

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Gilberto M. Hernandez
Corpus Christi, Texas
January 21, 2011
289th Regiment, 75th Infantry Division
Battle of the Bulge

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer; today is January 21st 2011. I am interviewing Mr. Gilberto Hernandez by telephone. His phone number is 361-884-6455. His address is 1548 15th Street, Corpus Christi, Texas 78404. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Gilberto, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today, and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. So, thank you again for that.

Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum. I'll read it to you and see if it's okay with you.

“Agreement read”

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

First question, what is your birth date?

Mr. Hernandez:

September 13th, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Hernandez:

In Corpus Christi.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, I had two brothers and two sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were either of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Hernandez:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were too young?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes, one of them and the other was too old.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were either of your sisters involved in war work?

Mr. Hernandez:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, I noticed according to the write up in the paper that your father died when you were how old?

Mr. Hernandez:

I was about five or six.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how about your mother?

Mr. Hernandez:

She died a couple of years later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, who raised you then?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, (laugh) several people had the chance to do that. I just stayed with relatives, you know, and finally one of my aunts, my father's sister, took me in and my youngest sister, and she made a home for us. That was about the most, I think we were there for most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your grandparents, were they around?

Mr. Hernandez:

No. My father and mother came from Mexico. I'm not sure what year it was, but it was in the 1920s, or I don't know. They never went back, they stayed here, got married in Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you say you were on a ranch part of the time?

Mr. Hernandez:

Worked on the ranch. Harvested all kinds of crops.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, like I said, I started working on farms, different farms, depending on where the work was. Once in a while, we had to stay in town for a couple of weeks or so and move back to the farm again. Most of our younger life was spent at the farm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was this around Corpus, Robstown, or where?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, from here to West Texas and Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how old when you were doing that?

Mr. Hernandez:

I was about, well, four or five – well, my dad was a farmer. He had farms around Corpus Christi. At times I would help him do that. That was about time when the first tractors came out, the Farmall, I believe, was the brand. Then later some other, I can't think of the name of the other tractor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, there was a Fordson at one time.

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, it was a Farmall. They made lawnmowers, stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you on the farms, pick cotton or what?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, my dad planted the crops, the fields, his cultivator, stuff like that. Then later, tractors came out. Before that we used horses and mules and a few cows were on the farm. When the cotton season came in, well we picked a lot of cotton, here and all the little towns around here, and we went out to Pleasanton and all those little towns down on Highway 87, I think it used to be, all they way to La Mesa, Texas. Farmed this stuff over here, if it started snowing or freezing, really. If we couldn't pick cotton when it freezing. Cotton was too soggy with water, it would weigh too much. We had to wait until it dried out to pick it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you say "we" who all was that?

Mr. Hernandez:

The whole family. We had a Model T Ford, we travel in that one all the way out there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Hernandez:

The first year I went to school was a country school I went there for one year, and later I went to a public school another year, but that was the end for a long time. Then, later I went back to another public school and I went for another year, I believe, that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Hernandez:

No high school, no elementary school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Hernandez:

In 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What month?

Mr. Hernandez:

I think August or September, close to the end of the year I was inducted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were what, twenty years old at that point?

Mr. Hernandez:

I was eighteen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Eighteen, that would have been '43, then. Was it just after your eighteenth birthday?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, right after, yeah, everybody had to register or whatever when they turned eighteen. We had to register for the draft, and so I did when I was eighteen I registered, and later I was called in for a physical. I was pretty healthy, I had no trouble with the physical part at all in the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, you went in probably in October of '43, something like that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, pretty close, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I was inducted at San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston. I stayed there until they assigned me to some other training camp. It was in Camp Wolters, Texas. I took my... I think it was seventeen or eighteen weeks of infantry training.

What all did you do in your training at Camp Wolters?

Mr. Hernandez:

Regular infantry training, you know. Training on all different kinds of weapons and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What weapons did you train on?

