did you go to CC Camps at all in the thirties?

H: No.

T: Can you say a few sentences about what it was like to grow up on a farm in the 1930s?

H: In those days we didn't know anything else. We just went to a little country school and came home and worked and the next day go to school again. That was all there was to it. Either going to school or working. That was it. I didn't have any great education because there was work on the farm. At that time you just had to work. People had kids on the farm to work. They didn't worry about school too much.

T: There was just you and your sister at home at this point?

H: At that time, yes. The rest of them were all gone. I had brothers and they were on their own. My sisters were on their own. There were just the two of us.

T: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

H: Five of each. Five boys and five girls.

T: So you were the youngest?

H: I was the last one.

T: You were the last one. So when your folks got off the farm they were a bit older already?

H: Yes. My mother passed away before we got off the farm. My dad was in the late sixties.

T: So he was perhaps ready to move on anyway.

H: Yes, he was ready to move on.

T: What's a positive memory you have about growing up on a farm in the 1930s?

H: It was a lot of fun.

T: What was fun?

H: Going to school. Sundays. By myself in the woods someplace. That was a lot of fun. Play ball. I pitched ball for quite a few years when I got out of school. Going hunting. Fishing.

T: From the way you talk, growing up on the farm was a pretty neat thing.

H: Yes.

T: Now, you got drafted early 1942. Where did you go for basic training?

H: I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for basic training and from Fort Knox we went to Camp Campbell, Kentucky, which is Fort Campbell now.

T: Now Kentucky, that's a long way from Minnesota. Had you been in that part of the country before?

H: No.

T: Had you traveled much as a young person?

H: No.

T: What can you say about Kentucky as a place? You'd been there for the first time then.

(1, A, 121)

H: I couldn't say much because while I was over there in the service, it was just all the service. You couldn't go any place. You were in service and what I was doing was going to school and do what you have to do.

T: Did you get off base, have passes to go to town occasionally?

H: Now and then yes.

T: What's the closest town to Fort Knox?

H: Now this is a long ways back...

T: Yes. Testing your geography skills too.

H: Clarksville, Tennessee.

T: You were there sometimes?

H: Oh, yes.

T: What did you observe? What can you say about that little town?

H: It was a little town and I would have a few beers and come back to camp.

T: How was it different from going to town and having a few beers up here [Cloquet]?

H: I don't think there was any difference. Over there when I was in the service, you'd go in and have a few beers and then you'd get back home and get back to camp and have work to do the next day.

T: Talk about basic training for yourself.

H: Really I didn't go all through it. I had short basic training because when I was scheduled to go to school for cooks and bakers, that would take up my half a day. After the half a day of school I would go back in the kitchen and help out in the kitchen. That was my work as far as basic training was concerned. I would go out on marches and I would go out on rifle squads and target shooting and stuff like that for effect. Just to qualify. You have to qualify for all that stuff regardless if I was a cook or mess sergeant or what. I still had to do that so that I would have the qualification.

T: It was early on that you went toward cooks and bakers as a profession in the Army?

H: Yes.

T: How was it you got involved in that to begin with? Being a cook?

H: I just liked it.

T: Did they ask you?

H: Oh, yes. They asked me when I was at home but I had a little experience of it. At home on the farm. And then I was interviewed when I went into service and what I'd like to do, and what field I'd like to go into, and if I had any special things I liked to do. I mentioned that I liked cooking and stuff like that, and that quick I was in that school.

T: That's it. They asked you and then they pushed you ahead and let you go in that direction. Interesting. Describe for us the training by which one becomes an Army cook.

H: It's not very easy, because being an Army cook is just a little different than in civilian life. You go into a bigger scale when you're cooking for a hundred and sixty men. It isn't like cooking for two or three people. Over here you're probably going into a pound of meat and over there you're going into fifteen pounds of meat. First they haul in food. They teach you so much per person. If you're going four people to a pound let's say and if you have a hundred and sixty people, then you figure how much meat you have. That is the first step that you have to learn in service. A balanced diet and make sure that the people--

END OF BEGINNING PORTION OF TAPE. COUNTER AT 188.

