

**Interviewee: Augustine Martinez**

**Interviewer: Thomas Saylor**

**Date of interview: 14 November 2002**

**Location: spare room in the house of Mr. Martinez's sister, St. Paul, MN**

**Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, December 2002**

**Edited by: Thomas Saylor, January 2003**

Augustine Martinez was born on 28 August 1919 in Zaragoza, Coahuila, Mexico, one of eleven children of Mexican parents. His family, migrant workers, moved to St. Paul when Augustine was seven. Augustine completed the sixth grade, then held a number of jobs, including at the meatpacking houses in South St. Paul, before starting in 1943 at American Hoist and Derrick in St. Paul. In May 1944, with a wife and two children, Augustine was drafted into the US Army.

Following Basic Training, Augustine was made a rifleman. In January '45 Augustine shipped out to Europe and joined Company C, 264<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. This unit saw action in Germany until V-E Day in May '45. Following several months in France, in November '45 Augustine was shipped back to the US and discharged, with the rank of private first class.

Again a civilian, Augustine returned to production work at American Hoist and Derrick in St. Paul, retiring in 1980 with thirty-seven years of service. He raised his family in St. Paul, and remained in the city after his retirement. Augustine is a member of AMVETS Post 5, St. Paul.

*Bronze Star recipient for service in 1945*

**Interview Key:**

**T = Thomas Saylor**

**A = Augustine Martinez**

**[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 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 and this is our interview with Augustine Martinez. First, Mr. Martinez, on the record, on tape, thanks very much for speaking with me today.

A: Glad to be here and glad to answer your questions.

T: We've been talking for a few minutes already and I've learned the following. You were born on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1919 in Santa Costa, Mexico.

A: Santa de Coahuila, Mexico.

T: Coahuila? C-o-a-h-u-i-l-a?

A: Something like that. I've got it written down someplace.

T: You were one of eleven children; you had three brothers and seven sisters. Your parents came to the United States the year you were born, 1919.

A: Right.

T: At about age seven you were in Minnesota and your parents were working as migrant workers.

A: Right.

T: It wasn't long thereafter that they settled in St. Paul. And you did complete the sixth grade.

A: Sixth grade. That's as far as I went.

T: Was that in St. Paul here?

A: In St. Paul. Five, six schools. All the way around here in St. Paul.

T: So your parents moved around a lot.

A: Yes.

T: After you finished school you were working in the fields, I guess, as a migrant worker.

A: Working in the fields. Back and forth. That's why I was only in the sixth grade, because they used to take me. Every time my dad said, "Okay, let's go. Let's go." Summer comes and let's go. Let's go. I came back and the teachers... well, I spent three years in the third grade. Every time I would come home to the school, "Ah, you're back again, Martinez!" "Yes, I'm back again. Here I am."

T: So you were in school a lot of years, but you only completed sixth.

A: That's all. Because in the summertime they'd take me out and go out in the fields up there.

T: At home with your folks and your brothers and sisters, did you speak English or Spanish?

A: English and Spanish. My mom spoke Spanish and a few words in English. My dad the same thing. But me, my brothers and sisters, we all spoke English. I never lost my English. I learned my English from way back in Texas.

T: Your Spanish you mean.

A: Spanish and English. I never lost my Spanish, and I never lost my English. We were all together. All my English and Spanish all the way through now.

T: When your parents talked to each other, did they speak Spanish to each other?

A: They'd speak Spanish. And they would speak Spanish to me.

T: Did you answer in English or Spanish?

A: In Spanish.

T: If you asked your dad a question in English, would he answer you in English?

A: No, in Spanish. Otherwise he always talked in Spanish to me.

T: You had a number of jobs before you...

A: Yes.

T: You started American Hoist and Derrick here in St. Paul in what looks like about 1942 or '43.

A: Around there someplace. Around there.

T: I think your discharge papers said 1943.

A: Yes, they did.

T: Can you describe, when you started there, before you went into the service, what kind of work were you doing?

**(1, A, 64)**

A: Before I went to the service?

T: Yes. For American Hoist.

A: I was still at American Hoist when I went in the service.

T: What did you do at American Hoist?

A: I was a second melter [Metal-refining furnace operators and tenders, known as blowers and melters, oversee the loading of the furnace with raw materials and taking of samples, and overall operation of the furnace]. Second melter. You know, milled steel. See that rod when they're taking the carbon out? (*pointing at photograph of steel mill workers*) I was second melter. He was the first melter. I was a second melter. When he was there he was in charge. He figured all that. He'd take a look at how much a guy--arcing and all. See if it was already milled. I'm the second melter. When he used to go on vacation then I would take over.

T: This was before you went in the service?

A: Before I went in the service. Yes. Then we went together, back and forth all the time. All that time.

T: How many hours a week were you working?

A: Eight hours a day. Sometimes more than that. Even Saturdays sometimes. There was plenty of work. Even Saturdays I worked. Absolutely.

T: You were married in 1940.

A: Yes.

T: When was your first child born?

A: That would be... I have them written someplace.

T: You had two kids before you went into the service, right?

A: Yes. I had two boys before I went in the service. You see the picture there?  
*(points at postwar photograph of self with then-wife and three children, taken c. 1950)*

T: Yes.

A: And a girl. That's all.

T: She was not born before you went in the service though.

A: No. No. She was after. She was born after. Arelia was born after I came back. It was 1950 or '51 when she was born.

T: So you were a married man with two kids when you were drafted into the service.

A: Yes. In May of 1944.

T: Let me ask you, first of all, when the US entered the war, this was December 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor. Do you remember what you were doing when you first heard about that news?

A: You mean at home?

T: Yes. When you first heard the news about Pearl Harbor, do you remember what you were doing?

A: I was working, just like everybody else. Working. Just working. And the news came out and things like that. It was bad. I felt bad about it because it was no good for us. It's no good. It's just like the tall buildings in New York [reference to World Trade Towers and 11 September 2001]. We heard about. The whole world got changed today. You know that. The same thing when I heard about Pearl Harbor. That was terrible. People dying. Ships went down. Planes. They took them all by surprise. That was dirty! That's all I can say. That was dirty!

T: Now you were still a Mexican citizen. This is 1941.

A: Oh, yes. I was already an American citizen.

T: You were an American citizen in 1941 or not? You were a Mexican citizen?

A: No. No. I wasn't an American citizen yet. Because I got married then, and then I went in the service.

T: Then you became an American citizen.

A: Then an American citizen.

T: So when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941 you were a Mexican citizen.

A: Yes, right.

T: As a Mexican citizen, did you think of yourself as American?

A: I think as an American. I felt like an American. I never thought of Americans as anything like that. But they could have given me a slip like my dad, that every year he had to turn it in. Every year in the Post Office.

T: Because your dad was not a citizen.

A: Right. He had to go there and have that card every year. They didn't do anything and report him back. He had to report that because he had been here so many years. He didn't have to go back any more. All that happens, you present that card. I don't know about those things. They could have done the same thing with me. They could have given me a card and have to present at the Post Office. But when I went in the service, they got me right that day. "Want to be an American citizen?" First thing, I said, "Yes! Absolutely I want to be American." Just like that.