Mr. Hernandez:

Machine guns, rifles, bazooka, mortar. All kinds... we had training with .22 rifles and grenades, rifle grenades and regular grenades. All kind of training and looking for mines and stuff like that. Regular infantry training, I guess it was called. A lot of marching and crawling under barbed wire fences and the machine gun is firing on top of you – over you. All kinds of stuff. Bayonet training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And that was about seventeen weeks?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty rough on you?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, not really. It wasn't rough for me, because when I was inducted I was working with an amusement company. We used to deliver all kind of amusement instruments to beer places and restaurants and stuff like that, machines and stuff. I was pretty well in good shape, you know, and I was strong. I didn't have any problem with training. It was kind of like a vacation for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else from your basic training you recall?

Mr. Hernandez:

That's it. Well, no, there's regular rules and regulations for the Army, I guess the whole Army, they require you to, well if you memorize the Articles of War and stuff like that, you know, the General Orders, and stuff like that. Of course, memorize your serial number and your rifle number. You had to plant it into your mind somewhere, you know, I still remember all those.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you still remember your serial number?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh yeah. Rifle number, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your serial number.

Mr. Hernandez:

463280202. Rifle serial number, all that, you had to memorize that stuff. The General Orders that go along with, I guess, all the service people had to learn those and memorize them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished basic training where did you go?

Mr. Hernandez:

I was still under nineteen years old, and I think at the time there was some kind of regulation or something that they would not send anybody anywhere overseas until they were nineteen. So, I wasn't nineteen yet, so I was shipped to another camp in Oklahoma. I think it was Camp Gruber, Oklahoma close to Muskogee. I went through the same training again with the other guys that were the first time trained, I had already been through it one time. I went back again through the same thing again. Of course, it was like, a little vacation again. After I finished training there, they sent me to another camp with the 42nd Division, they called it the 'Rainbow Division'. I stayed with them for a while, and then from there we were shipped to Camp Breckinridge in Kentucky. That was when they was forming the 75th Division to go overseas. I had little more training there, and from there we shipped out as a division. We went to New York, and then we trained to get on the ship, those rope nets. Well, that was the last training we had, and then we went overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was climbing up and down on that cargo net on the side of the ship, is that right?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, right, that's kind of, well, it's a rope net, really, that's what it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh, it was easy for me, like I said, I was working hard over here in Corpus Christi with the amusement company. I was a pretty strong guy, you know, I did a lot of lifting in my work.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, when you climbed down that, did you get into some kind of a small boat?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, it was a regular tanker, a big ship at New York Harbor there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Hernandez:

We went overseas from there, and we ended up in England, in Liverpool, England.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you go across, do you recall?

Mr. Hernandez:

Gosh, I lost track of time when I was in the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Would it have been the fall or winter or what time of year?

Mr. Hernandez:

I can't give you a date because, I just... we didn't keep track of the time over there. So, anyway we left from New York, and we were in a big convoy of ships going the same way, I guess.

Different kinds of war equipment and stuff. We landed up in Liverpool, England and then we stayed there another – I don't know how much time we spent there, but it was several months, maybe, but there were so many other troops ahead of us trying to get across. Finally, they came, we did get across, we went back to Liverpool, and shipped out to Le Havre, France through the English Channel. That was the beginning of the French adventures (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what all did you do when you were in England?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, did some more training, marching most of the time. There wasn't much you could do.

The weather over there, it seemed like it rained every day, in England. I don't know whether it was the season or it's just that way all the time, but it seemed like it was raining most of the days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in England several months or how long?

Mr. Hernandez:

I'm not sure, but it was several months. Like I said, there was a lot of other troops ahead of us trying to get across to the invasion there. We finally got over to France and then we started going forward all the way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the article in the paper says you got to France in the winter of '45. Would that have been the winter when you got across?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, it was cold. Cold and rainy. Yeah, we landed in Le Havre. It was rainy and cold. We didn't stay there long. I'm pretty sure we started marching East.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you're still with the 75th Division, right?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, the 75th Division. The 3rd Army was there, Patton was there with his army, and of course our troops and different countries had soldiers over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on your trip over to England from New York, would many people get seasick?

Mr. Hernandez:

I imagine so. I didn't. I did a lot of fishing before I went into the Army. I would fish out here in the bay in Corpus Christi. I had a little adaptation for the wave part of the ocean, you know, and it didn't bother me too much. I didn't have any problem with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of a boat did you go across from England to Le Havre?