FRAGMENT FROM ORIGINAL PART OF SIDE A BEGINS AT COUNTER 367.

T:...pretty much the same guys for quite a period of time.

H: Yes.

T: Can you talk about your time...?

H: We trained and we shipped out. We went overseas together. With all the good luck that we had we came back together.

T: You finally shipped out to go overseas in January of 1945.

H: Yes.

T: Do you remember finally getting ready to go overseas, packing your bags to go somewhere?

H: Yes.

T: Do you remember that?

H: Oh, yes.

T: What can you say about that?

H: One thing about it, when you shipped overseas you were just limited to what you could use. You didn't bring anything else. What the military says you could take, you took. Nothing else.

T: Did you go over on an ocean liner?

H: Yes. A troop ship.

T: What do you remember about the voyage going overseas?

H: We went over on the *Thomas E. Berry* and we came back on the *Hermitage*. It's like I said, it was something new to me. Really it didn't bother me as much as it bothered a lot of those guys. They didn't have sea legs.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

T: You thought you had sea legs.

H: It didn't really bother me as much but a lot of the GIs got sick.

T: Did they? Can you recount an experience from that trip going overseas there that sort of sticks in your mind? Maybe something that happened on the ship or that was symbolic for that whole trip going overseas.

H: Not really. Just like in my case over here, if they needed me to go in the kitchen I'd go in the kitchen and help get the food ready and stuff like that. Outside of that, it was just get out there and go over.

T: What were the quarters like on the ship?

H: Actually, on our ship when we went over it was three bunks, four bunks, and if you didn't hang onto the chain and put it under your head, you fell out.

T: Were you down low or up high?

H: I was on the third bunk.

T: So it was important not to fall out.

H: It was really important. Yes. Very important.

T: How did you pass your free time on board that ship? You must have had a lot of time to kill.

H: Playing cards and reading. I don't know. We just had to roll with the punches, I guess.

T: Were you a good card player?

H: I wasn't that good.

T: Other guys were better?

H: You find some good ones. You find some real good ones. You find some that would make the rounds especially on blackjack or poker or something like that. We had some shysters.

T: You were mixing with guys from different units here now, weren't you on the ship?

H: Yes. We watched those that were trying to sneak in and do some card playing because those are the ones that know what they're doing.

T: They're making the rounds. They kind of know what they're doing.
You said you read, too.

H: As much as I could.

T: What did you like to read?

(1, B, 48)

H: Mostly newspapers. See what's going on.

T: Did you get news on board the ship?

H: Oh, yes.

T: A week, ten days later you landed in France, right?

H: Yes.

T: What kind of thoughts were going through your mind as it was suddenly a real thing that you were over there?

H: Over there you can't think a whole lot. The only thing you say is, well, we're doing this today... I wonder what we're going to do tomorrow. Just wondering what's coming. You don't think. You let other people think for you.

T: Is that a good thing or a bad thing in your mind?

H: I think it's all right. Especially when you don't know what you're going to do. Let somebody else do it. Let them tell you what to do, and if you do it right, you're in the ball game.

T: I imagine there must have been some guys who didn't respond in such a relaxed form like you did. You mentioned kind of rolling with the punches and taking one day at a time which sounds like a good way to do it. Were there other people who weren't quite so successful at taking things as they come?

H: Now and then you find a few that would figure, hey look, why should we do this? But after a while they just find out that that's the best way to do it. Go along and do what you're supposed to do and get along.

T: By this time you had been in the service three years, or a little more than three years. You were pretty much used to the military way of life by now.

H: Yes.

T: From France when you landed you moved into France and to Belgium, is that right?

H: Yes. We went into Belgium; moved through France and to Holland, Belgium, and just we just kept moving.

T: You were in an armored division that was moving fairly quickly into Germany then.

H: Yes.

T: Can you remember what you might call your first nervous moment as a soldier on the continent?

H: Lots of them.

T: What's one that sticks in your mind?