T: Did you get a letter from the military, a draft letter, while you were still a Mexican citizen? You were drafted as a Mexican citizen?

A: How was it anyway? *(pauses five seconds, thinks)* I think I got a letter that you had to be... oh, yes. In Olivia, Minnesota, when I was working the fields. I was sixteen then. All the sixteen [year old] persons had to register.

T: For the draft.

A: Right. So I registered. In Olivia, Minnesota. I was already a Mexican citizen. Yes. Not American. I was still working the fields. So I registered. Everybody had to register. I registered. A couple years after that they came back. They drafted me. That's the way it is.

T: Let me ask you, how did you react to getting the news that you had been drafted?

A: I didn't like it because I had children already and a wife. Work and food and things like that. I didn't feel good. Hey, what's going to happen here? You go away for months and months, and during a war you never know if you will come back or not. Everything was on my mind there. They're left behind, you know. You cry. You just don't feel good.

**(1, A, 151)**

T: Sure. How did your wife take the news?

A: It was terrible. We cried. All the kids. Remember that [train] depot here on Kellogg?

T: The St. Paul Depot?

A: Yes. We went there. That's where I got transferred on the train.

T: Your wife went down to the station with you?

A: Yes. That was hard. Oh, my! It was hard. I'm not kidding you. Oh, I remember. I cry. All the way. I still cry. It was terrible! It's worse than war leaving your family like that.

T: You were almost twenty-five years old.

A: Yes. When I went in. It was terrible.

T: Was a deferment possible for you for the kind of work you did at American Hoist and Derrick?

A: Oh, no. No. They held me back a year.

T: Oh, so the military wanted you before you actually went in?

A: Yes. Yes. But American Hoist was short. They started hiring women. They held me back. That was one thing. They kept me back. They said, "Martinez, we can't let you go." I knew I didn't want to go then either. Forget it. But they came around, they called me in the office. "Hey, Martinez, you've got to go. I can't do anything. You have to go." Oh, no! There I went. I had to report. I think there was a letter. I don't know what happened to it. I had to report to Fort Snelling [in Minneapolis] for examination--physical. They examine you and all that stuff. Everything went all right. Number one. I said, "No, no, no. I'm old. I can't go. I have a wife." They said, "No. Sorry, Martinez. There's nothing wrong with your hands. You can hold a rifle, can't you?" Oh, boy! That was it. That's it.

A: So you were not happy about going into the service.

A: No. I wasn't happy. I didn't think anybody was happy. I wasn't happy. Those that volunteered, maybe... They were a lot younger. I didn't care for that. No way.

T: Let me ask you, you mentioned that at American Hoist and Derrick that women were being hired on.

A: Yes.

T: Do you remember more women showing up at work?

A: They were showing up. When I left there they were coming in. Driving trucks and things like that. Bringing here and bringing there. The rest I didn't see any more. I don't know what happened afterwards.

T: How about on the shop floor where you worked? Were there women there too?

A: No. Not in the milling department. Just men. That's all. This, like Wally, he was an old timer and the other one and the other one. They were there and they took over.

T: They were older though.

A: Yes. The women did something else over here. Working in the mill making sand or driving a truck or driving this or something else. Clean up and things like that.

T: Where you saw those women working, were those jobs that used to be done by men?

A: By men. Yes. A lot of times by men. Labor and all that stuff by men.

T: So there really were lots more women working there when you left than when you started?

A: I just saw a few women working. But when I left there might have been more women there. But I think I asked questions. A lot of women here? Yes. They took over the mill. They had two women working the mill making sand for the molders and sweeping over here and picking up this and picking up that. Unloading cars and things like that.

T: To jump ahead for a minute, when you got out of the service in December 1945, did you go back to American Hoist?

A: American Hoist. I went back.

T: Did you get your job back?

A: Yes. I got my job back. All my rights back. I got three weeks vacation, pay and everything. Everything I got back. Everything.

T: I'm wondering if the women that you saw during the wartime, did they stay on the job after the war?

A: No. No. Everybody disappeared.



T: The women disappeared?

A: Yes. They didn't work anymore. When I came back, I guess the guys were coming back already. There were no more women working. Just one or two in the office from way back. Otherwise, no more on the floor. No more women. All men. All the way.

T: So the change that you're talking about was definitely during wartime.

A: Just wartime.

T: There were more women working.

A: Just in the wartime. In a lot of places the men were drafted and they put a woman in. Just like that. There were no men. Everybody took off for war so they had to replace them. Putting bolts on the planes and things like that. You've seen that on TV.

T: For Basic Training you were at Camp Robinson, Arkansas. Arkansas is a long way from Minnesota.

A: It's a long ways. Hot! Ooo!

T: Hot. Different kind of climate. What about the people in Arkansas?

A: They were all right. I don't know it, I mentioned the colored people. They still didn't like too much about those people, the colored people. I noticed that. Because we used to go in the park, the guys, and bum around. You have to go to the white toilet and the black toilet. They were separate in those days. And busses downtown. The blacks were in the back and the white in the front. I noticed that. I don't dare say anything. I don't care about that. It isn't right to be like that. I said, we're all equal. We're all together here. What the hell. We're all human anyway. I sat right next to a colored guy just to make it. There's no big deal in that. After they used to come... like today, everything is changed.

T: When you were there, how did people from the South perceive of you?

A: They treat me good.

T: For them were you a white person or a colored person?

A: A white person. They treated me like a white person. I'm white. They treated me as white. My uniform. No big deal there. They can see the color. Black. They got me as a white. I used to go to churches just to eat, me and my partners. Go around singing. Just to get a sandwich, because we were hungry. We sang, hallelujah and

things like that just to go eat. They treated us good though. They were good. And there were places we would go for a beer or something. They would treat us good.

T: So the discrimination in the South was skin color discrimination.

**(1, A, 245)**

A: Yes.

T: Because you have white skin you didn't feel that, is that it?

A: Didn't feel that. It was good. No problem.

T: Augustine, how hard was Basic Training for you?

A: It was hard. And hot.

T: Arkansas. In the summer too, right?

A: Yes. Every morning twenty miles with full field pack and your rifle and whatever, shovel, bayonet, whatever it was. There we go. Sometimes, once in a while, okay run now! Running. Stop. Then we walked. Stop. Then we walked. No rest. All the way down about five miles, then, okay, take a five minute break (*panting sounds*). Okay, let's go again! Here we go again. Full field pack. Hot. I remember, they used to take us in that truck. Full field pack. Everybody together like sardines in there. Hot! Okay, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up! Then it's hurry up, hurry up, hurry up. Okay. We sat in the truck for an hour. Half hour to forty-five minutes or an hour. And the truck was hot! "I thought you said we were going here." "Never mind, you stay there." I think they wanted to teach us that.

T: Hurry up and wait?

A: Hurry up and wait. There you go. There you got it. Hurry up and wait. It was hot, though. Hot!

T: How did you handle being so far away from your wife and your kids?