Mr. Hernandez:

That was one of those tankers from England. I guess it was a tanker, I don't know what they call it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A troop transport.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah. It wasn't designed for troops, it was just a, I don't know what they used them for, but they were designed like it was not going to make it across there (laughing). Pretty rugged old ships.

That was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What company were you in?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, England for one thing and then we went to France and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in a company, a rifle company?

Mr. Hernandez:

75th Division.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, but you were in a regiment weren't you?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I forgot all those, and I have never been able to find out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, the paper said something about the 289th Regiment.

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, the 289th Infantry. The 289th Infantry in the 75th Division. There was other divisions there, too, but that's the one I was in, but I can't remember the rest of the stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job in there?

Mr. Hernandez:

I was an infantryman, a rifleman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After you land in Le Havre, what did you do?

Mr. Hernandez:

We were in the battles they were having with the Germans, and then they put us guarding the little towns that were taken over by the American forces. They would call us out to go do some traffic or whatever the next day, but the weather wasn't exactly sunny or anything like that. It was cold and freezing weather, a lot of snow.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of clothing did you have?

Mr. Hernandez:

We did not have any clothes for that kind of weather. All we had was the regular field jackets, that's it. It was very cold, and of course a lot of snow. It was kind of a forest, pine tree forest, something like that. Hilly, and like I said, we weren't prepared for that kind of weather. Your canteen would freeze on you, you couldn't drink water, you had to eat snow, and dig foxholes and the snow, cover it with tree branches for a mattress and then cover it up with tree branches. I was determined to get a chance to sleep, half the time we were all on guard or something trying to stay alive. They would move out, then they'd tell us to dig in again, and of course it was frozen, you know, all that cold, try and dig in with a little shovel. Try to dig a hole in the frozen ground, but just get through the snow to the ground and then try digging with that, put pine branches on the bottom and then a few to cover yourself with and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your first fight with the Germans?

Mr. Hernandez:

That was in the Ardennes. That big town there, I can't think of the name now. It was the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was that the first fight? Was it the Battle of the Bulge?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, tell me about that.

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, like I said, we were kind of... there was some infantry ahead of us, I guess, they had to take over a little town and they put us to maintain it and guard it. We kept going after the other troops were ahead of us, I guess, and that was the way it was. You hold little towns and dig in there and hold it. Of course, the Germans had all the artillery all ready for us there, so that's what we did. And that time they told us to move out, it was at night, and we had to move out. So, we were going across this open field, we didn't know, and at the end of the field was the forest and the Germans were dug in there with machine guns. We couldn't see them; it was at night. But they could see us real good in the snow. As soon as we got in to range, they started shooting their machine guns at us. Some of those bullets got me, and that was the end of the war for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you hit?

Mr. Hernandez:

In the right leg, on the knee.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how many bullets hit you?

Mr. Hernandez:

I have no idea. I know it was more than one because, you know, the German weapons were, I mean, they were rapid fire. They were just – I don't know how many bullets hit me in the leg, but that was the end for me. After that, they got me back to the little town we had just left, and

they started shooting morphine into me or something, knocked me out. The next time I woke up, I was in some kind of a temporary field hospital they had built in the forest over there in the snow. They couldn't do much for me. They put me in a cast, and I just couldn't eat. I couldn't do anything. It was pretty bad. They gave me some type of shot, I've been trying to recover my medical history and I just haven't been able to do that. I've been trying several times, and they keep telling me there was a fire over there in '72, I believe, they said and burned most of the records. I have not been able to find out exactly what happened to me or anything like that. I know I was in the field hospital, for how long I don't know. They kept me sedated because there was nothing else they could do. Finally, they moved me out of there in some kind of an ambulance, and I was unconscious most of the time anyway. I was weak from not eating and all those shots they had given me for sedation. Then I went up in a train, I woke up and I was in the train somewhere, I didn't know where. So, when they finally got to a place where they stopped, we were in Paris, France. There was a general hospital there. That's where I wound up in that general hospital there, and a bunch of doctors got around me and checked me out. They took me to surgery. They removed the cast from me and part of my leg went with it. It was gangrene already, pretty bad. I don't have any idea how many times they had to cut on it. They cut below the knee and then kept going up until they got all that gangrene out. From there, I started recovering again. I don't know how long I had to stay there. Finally they put me on a plane and flew me back to the States.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they amputate your leg?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh, yes, they did over there in Paris.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So, they had to keep amputating more and more, then?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, like I said, after I got to the hospital they got together and they said, "Well, I have to see what's under that cast." They took the cast off, they found gangrene, and they started cutting the leg. I don't know how many times they had to cut to get the gangrene out, I don't have any idea.