H: One that we really had problems with was (***) Charlie.

T: Can you talk about that?

H: Not too much. Not too much. This plane would sneak in and go over and I think...

T: A German plane?

H: Yes. Finally they kind of (***). I don't know how, or why, and when, but they knew he was coming.

T: This was an observation plane?

H: Yes.

T: What went through your mind when you heard a plane up there for the first time?

H: Be real quiet.

T: Was there a sense of nervousness or excitement in your mind or what?

H: Similar to that. Mostly it was: you better stay the hell out of the way. Don't give your position away.

T: How do you not give your position away? I mean you have things, pots and pans that bang together, fires make light and heat.

H: That's the main thing. Stay quiet. Stay calm and stay out of the way. That's what you have to do. If you have something else to do, you have to do it.

T: In an armored division you had tanks. How close to the tanks, to the front line, were you typically, in the kitchen?

H: I would be right there. We were pretty close. Mostly always pretty close. It all depends on what progression you go. If they were out on the range, or clearing out, or scouting, or something like that we stayed in behind. They would always let you know when you could pull out.

T: How did being close to the front line inhibit how you cooked, or what you cooked, or when you cooked?

H: You really have to cook what they give you. You couldn't sit out there and cook a roast beef or something like that (*laughs*). There was a lot of dehydrated things. It all depends on where you were. If you were in the front lines, you wouldn't have any fresh vegetables or anything like that. It's mostly C rations, K rations, chocolate bars or candy bars, and stuff like that.

Yes. It was like I say, you have to do what they tell you to do.

T: You were preparing food for lots of guys, right?

H: Yes.

T: What kind of things could you prepare? Dehydrated stuff or what?

H: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There was a lot of dehydrated things. It all depends on where you were. If you were in the front lines, just like I say, you wouldn't have any fresh vegetables or anything like that. It's mostly C rations, K rations and stuff like that.

T: In your capacity, were you always a cook from January until the end of the war, or were there times that you did other jobs or had other functions as a soldier?

H: Pretty much always a cook. We did, just like I say, we did take our training in the rifle range and stuff like that.

(1, B, 148)

T: But that was so if you had to be a soldier in a situation, you could be.

H: You had to do it.

T: What do you mean when you say that?

H: If they tell you to just throw that gun on your shoulder and dig in, you dig in. That's why. You don't just do what you want to do.

T: Was that the case at times, that you had to actually be a soldier and dig in?

H: Oh, yes.

T: Can you talk a bit about that? Because for you that's a long way from a field kitchen, I suppose?

H: Yes. In the field kitchen it's something when you've got shells going over you and bullets flying. You have to dig in. It's one of those things. There's a long time when I got out that I wouldn't even talk about it.

T: Is that right?

H: Yes.

T: I'll be honest. You're not the first person who's told us that. That they didn't want to, or found it difficult to, talk about things. Yourself, why was it after the war that you found you didn't want to talk about things, or chose not to?

H: It's a kind of a tough subject that... You really can't explain it. There's a heck of a long time that I wouldn't really mention the thing. But then as you kind of... grows out of you.

T: Does that mean then after the war if you would go to the VFW Club for example, or if you were with other veterans, would you talk to them about things that you might not talk to other people?

H: Not too much. You keep that stuff out of your mind a little bit.

T: What caused the change for you, because we're sitting here talking today? What caused the change in you, do you think?

H: I don't know. I just hope people aren't the same. Some of them, like you would say, adjust to things faster than others. It probably took me a little bit longer to

adjust because, well, maybe I had it a little rougher than somebody else. Or maybe somebody else had it rougher than me. It takes a long time.

T: How old were you before you felt comfortable even talking a little bit about things?

H: It took a while.

T: If I had come to you twenty years ago, let's say right about the time you retired or got pushed out of Diamond Match, if I had come to you then and asked you for an interview, would you have yes or no?

H: That wasn't too bad.

T: Yes?

H: Yes.

T: So by that time it was already a little bit easier for you?

H: Yes.

T: Would you say there are still things today that you prefer not to talk about?