A: I didn't like it, but as we looked at each other it's just like brothers. We're all brothers. Same uniform and all that. Same necktie and everything. Same thing. We all just like brothers. Basic Training. Hot. Do this. Going to eat, training. You kind of forget a little bit about home. You forget about your house, your wife and kids. Just keep on with this. They got your mind on doing something else here. They kept you busy so you can't keep track of your wife and so on. But anytime when you're alone, you sit up. Oh! I wonder how they're doing, and things like that.

T: Did you get mail from home when you were in Basic Training?

A: Yes. She used to write to me. She used to send me two watches. Wrist watches. When you go down in the rocks, you hurry up, hurry up. Pow! You break your watch.

T: So you got a couple wristwatches?

A: Yes. You could break them all the time. Sometimes you were disgusted, you know. You are disgusted when you're up there. It's hard. It's hard. Especially war is hard.

T: You spent some time at Camp Robinson there learning how to be an infantryman.

A: Yes.

T: You were a rifleman.

A: Right. Rifleman.

T: In January of 1945 you were shipped over to Europe.

A: I went to New York. From there we went in a boat. Big ship. All the way to Le Havre. In France.

T: Do you remember that trip across the Atlantic?

A: Yes. Very much. I'll never forget. I got sick three days in there. I was throwing up all the time. My buddies came over. I was really sick. My buddies used to come over. "Hey, Martinez, you want a pork chop?" Aaaaaghhh! Throw up! Throw something at them. We always kidded around. The guys would bring me an orange, an apple. You can't eat meat. Throw up. Everybody was throwing up. Going by the ship rail and throw up. The waves are as big as two houses over here. The waves. Oh! That was rough!

T: So this boat was rolling...

A: Yes. Like that (*up and down hand motions*).

T: I get the picture. These guys standing at the rail throwing up over the side.

A: Yes. Sick. They were sick. Oh! For three days. I think it was nine days when we got there. Took us nine days to get to Le Havre. Nine days. When we got there they had those semi-trucks, those open trucks, semi-trucks. Of course they had bars on the side. They must have been sixty-five in one truck. Just like sardines. One next to the other one.

T: Off the ship and on the truck.

A: On the truck. Isn't that something?

T: It probably felt good to get off that ship.

A: Oh, yes. I felt better afterwards. There were slow waves and it was nice. I got over it. I got over that. But then we got to Le Havre, like I said, it was just like cattle. All together like that. About sixty or seventy, sixty-five in one truck. All bunched in like that until we got to the camp.

**(1, A, 305)**

T: You were part of the war effort against Germany. You didn't go to the Pacific.

A: No. No. Just in Germany and France and from France and Germany all the way down.

T: What did the military do to create in your mind a picture of what kind of people the Germans were?

A: They didn't mention too much. We used to have meetings like that.

T: Did you have little films?

A: Yes. Little. "Those have a sickness. The women. There's a lot of sickness going on. They get bugs. Sores."

T: So stay away from the women?

A: Yes. They tell you that. Your testicles, you know. You get sick.

T: Warning about venereal disease, it sounds like.

A: Warning of disease. They got a lot of disease over there. There wasn't much as they got today, but there were a lot of them over there and they were spreading that stuff so you have to take it easy. You don't monkey around with that stuff.

T: They gave you condoms?

A: Oh, yes. They gave you all kinds of them. Bunch of them. I used to sell them (*laughs*). I used to sell boots. Soap.

T: How did you get the stuff?

A: The lieutenant used to come over and give them to you. "Hey, Martinez, you want any cigarettes?" "Yes, I'll take two cartons." Lucky Strikes. Camels. The best.

T: Did you smoke?

A: Very little. Just a little bit.

T: So you had extra to sell.

A: Yes. But a carton of cigarettes, I'd sell it for fifty to one hundred dollars a carton.

T: To soldiers, other soldiers?

A: Yes, soldiers. To civilians.

T: German civilians?

A: Yes. Yes. The women. They go for them. The women and the men. In the Black Market, way back, in the corners. They would sell them to the civilians. Cigarettes and all that. The women used to buy them.

T: Cartons?

A: Yes. They used to buy them from me. Ten dollars apiece.

T: Could you sell this stuff during the war or was this after the war?

A: After the war.

T: Let's hold onto that for just a moment.

A: Okay.

T: When you got to France, did you go right to the line or were you in a camp?

A: No. No. We went to a camp. I think it was Camp Lucky Strike, or Campbell. I can't remember the name. I think it was Lucky Strike. We went to that camp. Oh, no. We went to that camp first. Then it was a muddy field or something. Afterward they gave us rubbers, overshoes and things like that. There was mud all over. They gave us all that. You have to go eat. Get some snow, for washing your plate. We had to do all those things. "Come on Martinez, come on. Over there, get some snow." Oh, boy! Barracks.

T: Tents or...

A: Yes. Tents.

T: How well did you adjust to Army life?

A: How I adjusted?

T: Did you adjust fairly easily or not really?

A: Like I said, I never did like the service. I didn't like the service at all. But you learned a lot when you went in there. You learned a lot at the camp at the start. You learn a lot. Every time you get inspection. There's mud all over here. Guys used to get mad. "Come on, form your line." Okay. It was disgusting. I didn't go for it at all. "Hurry up, hurry up." That's all. We had to do what they tell us. But we were all brothers there. We all had the same ideas, the same thinking, I think. What are we going to face up ahead? We were in camp. We could hear the bullets from way up there. The booms. Boom! Boooooom!

T: So you were close to the front.

A: Oh, yes. I would say roughly, I would say we were twenty or twenty-five miles away from that camp. They were just waiting. Just waiting. They had to organize us or give us this and give us that. More ammo.

T: In this camp, in France or in Germany too, how much contact did you have over in Europe with black people?

A: With black people? None at all. It's just like white people. To me it's just like any white people. The same. It doesn't make any difference to me.

T: Did you see black people?

A: Here and there driving trucks. No problem. "Hey, buddy, where are you going?" That's all. I had no problem with the black or the white or the French or the Germans. No problem with them.

T: What other jobs did you see blacks doing?

A: They were driving trucks. That's as far as I can tell you. Just driving trucks, because you didn't have time. It was just hurry up, hurry up. You aren't going to watch this guy to see what he's doing. That's a no-no. He was just driving trucks for the GIs to go over to the front and things like that. That's about it.

T: How soon was it that you got moved up to the front?

A: From the camp?

T: Yes. How soon did you go up to the front?

A: We must have stayed there... oh, to get organized... oh, I'd say about two weeks. About two weeks. That's about it. Then they got us all prepared. Then they gave us a big lecture, you know. "We're going up to the front," he says. There was snow. But it was warm though, in France. I don't know, maybe south France. It was warm. It wasn't that warm, but it wasn't cold.

T: Not like Minnesota, though.

A: No, no. Forget it. They gave us a big lecture. "You're going to the front now. Watch it! You're going to the front. It's going to be your life. Take care of your rifle—that's the only one you've got. Don't lose it. Don't lose your hardhat or nothing. Don't lose anything. Don't lose your raincoat. You need to take care of that raincoat. You need that. And your rifle and a lot of ammo." They gave us a big lecture. I remember that. "Be careful now. You're on your own." Two weeks and then we go.