I have never been able to recover those records like I wanted to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is your leg off above your knee or below?

Mr. Hernandez:

I don't know where they started, but I wound up with above the knee. I don't know where they had cut it before, or what, but they ended up above the knee.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you got back to the States what did they do with you?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, they did some more surgery to redo what they had done over there, and then that was the end of the surgery part. Then after that healed, they fitted me with a temporary leg, I guess, a very crude leg. I learned to walk with it. That was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that? Where were you in the hospital in the States at?

Mr. Hernandez:

It was in Brigham City, Utah. At Bushnell General Hospital. They had all the amputees there from all over the country, I guess. I stayed there until I got to use the leg, and then I got a thirty-

day furlough to come home and get used to the leg out here. I did that, and I went back and got discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you get discharged?

Mr. Hernandez:

I think it was in '45 sometime right in the middle of the year, somewhere in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

June or July of '45?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some other things that happened to you over in France and Belgium before you got wounded?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, the bad thing is, you had to go every day. There wasn't much change in anything, except the weather. It was just the same thing every day. Didn't have too much well, clothing, for one thing, for the weather over there. The same thing over and over again every day. All the snow, the cold, freezing weather. A lot of people got frozen feet, frozen fingers, stuff like that. It was very cold. They claim it was the coldest year they ever had there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, were you ever fired on by German artillery?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh, yeah. We had to deal with that all the time. We had to retreat because they were really prepared in those areas there. They it all set up with the artillery and mortar shells. They could

see us, but you couldn't see them. The artillery, made us go back, hard time. They were good with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you bombed by German airplanes?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, no. We could see dogfights, but no there was no airplanes in that area there. There were too many German troops there, too, so they didn't want to kill their own people, so it was mostly dogfights, they call it, you know airplanes shooting each other down. Of course, that was that time they were bombing England with those buzz bombs, V-2 or V-1 and V-2 rockets. We could hear them going overhead, see the fire coming out of the exhaust. They would hit England with those buzz bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were there many people in your outfit wounded or killed?

Mr. Hernandez:

I'm sure there were because there was a lot of shrapnel from the artillery, it hit a lot of people. They had the machine guns also, they were all prepared. They were set up before we got there. They had the areas concealed and protected. We were out there in the open. It was kind of a one-way thing, you know. We had no protection at all, just ourselves, and they were dug in ready for us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by German tanks?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, but they probably were shooting at us from their concealed areas that they had. They had a net and they would cover themselves with a net. They were up in the hills, and we were down in

the bottom of the hills. It was kind of... well, we didn't have much defense against that. There was no way you could defend against that. You couldn't see them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about American tanks; were you ever around the American tanks?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh, they came by every once in a while. Yeah. But they were, most of the time they were moving away from us, you know, forward. They were pushing the Germans out of that area there in the Ardennes. They finally got them pushed out of there, and that was the beginning of the end there for them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was anyone anywhere close to you hit by artillery or rifle fire or anything?

Mr. Hernandez:

I'm sure there were because there was a lot of that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you didn't see anybody get hit?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not exactly. You know, what they did was they sent out patrols to scout the areas where the Germans were and a lot of those guys got killed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go on many patrols?

Mr. Hernandez:

No. I never had to go on any of them. Some of the guys to go and never came back.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you know about what day you got wounded?

Mr. Hernandez:

I just had an anniversary Monday. January 17th, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, okay, in January, then.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, Monday was the anniversary, that was the day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, you don't forget something like that, do you?

Mr. Hernandez:

No. No way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from your time over there in France and Germany and all?