H: No.

T: So you feel that it's taken fifty years or so but now it's okay?

H: It's worn off.

T: I know from my reading of history that in those last months of the war that things moved rather quickly. Our armored divisions covered a lot of territory and you must have come along right with them. With that division. Most of this through Germany and then through southern Germany, right?

H: Yes.

T: Did you come into contact with German civilians at any time?

H: Not really, no. Personally, I felt so different to stay away. Maybe a lot of them did. I was a little skeptical. I stayed away.

T: Of the German civilians?

H: Yes.

T: What do you think caused that for you?

H: I don't know. I think I was thinking about home too much.

T: Was it hard for you being far away from home?

H: For a while, yes.

T: Was it harder over in Europe than it had been stateside?

H: No. I don't think so. Just like a snot nose kid that didn't know a hell of a lot, you take him away from what he's used to do and you shook him up a little. You just had to adjust to it that's all.

T: What did you do to adjust to a difficult situation? Being far away from home?

H: I don't know. Just have to adjust, that's all.

T: Were you someone who kept in touch a lot? Were you a regular letter writer?

H: Oh, yes.

T: Who did you write to?

H: My dad and my sisters and relations. I had a couple of girlfriends too, so that helped out.

T: That kept you busy writing I guess.

H: Yes.

T: Did you get mail from home a lot?

H: Oh, yes.

T: How important was that to you, to get mail from home?

H: Very important. Very, very important.

T: What did you look forward to in those letters?

H: To see how things were and, of course, the people at home. They wanted to know just what you were doing and most of the letters were censored anyhow. You couldn't put anything that wasn't supposed to be in there. All you could tell them was: I'm okay and hope to get home soon. That's all.

T: Why do you think you liked getting mail from home so much?

H: I don't know. Really most of the people, most of the GIs, liked to get mail because they wanted to know that people still thought about them and wanted them to be home. To make them feel good and that they were still thinking about them.

T: Would you say that described you pretty well, too?

H: Yes.

(1, B, 243)

T: As a soldier you ended up near Austria, near the Austrian border at the end of the war. What's something that you saw or something that you experienced during those months that sticks in your mind?

H: Really, I'll tell you. I got everything out of my mind. I couldn't place one thing in front of another. I try to get everything out and I did.

T: You mean out as sort of pushed your memories aside?

H: Yes.

T: Do you remember how you reacted when you heard the news that President Roosevelt had died in April of 1945?

H: Not very good. One thing I remember that they were just wondering, most of the GIs, saying I hope somebody gets in there that will do just what he would do. Carry on his work.

T: Do you remember where you were when you got that news?

H: No I don't.

**TAPE 1, SIDE B ENDS AT COUNTER 259.
RETURN TO SIDE A OF TAPE 1. COUNTER AT 188.**

T: A month after President Roosevelt died, the war against Germany ended. By that time you were down there at Salzburg I think you mentioned. What do you remember about V-E Day? May the 8th.

H: I tell you one thing, I do remember that the GIs they knew that something was coming. They had their bottles pretty well filled and when that thing happened everybody started. They pulled out their bottles and had a good time.

T: You too?

H: Yes.

T: Would you describe your reaction to the end of war as excited, relieved or something else?

H: Relieved.

T: Once the war was over, what started to go through your mind then? Because you didn't leave Germany right away.

H: No. Let's get home. That's what we wanted to do. We wanted to get home. Right quick.

T: Like everybody else I suppose.

H: Yes.

T: You didn't go right away. You were in Germany dealing with the civilian population after the war was over. You were stationed there. What can you say about that time? After the war. Did your job change at all?

H: No.

T: You were still feeding soldiers.

H: I was still a soldier and I was still doing the same job. The only thing, that we were relieved. We knew that the load wasn't as heavy to carry.

T: Did you come into contact, now, with civilians?

H: Not too much.

T: When you did, what were those encounters like?

H: I really didn't. You have to understand there were two different kinds of people. As far as the civilians were concerned. There were the civilians that wanted to get you, and there were the civilians that wanted to keep you there. You see what I mean?