T: What about being scared? Were you scared?

A: We were scared. I was scared going up there. I was scared already. I was scared, hungry and cold. You don't believe it, but it's the truth. We were all young and green. We started out and started working. That's where I got those stars. We started right there. Bullets all over the place. Flares all over. They were throwing them from way out there. So when they throw a flare, you don't run. You stay right there. Freeze, or they'll shoot you right there. A lot of guys were shot running. They were shot. You know what happened during the war? The first thing, the first battle, like that? We went in a great big house. Everything was running like hell. Run scared. I was scared. Into the house. You know how many GIs were in that basement right there? There must have been about fifty, sixty GIs, just curled up like that. Scared. Scared as ever. And hungry and cold. It just got cold, just looking. At that first battle I had.

**End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 386.**

T: How soon was it before you actually had to fire your gun for the first time?

A: We were in battle. There were about fifty or sixty guys in that basement. All of a sudden there comes the sergeant. "What the hell are you doing here? Get out of here! Come on! Out! Out!" We go around front. Snipers all over, shooting at us. That's when we used our rifles. Shooting at them over there, and running up this way.

T: Could you see them at all?

A: Yes. You could see them. Running this way. Up in the house there. Shooting. That's when I used my rifle the first time.

T: Was that difficult for you to actually be shooting at human beings?

A: It was hard, but the guys they told us, “Those are Germans. If you don’t shoot them now, if you don’t stop them, they’ll go to your house.” Then I learned—if you don’t hold them back, they come over here and knock your house down or do whatever they want to do like we do over there. I told my sister, “I’m a GI. I was out there. I held those Germans from not coming over here. That’s why we were over there.”

T: Did that make it a little easier to kind of...

A: That was brave for me. I had that rifle in my hand all the time. It was brave for me to do that. You gotta kill or surrender, one way or the other. Some, they came over to surrender, and some they are going to shoot you and you have to shoot back. So you shoot them. So you’re just laying there. That’s all. Just keep on going. That’s all. Don’t stop. Just keep on going.

T: How did you deal with seeing dead bodies around you?

A: Terrible. Okay, here’s one. Rhine River [in Germany]. That’s another star I got. Rhine River. We crossed it. We crossed the Rhine River and there were bodies laying all over. Germans and Americans, all on the shore. Guys still had ammo and we took it away from them.

Read right here. Read right on top. *(has certificate)*

T: Your unit? Where am I reading?

A: Right here. *(points to certificate)*

T: *(reading from certificate)* 264<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion.

A: Yes. That’s who I served with. They told me, “Hey you, and you, Martinez, and so and so, and so and so, I want you to help them build a bridge.” The engineers, they came over. They throw planks over, real steel. Whang! Right after the other one. Then they got bolts in there. We had to put bolts in. Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up! You know a river...

T: The Rhine River is pretty big.

A: Yes. From that piling way out there all the way down here...

T: Okay, on this picture we’re looking at fifty yards.

A: A guy comes with his truck putting those planks over. Like a bridge. We have to tie them up. Hurry up, hurry up! That’s why they got me in the engineers.



T: Is that when you joined them?

A: I worked with them. And it was that way. All through the front. All the way through.

T: Did you come into contact with German POWs?

A: Oh, yes. That's all it was. Prisoners of war. That's all we had. They were surrendering. "Come over." They came over and we used to take their watches away from them. And rings. SS troops. We had a lot of them. They took their rings off. SS. Before they were big Gestapo. "Look at them. All crippled up now. Scared." Like us, too. I don't blame them either. I don't want to kill them either, but I kill the ones over there. Yes. But they come over, I don't get it. I don't have anything to do with it. Stay over there. Stay over there. Those guys will take care of them.

T: From what you saw, how were these prisoners of war treated by the Americans?

A: Pretty good. They were treated good. I was guarding. We treat them good. No problem. And some of them spoke some English, you know. They say, "Can I have this?" Oh, yes. I'll see that. I was good. I was always good. I said, "I'll talk to the sergeant and see if you can have this." I went to the sergeant and, "They want to have so and so." Oh, yes. "Okay, we'll fix them up." "Okay."

T: You mentioned the watches and rings and stuff. Were souvenirs a popular thing for guys to get?

A: That was all right. We were doing the war. We used to go in the buildings and all the rifles would come out of there. Taken away from peoples' homes. We had piles of rifles, bayonets, machine guns. Everything we took away from them. They gave orders that you can send anything home during the war. I should have done that. A fool. I wasn't thinking. Right away, you've got the wood from the houses, the crosses, nails. Everybody was sending machine guns...

T: Sending them home?

A: Yes. You could do that. There was an order you could do that. I should have done that. Lugers. German Lugers. Beautiful things. I could have sold them today for a thousand dollars. Machine guns. They got machine guns. You send them home. I didn't do that. The only thing we got, we had two big carts and loaded them with boxes, and those boxes were the German automatic pistols. German Walther automatic pistols. That's the only one. I think I have a letter...

T: You have a letter that says you have one.

A: Yes. That was legal. We could take that home with us.

**(1, B, 501)**

T: You could take one of those?

A: We brought it home. Yes.

T: Why do you think guys, soldiers, yourself too, were interested in souvenirs from the Germans?

A: It's American style. Americans like to do that. It's American. They always... even today. You go to Goodwill, or Salvation Army, they look for souvenirs. Americans like all that stuff. You see on Channel 2, on *Antiques Road Show*, where they have all those that takes them way back. "It's worth a thousand dollars for a little gadget." That's Americans for you. They like that. GIs do the same thing, over there.

*(remembers a story)* Oh, yes. Here's one. A woman had a big box, in her house. I went in and searched for guns and I was in that box. They were full of medals. Beautiful medals. Military medals. From her husband in Germany. German medals. From way back, World War I. This guy next to me here, he was a mean guy. My buddy. "Gee, Martinez, can I have them?" "No, no you can't." I kept them for two or three weeks. This guy could have killed me and taken them. So I finally sold them to him. "You want to buy them? Okay." Just to get rid of him.

T: He wanted them?

A: Bad. I wanted them bad, too. I could get a fortune today for those medals. So I sold them, maybe if I had money. But you couldn't spent it. But when we came back, he gave me a lot of money back. So he gave me some that he had in his pocket. But Americans are good for souvenirs. But me, I wasn't thinking of that. I should have done that. Today I could have had... I like some of these things. See what I mean.

T: You mentioned being in a house. How much contact did you have with German civilians?

A: You mean like friendly or something?

T: As you went through towns, did you have any relations with them, talking or anything?

A: No, no. No, they just stayed inside, that's all. It seemed like they respect us. That's all. We'd never hurt them. The women, we never hurt them. Just stayed inside. That's all. We go downstairs and see what they got. Search the house. Downstairs they had a lot of food. I'd never starve. My dad always said, "You'll never starve. You'll always find something to eat." There were German sausage, you know. They had cognac, tequila, they had all that stuff down in the basement. Barrels of that stuff. Wooo! Some of those guys were drunk.