Mr. Hernandez:

That's about it, you know, after the time I got wounded I lost track of the rest of the stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time over there?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, like I said, to me the Army was the place that I was most of the time living day to day sleeping on clean sheets all that kind of stuff, so the stuff I didn't have much of that while I was a civilian over here. My parents passed had away, and I didn't have much help for anything. I hardened myself most of the time. The Army was like a vacation to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got hit by those machine gun bullets, did it hurt very much?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, no. You know, the funny thing is I actually believe it was so cold that I didn't feel anything. Once they got me back to the little town they had just left, the medics gave me some drugs, shots, for pain and stuff like that and they knocked me out. I spent the rest of the time half knocked out all the time, you know because of the shots.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I noticed in this article in the paper it said that you were near small towns near Vielsalm, Belgium, is that right?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, we didn't keep track of the towns, everything was secret over there. They wouldn't give us any information about anything. They were afraid it would get back to the enemy somehow, so I'm not sure where, what town we were holding. It was close to Bastogne or whatever, Bastogne and that other big town in the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, what medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I had the Purple Heart, of course, and the Bronze Star, and four campaign stars.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Four battle stars.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah. Infantry Badge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Combat Infantryman's Badge, okay. What did you get the Bronze Star for?

Mr. Hernandez:

That goes with the Infantry Badge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, yes, right. You got that later on, not too many years ago.

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I got all that stuff when I got to the hospital in Utah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then later on you got the French Legion of Merit, is that right?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, that was since last Veteran's Day, my daughter went in my place to Houston at the Embassy over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about getting that, how did you get that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, the 75th Division has an organization like the GI Forum over here in Texas, well they have an organization like that. I belong to that, that organization, and every month they send me a little newspaper that they print every month. There was an article there about all the troops that were in that area, in the Ardennes Campaign, they were entitled to this medal. So, I applied for it. I sent a copy of my 214 File and my discharge, and it took over year to get that medal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And that's the Legion of Honor?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

From France, okay.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes. I understand it's equivalent to what the American people give to the GI soldiers, the Congressional Medal of Honor, it's equal to that, in other words, in France.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not much after that. I told the newspaper guy that came over to my house to interview me, I told him the story that happened to me while I was in the service, of course. It's sort of an unbelievable story, really, because I kind of view it like a miracle. See, I had a cousin, he was about a little older than I was, and we didn't keep track of each other too much here in Corpus Christi. He volunteered for the Marines, I didn't know that. He volunteered for the Marines, went off somewhere, and later I was drafted into the Army, so I never heard from him. I never knew where he was, and what they were doing. When I got discharged, I came back by train from Utah to San Antonio. When I got to San Antonio, I had the same train, so I got into this car and I sat down. When I went into the car and on the other end I could see somebody sitting with his back towards me, I could only see his neck and his head. I kept looking at that person, just wondering. Something attracted me to that person. Finally I got up, I walked over there, and it was my cousin that I hadn't seen for years, I didn't know where he was. He was in the Pacific, in Okinawa and Iwo Jima, and he got so badly shot up that he lost part of his shoulder and some of his ribs. He was on the way as a convalescent from a California hospital somewhere and I was coming back from Utah, from the hospital also and we met on that train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite a coincidence.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, I told that story to this newspaper man, but he didn't print any of that stuff in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, it wasn't in the paper, no.

Mr. Hernandez:

He didn't use it. I don't know why, but I thought that was more interesting war story that anybody could ever have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some other things that you told him that weren't in the paper.

Mr. Hernandez:

If I remember, he got quite a lot of stuff there that he didn't print, like I said, maybe he didn't have room in the paper or he was only allowed so much or whatever. I told him that story, but it was not in the paper about that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'm looking at the paper now, it wasn't in there, no.

Mr. Hernandez:

Maybe, like I said, he only had a limited space in the paper, I guess, or whatever, I'm not sure why. But, I thought that the best story of the whole thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was a good story, yes, right. When you were overseas, did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, we didn't have a chance to listen to anything like that. We were moving most of the time, moving ahead, and holding towns, and then they would move us out again, and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, on December 7, '41 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh, yes, of course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I was still here; I wasn't in the service yet. I was in Corpus Christi when that happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard it, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Hernandez:

At that time, (laughing) I didn't know much about the other countries there, I just heard about it.

Not much I could do about that, so it was just something had happened. Later I was drafted into the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I brought a lot of coins from England and France and Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else?