T: What's an example of someone who wanted, when you said, to keep you there? They were anxious to have the Americans remain?

H: Yes. They liked to keep it. They knew that the Americans over there were trying to save them from Hitler. Get through with the bombing and all that stuff. As far as the... We're talking about Germany now. The SS, if you understand what that is.

That's Hitler's troops. Once they got rid of them, the people were great. That's the way they felt about it. Of course we felt about the same way too.

T: With the war over, was it possible for you to go to town on leave or on evenings and actually see Germany? And to see the people?

H: A percentage of the people would talk to you about it and they would... they could speak American pretty well. Then of course, don't get me wrong, because the American soldier, the real soldier, could pinpoint the ones that you don't want to talk to right quick. I mean, you could look at them and you know whether they wanted you around or not.

T: Could you do that too?

H: Oh, yes.

T: What was it about someone that made you nervous or skeptical?

H: I stayed away from them. Simple as that. I leave them alone.

T: What was it that you noticed that you would say, "Not that person over there. I don't trust them."

H: Just people. There's a lot of people that didn't want to talk to you. You can't understand what they have on their mind but you can visualize what they're thinking. Those are the people you have to be careful about.

T: Even if they didn't say it.

H: You knew.

T: Did you feel comfortable going to town alone or not?

H: Never go alone.

T: What was the nearest town? Was it Salzburg? The nearest German town to where you were at the end of the war?

H: I don't know the name of the town.

T: But you didn't feel comfortable going to town alone?

H: No, not really. We never did. I didn't anyway. Maybe a lot of them did, but I didn't.

T: Would you carry a sidearm or a weapon when you went to town?

H: Yes.

T: Even when the war was over?

H: Concealed. When the war was over, then we didn't.

T: Then you didn't.

H: No.

T: You covered a lot of Germany. I noticed the map you showed me for your unit. From the north all the way to the south. Was there a time when you saw something that was uncomfortable, or that was something you didn't think you'd see when you were over there as a soldier?

H: The Rhine River.

T: And what impact did that make on you?

H: You have to go across with the big equipment over pontoons. It gets kind of shaky.

T: You're driving trucks with your stuff. Did you drive truck yourself?

H: No.

T: But your equipment was on trucks. That's right.

H: We went over on pontoons. With big equipment.

T: Do pontoons move up and down?

H: Yes.

T: Were you walking or riding?

H: Riding (*laughs*).

T: I think that might have made me more nervous than crossing the ocean on that big ship. When did you cross the Rhine? Was that March already?

H: I don't know.

T: When was it that you finally shipped back to the States then after the war ended? Was it a couple months?

H: No. I would say maybe... well, let's think a minute. In that area. I don't know. It was a while.

T: Were you concerned that you might be redeployed to the Pacific?

H: We were. We were going to the Pacific.

T: Were you?

H: We were supposed to. We were scheduled to go. Then we came back and just as we were going to go over it was over.

T: So you were back in the States...

H: We were headed over.

T: Headed over to the Pacific when the war against Japan ended?

H: Yes.

T: So the end of the war in Europe for you in May wasn't necessarily the end of the war period.

H: No. Not right away.

T: How did that make you feel? This thought that, "Oh, my God, now I'm going to the Pacific."

H: You had to do what you had to do. That's all. I mean we were going.

T: Were there other people around you who took that news a little more, a little harder?

H: Felt the same way. Felt the same way.

T: Just get it over with.

H: Get it over with.

T: You were in the States then on route to the Pacific when the war against Japan ended. How did you react to the news that war was over?

H: Good. I was free.

T: And now that you knew, that in a sense, you were going to be getting out.

H: Yes.

T: When you got out of the service did you come back to the St. Cloud area or did you come back up here [Cloquet]?

H: I didn't come back to the St. Cloud area at all. I came back here first. Then I went to St. Cloud.

T: Back to Cloquet?

H: Yes. And then from there I went to Chicago. I was moving around a little bit.

T: Why did you go to Chicago?

H: Look for a job.