T: How much drinking went on over there?

A: A lot of drinking. A lot of drinking. I'd drink a little bit. Not too much. Just carry a bottle. Just when I was thirsty. When you feel cold, shot of that cognac once in a while. That's about it. Otherwise, I liked to drink but overseas just a little, just to keep warm. I had that bottle on me. Two or three bottles. That's no big deal. Every GI was drinking here and there. Same thing. But we were still on the warpath.

T: Did some guys, in your opinion, drink too much?

A: One or two. Not very much. They would drink it, but not stupidly. Not stupid drunk. No, just drink. Normal. Like that. We knew we had to be at the front. We knew we had to hurry up.

T: If you were drunk you'd be in tough shape.

A: No. They'll catch you. They wouldn't allow that. After that they'd destroy it. Everybody take everything or barrels of it, they would have to bring all that...

T: The big barrels had to be broken.

A: They used to break them all up. But I kept my bottles on the side. They didn't say anything about that.

T: When you went into or through German towns did you have quarters in houses sometimes?

A: Yes, we stayed in houses. Right.

T: Were the German civilians still in the house?

A: No. No. They weren't there. I don't know where they went.

T: But they were gone.

A: They were gone someplace. They must have gone in the field. I don't know where they went. We had the right to go... Everybody had their rooms in the big huge house. Everybody would sleep there for an hour or so or do something and keep on going and that's about all. One day we'd sleep all night in the whole house. Nobody bothered us.

T: What kind of orders were there to you guys of how to take care of the house and the things that were in there?

A: The sergeant would come.

T: Could you go through their stuff?

A: No. No. We didn't destroy anything like that. We just looked for food. That's all. Drawers. Look for rifles and things. What they have.

T: But not their personal property.

A: No. No. They had glasses. Beautiful things. Big drawers. They had big chandeliers. We didn't care about that stuff. Linen and all that, clothes, you didn't monkey around with anything like that. You didn't want that kind of stuff. Souvenirs, like German money, I got a lot of that. I got a pack of German money. I got a whole bunch of it. I got a lot of it from Germany. I kept that. But that was no good anymore. Even the money you find over there, it was no good there anymore anyway, but for a souvenir.

T: Before the war ended in May, and you were there for four or five months as a rifleman, what was the most difficult situation that you were in?

A: Going to the front lines. It was just cold and hungry and scared. That's the main thing.

T: And that was with you all the time.

A: All the way. All the way. The sergeant says dig a hole here. We'd dig a hole. It was raining. You got your overcoat on. Raincoat. That thing would fill with water that deep. I don't know how I got by with it without getting sick. No more than ten minutes later he comes by and, okay, let's go, let's go! We just get the foxhole, now we go. See, that's the Army for you. Hurry up, hurry up and wait. Hurry up. Here we go. That's the only thing that bothered me. Why all that fuss and then we have to go again. So we go on the run. Camp set. You gotta keep them on the run. If you give them a day of rest, then they'll fill up and throw it back to us. So you have to push them. Keep them running all the time. That's what Patton said. Two meetings I heard that, in the war and now after the war.

T: Were you ever in your camp or in a foxhole where you were shelled by German artillery?

A: No. We didn't have time to do that. We just kept running.

T: Did you ever have German artillery fire?

A: Yes, coming over. Yes. But we had to hide. Lay down or something like that. Then just keep on going. That's all. Don't stop, just keep on going. Didn't have time. Just one foxhole. That's all.

T: You were in motion a lot. Moving a lot.

A: Yes. General Patton said, "Keep on going." I never rode in a truck. In back of the tanks, you know. I was in back of them. That was about all. But just walk all the way. Walk, walk, walk, all the way. Walk.

T: Where were you when the war ended in May?

A: We were in [the city of] Linz, Austria. Yes. We were guarding those prisoners after that.

T: Were you in Linz the day that war ended? Or did you go there after the war ended?

A: After the war, yes. After the war. We were guarding. That's all. Just guarding. Guarding.

**(1, B, 615)**

T: I know from talking to you before that you came across in your unit, some of these German concentration camps.

A: Yes. I saw them.

T: Can you talk about what you saw there?

A: It was bad. I didn't see how the Germans can do that to a person like that? Don't feed them or anything. They were just skinny. All those people just laying there. Sick.

Then I heard another one that they were draining the skeletons, the bones, to make soap out of them. Have you ever heard of that? Making soap? That's what I heard over there that they were making soap out of their bones. They grind them up. All those bones, they grind them up for fertilizer. They used to do the same thing for soap. They got factories out there for that.

T: So you saw dead bodies as well as these prisoners?

A: Dead bodies. Not very much, but I think that's enough.

T: What kind of a smell was there around here?

A: The smell was no good. It was spoiled, a smell. You don't take a shower, you don't take a bath or anything.

T: I mean the dead bodies, when you saw them. Did they smell too? In the camps.

A: Yes. Oh, yes. They smell it. Not very much. But we used to go out of there and get air. Things like that.

T: How did what you saw in the camps, these bodies, how did that change your opinion of the German people?

A: Bad, because I can't see that. I didn't feel too much about that because I was just thinking of home and my house, and get the hell out and go home. I was thinking a lot of things. Sometimes I used to sit down and wonder what they are doing now and things like that.

I saw in movies of them where the Gestapo, great big, big shots and all that. All of a sudden here he comes again, after the war, way down. SS guys and all that. Why did they do to the people like that? Then burn them up and give them gas and kill them. Women and men. Isn't what they did dirty to the people? I don't blame all these Jews for being mad at them. These were relations to them.

T: How much letter writing contact did you have with your wife?

A: Not very much. Very little; once in a while. I can't write very much. Some of the guys used to write letters for me. Some I can do, and the rest they can do for me. I would copy and the rest they can do for me. They helped me out.

T: So you would speak it and they would write it for you?

A: Yes. There you go. Do that. Everybody was writing letters when they got a little chance here and there. That's it. That's it. We didn't get the letters from my wife until way back.

T: So you weren't getting much mail over there?

A: On the front we were moving all day. Oh, my gosh. Sometimes they'd send a package of something. It was all torn or something. You'd get it way back. And mail. Way back there. We were on the front lines. We didn't stop for anything. Just keep on going.

T: So you never really stopped to...

A: No. You know what, why is it all these other guys stopped to take...? They all had Bob Hope, and they had all these guys entertaining the troops. We didn't have anything like that over here. We were just on the frontlines all the time. We never had any shows or anything, girls coming dancing or something. We didn't have anything. Never happened over here. It probably did, but we never went to anything like that.

T: You were never in England were you?

A: No, not in England. No.

T: So you went right to France.

A: Austria.

T: When you landed off the ship you were in France.

A: Yes. In France.

T: And you left from France, too?

A: To France, all the way to Germany.

T: When you went back to the States, did you leave from France?

A: Oh, yes. Went back from France. That was another camp. I can't remember the name of the camp.

T: Then from there on a ship.

A: And then we took a ship back to home again.

T: Let me ask you about the food in the service.

A: Uugh!

T: When you were in Europe. Talk about the food you were eating.