Mr. Hernandez:

I have a P-38.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, okay. Still have that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a nice pistol, isn't it?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, a pretty nice pistol.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any other souvenirs you have?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Hernandez:

Mostly the Red Cross were everywhere, that was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What experiences did you have with the Red Cross?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, sometimes they would treat us to different kind – hot dogs, stuff like that, you know when the train stopped somewhere. That was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they ever charge you for anything?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh no, no. There were no charges for anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, April 12th of '45 President Roosevelt died. You were back in the States, did you hear about that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was peoples' reaction when they heard that?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, he was a pretty good man, I believe, one of the best that's ever been over there, after Lincoln maybe. He started Social Security, I believe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When Germany surrendered on May 5th, did y'all have any kind of a celebration?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not that I know of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about on August 15th when Japan surrendered, any celebration then?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not... I never heard of any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were still in a hospital somewhere, rehabilitation or something, right.

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, I was in the hospital when the war ended.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, I didn't have any trouble adjusting to civilian life.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you get along with your artificial leg?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I was doing the same thing I was doing when I left: installing those jukeboxes and pinball machines and all kinds of amusement machines, and replacing – taking them out to repair them, that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And your wooden leg didn't bother you with that, or artificial leg?

Mr. Hernandez:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get disablement?

Mr. Hernandez:

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What percentage did you get?

Mr. Hernandez:

When I first got out, I had 60%.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened to later?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, I thought that wasn't enough, so I... one year I requested reevaluation of my disability. I made five trips in one year to San Antonio for physicals and stuff like that, and they kept asking

me to go again, and go again. I think I went five times one year. Finally, they increased the disability to 80% , but they were paying me for 100%. So, it ended up the same thing, anyway. So, that's what it is right now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have your had any reunions of your Army unit?

Mr. Hernandez:

No. I don't travel too much anymore. I couldn't even go to get my medal in Houston, you know, my daughter took my place over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But, early on you didn't have any reunions any other time, right?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, no. I didn't have much time for that, I was already working.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Hernandez:

No. No. I had jobs the whole time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't go to school or use it to buy a house or anything like that?

Mr. Hernandez:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from World War II?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not much, like I said, I came back to the same place I was when I left. About a year and a half later, I went and got married, and eventually lived in Corpus Christi again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Hernandez:

It seemed like it was all right. Nobody had complaints. Everybody was doing all right. Of course, some guys were having a hard time, you know, dealing with the training, it was pretty rough. Especially guys out of high school and stuff like that. They were not used to that kind of hard work.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Hernandez:

PFC, Private First Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, over there in Europe, were you ever under friendly fire?

Mr. Hernandez:

No, we never had to deal with that, the areas that I was in, anyway.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, we didn't have contact with them too much, except to take the orders and that's it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they know what they were doing?

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, they were instructed there like we were. They were following orders just like we were.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay. Anything else, Gilberto?

Mr. Hernandez:

Not that I can think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Gilberto, do you have a middle initial?

Mr. Hernandez:

Yeah, M, Martinez.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All right, unless you've thought of something else that's all I have.

Mr. Hernandez:

No, I can't think of anything else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, thanks again for your time today, and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Hernandez:

Well, you were asking me to tell you about that story. At that time, they weren't experimenting too much with artificial limbs: legs, and arms, and stuff like that. They weren't very good, you know, they were just like a temporary thing. That's how I got my leg in the hospital. I met my wife over there when I was visiting in the little towns around there. We'd go to eat in the restaurants and go to the movies, stuff like that. One day, one of my friends and me were going with my wife and his girlfriend, we were walking to the restaurant and my leg fell apart. It just dropped right out of my pants. She was behind me picking up the bolts and screws that went with it. (laughing) So, there I was, I had to lay on hot sidewalk. I hailed down a taxi and I asked

him if they had any place they could have a tool so I could put this thing back together. So, they took me to place where they had jukeboxes and stuff like that. So, I borrowed some tools and put the leg back together, and went on to the movies. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer:

(laughing) That's quite an experience, yeah.

Mr. Hernandez:

She was telling me to tell you that story.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a good one, yeah, right. Okay, anything else?

Mr. Hernandez:

I didn't think much of that story then. It did happen.

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