T: Did you have friends or relatives down there?

H: Yes.

T: Were you successful in finding a job down there?

H: Not really. Not what I wanted.

(1, A, 296)

T: What did you want?

H: I was going into steam fitting but I went into meat cutting. I couldn't find steam fitting because I didn't have a card--you had to have a card. You needed a card then. I went over with my brother -in-law then. He was supposed to find me a job over there, but he wasn't even working when he said he was working. He just wanted a ride up there, that's all. So on the way back I stopped at the Columbia Packing, right there in Chicago, and asked them if they needed a meat cutter and I went to work.

T: How long did you stay in Chicago?

H: About a year and a half. Then I wanted to be back in Cloque, so I moved back here. And here I am.

T: What can you say about that time in Chicago? That's really your first stop after being a soldier, right?

H: Yes. I didn't like it at all.

T: Why not?

H: I don't know. Too many people for one. I shouldn't have stayed where... Of course, her family was here and my family was here, so we just made up our minds to come here.

T: You met your wife, Marion, when?

Wife: 1946.

T: So you didn't know him until he was out of the service?

Wife: No.

T: Are you from this area? From the Cloquet area?

Wife: I'm from down by Aitken. Then my folks moved to Carlton. That's where I was when the war broke out. I worked in a grocery store there. The fellow I worked for was a friend of Hank's. He came down to the store to see Ed--who I worked for. That's where I met him.

H: That's where she saw me and she glommed onto me.

T: I can see why. Good looking Army cook like this. And you're married fifty-five years, so something's gone right over the years I guess. So you weren't unhappy leaving Chicago.

H: I just didn't like the place because in the first place there were too many people, and secondly I wanted to get back home.

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T: When you were out of the service, what was your initial reaction to being out of the military after all those years and being a civilian again? How did you feel about that?

H: Real good. I felt real good. The one simple reason is that I didn't have to take orders. I could give orders.

T: You described yourself as a guy who adjusted pretty well to the military way of life though.

H: Yes. Of course, when I was involved and working in the kitchen I did give orders.

T: Did you give orders better or take orders better?

H: Both ways. You have to learn to do it or suffer the consequences.

T: So you were happy to be out of the service. What was the first thing you did when you got out of the service?

H: Do you want to know all of it?

T: Sure.

H: *(laughs)* Me and my buddy we got ourselves a couple of quarts and we were drunk for about a week.

T: Pent up frustrations or just happy to be out? Was that a guy you knew from service or a guy you knew from home?

H: Guy I was with in service and came home the same day.

T: So you were happy to be out of the military, weren't you?

H: Right.

T: What would you say, in general, as you think of the years '45, '46, '47, what was the hardest thing for you with readjusting to be a civilian?

H: I adjusted pretty well.

T: Was finding a job hard for you?

H: No, because I had my job waiting for me. It wasn't that. I couldn't pinpoint anything that was real hard.

T: What was the easiest thing for you coming out and being a civilian?

H: Having fun.

T: Not wearing olive drab green I guess every day either.

H: That's right.

T: When you were a soldier, what did the war mean for you? Why were you doing it when you were a soldier?

H: Because I was asked to. I was told to. If we wouldn't have done what we did, we would have to be working for somebody that we didn't want to work for. That's why everybody as a whole wanted to go out there and get it over with and do it.

T: Fifty-seven years later--now--how do you reflect on that?

H: I felt that we did a good job.

T: What's the most important way that the war changed your life?

H: I don't think it changed my life.

T: You think you're the same person that you would have been without that experience?

H: Yes.

T: That's interesting. Anything else you want to add, Mr. Buczynski, that we didn't cover, or something you had in your mind and you say, "I'm looking for the right time to tell that story?"

H: No. Not really. Not really. I was glad that it was over with and I hope that they do the right thing right now in what they're doing. I hope that they just don't let people ruin our lives and take over so we would be in a predicament like we were. Now they got them on the run (**). [In reference to September 11 attacks (2001) and the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.]

T: Thanks very much.

END OF INTERVIEW