A: They were all K rations. They used to give you all the stuff in cans. All of us would get together, and the tuna or something, you would open it up and heat them up, the pans and pots from the German kitchens. We used to heat them up and everybody would eat out of that. Otherwise they gave you K rations or otherwise our regular cooks.

T: Did you have cooks sometimes?

A: Sometimes. Not all the time. Then they'd give us a hot meal. They got plates and handed it over, pow, like eggs and stuff like that. Beans. Coffee, whatever you want.

T: What did you think of the food?

A: Not too much.

T: It wasn't very good?

A: No. No, not too much. But you were hungry, so you gotta eat it. You gotta eat it. My dad said, "You never starve. You always get something to eat." I always had a piece of salami in the back of my... I didn't tell anybody. That German black bread. It was hard. I would put a piece of that in my mouth and let it melt in my mouth and eat it.

**(1, B, 682)**

T: You always kept a little something in your pack?

A: Yes. And a little bottle of cognac on the side too. You gotta be flashy. You gotta be in there.

T: Did you spend most of your nights sleeping in foxholes or tents?

A: Tents. And houses. In houses. Not tents. Houses. Foxholes only one time. Just that one time. The rest was just run, run, run. Now we had towns. Then we had houses. We would go in there and sleep there. Advance, whatever. Then hurry up, hurry up, hurry up.

T: You must have heard hurry up an awful lot.

A: Oh! Hurry up and wait. But hurry up otherwise. Let's go, let's go! Okay, here we go. Put your pack on. Let's go. You needed all those things. You needed your raincoat, your pack. You need this. You need your bayonet. You need your rifle the most. You need all the ammo.

T: Augustine, did you have a lot of close friends in the service?

A: Here's another thing. We had a lot of close friends. Buddies. Buddies. Like brothers. Brothers. As we go overseas in the battles... killing each other. Killing. Every other day we get new guys all the time. New guys. Two, three, five guys. Every time. All the time they're new. We don't know who they are anymore. So from there on they disappear. The ones I knew, they were gone. Left it to the Lord that I was alive. I came back with no scratch.

T: Some friends that you did go over with did get killed.

A: Yes. They got killed. Then replace them. Replace them. Replace them. We don't know anybody.

T: Those guys were younger than you too, I bet.

**(1, B, 703)**



A: Way younger than me. So you have to run and every time you turn around there are two or three replacements. You just keep on going. Keep on going. Keep on going. Then I just don't know anybody. After we'd wait, you're George and you're Jack, whatever. We got to know each other, but not very long either. That's the way it went.

T: It must have been hard though. After a while I guess you could have become your own best friend. I don't know.

A: Yes. After it I was the best friend. But we didn't have much chance for that either. Hurry up here and hurry up there. We go here. We go there. How are you George? We ate and went to get an orange. Haven't seen an orange for a long time. Things like that. It's Jack sitting right next to you. Things like that. That's about it. Isn't that something?

T: On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. I'm wondering how you reacted when you heard that news?

A: He died normally, didn't he?

T: Yes.

A: We heard about it. He died normal. I like Roosevelt. He was good. I don't know about you, but in my time I liked him. He was a good President. He was a good President. I don't care what he was, Republican or Democrat. He was a good President. You take another one, Eisenhower. He was a Republican, but he was good though. He was good. Over there he was a general. He was good. When he got to be President he was good. But Roosevelt, he was good. I liked him. He was good.

T: About a month later on May 8, 1945, the war against Germany ended. How did you react to the fact that the war was now over?

A: Oh, I felt good. Everybody had the news. Everybody had the news and they had the *Stars and Stripes*.

T: The paper.

A: Yes. The war was over. Oh, good. We're going home. We got to the camp and everybody that had kids, one kid or two kids or three kids, they go home first. That's me. We waited and waited.

T: But you didn't go home until November.

A: Yes. Yes. Waiting and waiting and waiting. Some men went crazy waiting and waiting. All we do is coffee, go to eat, big donuts and things like that.

T: So you were just hanging out.

A: Hanging, that's all. They're playing cards. They're playing dice. Everything. Everybody had a gambling table there. What else can you do? We just wait and wait. I almost said we're going to get so and so and we're going to go. We're going to get ready. So they pass a law. They came out. Oh, oh. We're still warring in Japan. So all the young ones, they send them in the boats to Japan. Japan. Japan. The war is still in Japan. So they send them. All those boats that were ready for us to go home, they send all these young ones, new ones, no family, they send them on the ocean to Japan. Remember that?

T: What about you though?

A: It was your decision and they kept waiting. Okay, they say, all you guys, a lot of ships going to Japan. Oh, boy! Going to Japan and we're here waiting. In the middle of the ocean they had the news that Japan surrendered. V-J Day. What was the name of the general there?

T: MacArthur?

A: MacArthur signed all that. The war was over. So we got notice. Don't bring them back. Turn around and send them overseas. They went overseas instead of us. So then I feel bad.

T: You were still in Europe.

A: Still in Europe. In France. Waiting.

T: When the war ended you spent some time in Linz, Austria.

A: Yes.

T: How long were you there approximately?

A: I can't remember. Like I said, give me a time. We were just guarding. Guarding all the time. One the bridges. In the camps. Bridges and the camp again.

T: The camps with POWs.

A: Yes. Just guarding. Everybody was guarding. Take their time guarding. So that's me right there (*points to photo of GI in guard tower*).

T: In that picture.

A: Yes.

T: Was that easy duty?

A: It was easy. We had women go by. That's where I learned how to speak German a little bit. You have to show a card. You have to have a card. A yellow card. They had them. They had to show me their card. "Let's see, I don't know, what you got in your skirt there? Lift those skirts." Machine guns, you never know. You have to inspect them pretty good, you know. They might have a bomb and blow the bridge all over the place. But they're going to go across to buy something. So we can't let them go. That was just guarding. Guard, guard, guard.

T: Was there a Black Market going on after the war?

A: Not until we got to France and, like I said, after that we got to France and that camp. That's when the Black Market starts.

T: When you were in Linz there, were German civilians trying or sell things?

A: No. Not very much. None of that stuff at all. No. Not until we got from there. I think we were there roughly about two or three weeks. I can't remember. Guarding. From there they sent me back to France again.

T: So you spent months in France.

A: Yes.

T: Doing nothing.

A: Doing nothing. Going crazy. We wanted to go home.

T: Was there Black Market stuff going on there?

A: Now starts the Black Market. Now we go to Paris out there. Paris was an open town now.

T: What kind of things were people buying and selling?

A: Buying soap, GI shoes, clothes, a lot of cigarettes, and cans of food and things like that. Like peaches, cans like that. You can sell all that stuff. You say, want any cigarettes? Here's another one. We volunteered. Said, you want to take some French people back to Paris? You want to volunteer. And each car there were fifty prisoners. Take them back to France. So it takes us a whole week. A week to come back.

T: These are French ex-POWs?

A: Yes. And the lieutenant came over and...

**End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.**

A: The lieutenant. He says, you go in that car and Jack go in that car. They have about twelve cars with fifty in there. French in there. They were prisoners. The Germans brought over.

T: So they were French prisoners being returned.

A: Yes. Heading back to Paris. So the captain came over. "Do you need anything? Need any cigarettes?" "Yes. I want two cartons of cigarettes." I filled my bag full of cartons. Sometimes we... women, you know. Okay, come on, give them a lift. Put them inside. That was good. Put the women in. Come on. Bring them in. You got your kids. Bring them in. I talked English. I talk German. That's good. Put them in there. Cigarettes I kept. I sell them over there.

T: What about this train here? What happened on this train?

A: Nothing. It took us all the way to Paris.

T: The people. And when you were in Paris you were able to...

A: Oh, no. We can't go any more. We have to come back again. And that train. Each one had their own car. We came back again. When we came back then I had a lot of cigarettes, a lot of stuff. Black Market. Then they took us in a truck. "Martinez, you want to go to Paris?" "Yes." Two day pass. Like Saturday and Sunday. Come back on a Sunday night or Monday morning. You had to be there. So we took all the cigarettes and everything we can sell. Black Market.

T: Was there a place or places in Paris to go to sell this stuff?

A: No. They come to you. There's corners. "Hey, you got cigarettes?" They speak English. Some of them speak English. The women. Woo!

T: What did they pay you with?

A: Money. American money. Dollars. The American dollar. That was good money. I picked up a lot of money. Way back, it was French money. Then we had to trade into American money afterwards. I had to have some money guy fix my money to American money.

T: So you made some money over there?

A: Yes. Black Market. I was young. What the hell. You have to take something home, you know. It was quite a bit of money. That was good for me.

T: Was there much contact between GIs and German women or French women?

A: There were women and Americans. Yes. See, an American GI with a German woman there.

T: Was it mostly looking for girlfriends, or prostitutes?

A: Prostitutes. Girlfriends. One way or the other. A lot of them got married over there. A lot of them got married. They got a girlfriend. A lot of them like that. But they had prostitution. Just to sleep overnight with them and things like that.

T: Were the French prostitutes or German prostitutes, did they want money or cigarettes, or what?

A: Yes. A lot of them for cigarettes. A lot for money. But I take my money. I sell [my cigarettes] for money. That was it. I don't monkey around. I just take my money and take off.

T: So you yourself also visited the prostitutes?

**(2, A, 68)**

A: Oh, yes. They were all over the place. In the bars. You find them all over. All kinds of them. But me, I better keep my money. Safe and sound. Lay off that stuff.

T: Were you worried about disease with the prostitutes?

A: Right. Now you're talking. Right. Disease. There's a lot of that stuff going on. Oh, forget it!

T: So when you or GIs went to bars or restaurants these prostitutes were around?

A: Yes. They were all over the place. Some of them were half naked there for you. They touch you right there in the bar.

T: No kidding?

A: Yes. They were dirty. What they call it in France, pig's eye or something like that. It was a big building... GIs all over. All over the place. I went through there and then went home. Let me out someplace else.

T: So prostitutes weren't for you?

A: No. No. I wasn't looking for that at all. No. No. Because I was scared of what you'd get. Guys got disease and all that stuff.

T: So you preferred to bring your money home with you.

A: Right. I take my money home. I didn't tell anybody what I had.

T: That was probably smart actually.

A: Right.

T: Steal it from you?

A: Oh, yes. Your own buddy could hit you right there. I didn't tell anybody. I just kept it to myself. That's right.

T: When you got back to the States, you got back here in November and you were discharged in December. Did you come right back to St. Paul then?

A: Yes. Oh, yes. We got to the camp and they gave us the papers there. Camp McCoy, in Wisconsin. We stopped there and they gave us all the papers, discharge papers, and my American citizen papers there.

T: That's where you got them?

A: Yes. They told us over there. When you get discharged you get your discharge papers, you get your American citizen papers. "When you come back," they said. Some never came back. But I came back. I got both papers there.

T: So you became a citizen in 1945.

A: Yes. So I got my papers. And they gave us three hundred dollars besides. You got that coming. That was it.

T: How was it to see your wife and your kids again?

A: Oh, I surprised them.

T: Did you?

A: Yes. I didn't want to tell them when I got home.

T: Do you remember?

A: Yes.

T: Talk about that.

A: I think I took a taxi. And the other time I walked into the street where I used to live. I walked real slow and I got out there. That was a surprise. She cried. She cried all day.

T: She was happy to see you.

A: Never again. That was sad. I was glad.

T: You never liked the military, did you?

A: No. I got my discharge, and my citizenship papers. I'm all right now, see. Thank the Lord nothing happened to me.

T: It was a hard year and a half, wasn't it?

A: Yes. It was hard. All the way. Since I went in there, all the way through it was hard. Basic Training. Overseas. Fighting. It was hard all the way through.

T: So you're not a person that ever thought you'd make the military a career.

A: No. No. No. They asked you a couple of times. "Martinez, do you want to stay here. Twenty years?" "No, forget it. I just want to go home." I don't know, maybe I would have stayed there. Maybe today they could support me, but I didn't want that.

T: You had a job waiting for you.

A: Yes. I had a job waiting, that's right. I had a job waiting. I got home. The second week I got a letter from American Hoist. "Do you want to come to work or not?"

T: Were you home for Christmas that year when you got out of the service?

A: Yes, I think so. I think I was. But we were poor in those days. I don't think she had a Christmas tree or anything like that. I don't remember. But it was good to get home though. I don't know if it was Christmas or what. But I got home.

T: That was what mattered. How long did you wait before you went back to work?

**(2, A, 141)**

A: I think it was about two weeks. They sent me a letter. American Hoist. "Come to work. You have your job back and your rights." So I got there. So I got there on Monday and went to work. About two or three weeks after that the manager said they wanted me in the office. What for now? I went up there to see Corrine. "Now what did I do?" "Martinez, you have all your rights. From the start, when you went. You have three weeks vacation."

T: With pay?

A: Yes, with pay! That was good. All my rights. All the way through. So I told my wife. She said, "Well, my mother has a brother in Mexico. Why don't we go down there?" We had an old station wagon. An old car. Why not? So the next day or so I told them I would take that vacation. And they gave me another week beside vacation and my money. We took a vacation. We went to Mexico. We saw her brother, my mother-in-law's brother and other relations. Cousins of my wife and things like that. We stayed there for one week. One week to go, one week to come back. So that was nice. We drove all the way out there. Oh, man, that was far away. But we took our time. I enjoyed it. That was it. That was nice. That was absolutely real nice.

T: Did you feel differently now as an American citizen than you had before? Did you feel yourself to be a different person?

A: I felt the same. When I was working before I was an American citizen--I felt the same. I never felt they were going to give me up for a discharge or they were going to call me for American citizen. I never figured anything like that. Never. When I was sixteen, that's all. I never expected them to call me for the service. Nothing like that.

T: You didn't expect them to?

A: No. No. But you had to register when you were sixteen. It was a law. That's all. It didn't mean anything to me. Just work, work, work. That's all.

T: When you were a civilian again now, which is 1946, what was the hardest thing for you readjusting to being a civilian?

A: I'm an easy guy. I didn't have any problem. I just went to work, work, work, work. Back and forth. Back and forth.

T: And you worked the same place as before.

A: Yes. The same place. I went to work. Take it easy like anybody else. Just work, work, work.

T: You were living in the same house as before you went in the service.

A: Yes. Same house. Right there (*points to photo of home in St Paul*).

T: Same one. Same two kids. Same job.

A: Yes.



T: So for you, you really went back to a lot of the same stuff.

A: Same stuff. Mostly the same. Back again. After I got a couple years working there, then we moved. A new house and keep on going. And keep on going. But that's it, see? Until where the hospital is they torn the thing out of there.

T: On the West Side [of St. Paul] there.

A: Yes. I used to live right there. It was the neighborhood. So we moved out of there. You just keep on going. Moving here, moving there.

T: What kind of trouble did you have after the war, when you got home, with bad dreams or things that reminded you of the war?

A: No. I didn't have any problems like that. After the war I knew we were going home. I felt good that we were going home. I was young at the time. With my other buddies, I would shoot the breeze with them. Hollering. You forget a thing like that. We were already on our way home so I didn't worry about it anymore.

T: On the way home you kind of...

A: Yes. I felt all right. Just go home. That's all.

T: So you didn't have trouble with bad dreams when you were here in St. Paul.

A: No. No. No, nothing like that. I mean, everybody dreams, but I don't remember. Not like that. I knew we were going home. We got home. Just like it was way back. The same thing.

T: When you got home, how much did you talk to your wife about what you had been through?

A: I talked once and a while here and there. We'd get to talking. "I went through this." But they didn't believe it. They don't believe. Today you talk to young kids, you know. "Did you work here? Did you work in the fields? You were in the service." They don't believe that today. You're dreaming. But I told my wife that I went over there and I went over here. Foxhole. Hungry. "You did?" I'd say, "Yes."

T: Did she not care?

A: No. No. It was easy going. She took all what I said. "Did you do this?" "Yes, I did that." That's about it. Just keep on walking all the way through. Just go. That's enough. Just keep on going. And she said, I bet that was hard. I bet that was pretty hard and rough. It was rough. Hungry and cold. You're cold. You're hungry and

scared mostly. She said yes. Aren't you glad you're home now? Yes I am. I'm glad I'm home. Things like that.

T: But it sounds like it was kind of easy conversation.

A: Easy like. That's about it. That was nice.

T: Did people at work know that you were a veteran?

A: Yes. Oh, yes. When I came home. "Hey, you're a veteran." "Yes, I did service." I did tell the old-timers, my friends, "Well, I'm back again, Wally!" Yes. You're back in the grindstone. They knew I was in the service. All of them. In the office. Oh, absolutely. They gave me all my rights and everything.

T: Did you like working at American Hoist?

A: No, but it was work (*laughs*). I supported my family.

T: You stayed there thirty-six years.

A: Yes. You get used to it as you go by. I start from the bottom all the way up. Labor and things like that.

T: You retired before you were sixty-five.

A: Oh, yes. I retired at sixty-two. I was ready when I got to be sixty-two. Yes. Then the following year they closed the plant down.

T: So you got out just in time.

A: I was already sixty-two. The age already. They could give me the Social Security and everything.

T: Last couple questions. When you think about the war, when you were in the service and you were over in Europe and you thought about the war, what did the war mean for you personally? In other words, what was the war all about really?

A: Some people don't know anything about what's going on. They just follow the other guy. "What are we doing here?" "I don't know. We're supposed to kill Germans, that's all." We were supposed to block him there because if you don't they will come over to your house.

T: So your perspective on the war was what?

A: To protect the United States from those guys coming over here. The only thing I heard. We have to shoot them. They're mean. They will kill you if they see you.

They'll kill you. You have to stop them from coming over here otherwise. Things like that. We learned things like that. You learn as you go into the battle.

T: What do you think is the most important way that the war changed your life?

A: Do you mean today or during the war?

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

A: It changed a lot. The war. I was glad the war was over. And then over here I didn't take very much either. I didn't take very much. Like I said, I'm just a simple person. I don't take very much of anything dirty. I was glad it was over. I'm glad that it was over. Just keep going just like anybody else down the line. Just work, work.

T: In what ways in December 1945, when you were discharged, in what way were you a different person than the person who had gone into the service?

A: Only thing that [made me] glad I was in the service, then I got my discharge papers and American citizen papers. I was glad for that. I'm proud. Now. That I went in the service. I wasn't proud when I went, during the war. I was proud when I got out. Then I'm glad. I'm glad I got discharge papers and I got American citizen papers. I'm a citizen then and I've got my job. Working. I was proud of that. All the way. That was nice. It was a different for me. I felt happy after that.

T: Did life in 1946, really the first year after the service, did you see life as pretty good for yourself?

A: Yes. I was doing good. I felt good. I got my papers. I went in the service. I served my country. I went up there. I went to work. I'm working. I got my Social Security and things like that. Everything. Everything was good. I felt good. Back to normal again. Everything was all right. Beautiful.

T: And you came through it with no injury.

A: No injury. Oh, a little scratch. I fell down and scratch here.

T: But no wounds or anything.

A: No. No. Not a bullet. Not crippled. Not anything like that. Loss of arm or leg. Or sickness. Not me. Everything went all right. So far so good.

T: How much did luck or chance have to do with the fact that you came through it okay?

A: Luck is to the Lord. You pray. I prayed to the Lord. Protect me. Like her. I pray her (*points to statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, on table*). I pray. At night when I go to bed and in the morning I pray. She takes care of me.

T: Did you depend on your faith then too?

A: I got faith. There you go. I pray all the time. "Help me. Here I go." A lot of guys didn't make it, you know. Maybe the Lord protected me. I just keep on going.

T: That helped you though.

A: It helps. The Lord. Pray. It helps you an awful lot. Do that. I don't care what you are. Pray. At night and in the mornings when you get up. The sun is over here, see. Pray. It's good. It's a beautiful day. Pray. That's me.

T: You've been a happy person all your life, haven't you?

A: Not very happy, but I lost my wife. Now I feel lonely. I don't feel happy anymore. Just normal. They kept inviting me for graduation parties. Weddings. Drinking here and drinking there. Eat. Invite me to eat. Just normal. Not happy, because I loved the wife. Now I'm without her. That's why I feel lonely by myself. I feel alone.

T: Your wife died just a few years ago, right?

A: Five, six years ago she died. That's it. I feel lonely now. When you have your wife, I'm going to see you later. I got back and the wife was right there. We were together. We eat together. We sleep together. We come together. We go dancing together. We go drinking together. Now it's gone. It's hard. You can't do anything anymore now. All you have to do is go and have fun with the boys. Drink a little bit. Go eat. Invited to eat and things like that. Dance. Me and the wife used to dance. We used to go to dances all the time. Yes. We used to go to a lot of parties. We used to get a great big table and dance and drink and holler and all that. That was nice. I lived it up. Beautiful.

T: Let me conclude by thanking you very much.

A: I appreciate you coming over.

**END OF INTERVIEW**