

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

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An interview with Bern Ballard
Austin, Texas
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MIKE ZAMBRANO: This is Mike Zambrano. Today is the November the 17th, 2011. I'm speaking to Mr. Bern Ballard at his home on 3206 Beanna Street in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Okay, how are you today, sir?

BERN BALLARD: I've felt better, but I'm alright.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. Well first question I always start out with is where and when were you born.

BERN BALLARD: I was born July 12, 1920. In a little town just north of Victoria in little town called, I goddamn forgot the name of it. It's such a small town. Anyway, you could say in Victoria County if you want to 'cause that's where it was. I'm gonna think, think. Inez. Inez. That's it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Inez?

BERN BALLARD: We lived about two miles out of Inez. My father was working a share crop. He was a sharecropper. A [indiscernible] sharecropper. But I left Victoria County when I was three years old so I don't remember much about it. Now, being close down there in Rock Course, I go

over to Rock, going to Houston where my son lives, I go through what used to be Inez. Now the highway misses it, but used to go right through the middle of it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. You were telling me, just a minute ago, well next question pretty much is, did you have any brothers and sisters?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, I had two sisters and four brothers. One of 'em died when [he] was seven years old. One was killed in the war and the other one died. And so, there's only a few of 'em. Both of my sisters died. There's only my brother and myself left out of the mess of 'em.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What were their names?

BERN BALLARD: Well the oldest one was Vernon. Vernon, he was the one that died and incidentally I put granite marker on his grave about two or three months ago. It had one of those metal things that just rusted away. My brother and myself got together and we were putting a headstone on. His name was Vernon. And the next oldest one was Melburn. That's his plane here. That's this here and that's his picture over there.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Melburn. Okay.

BERN BALLARD: And then these two books are about him. And the next one would be Erin. And she died in, I guess 19-, well might have been 2003, 2 something like that. She was ninety.

She was ten years older than I am. She was ten years older than me and she was 93 when she died. And then the sister just younger than myself, just didn't wake up one morning. Her husband went in to wake her up for breakfast and she was dead. Been dead for several hours. Probably a heart attack. Of course, CT, Calvin Thomas, that's the head of the one below in the middle of the picture, those two books are about him. He was killed in the war. He was shot down over the Schedt Estuary in Holland. Then I'm the next. Hanger on. And then the next one would have been Picky. She was the one that, the young one that, she was the one that died in her sleep. And then Billy, he's six years younger than I am. He comes by here around one. He'll be by here today before the day's over. They live just east of the line. Cameroon what's the name of it? Cameroon Road? But anyway, he lives just east over the street that runs across Cameroon Road. North Ridge.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Cameroon Road. You don't mean Lake Line, do you? No? Okay. What was your father's name?

BERN BALLARD: Ralph.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And your mother's?

BERN BALLARD: Edith Belle. Her maiden name was Langston.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And you said he was a sharecropper?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, he was a sharecropper about ten years of my life. He had been a barber until he had a nervous breakdown and so went back to foreman which was what his family did in the dock down there. Well he lived, I used to say that he paid his share of moving, but what it was was just lookin' for a better form. And I'm going to tell you the places of the names that we lived in. We lived first, in Inez in my lifetime. And then we moved to, the doctor's told him that he was havin' chills and fever because of the climate down there. Actually they misdiagnosed him. He had anemia. That's what caused it. Anyway he moved to near Ballinger. A place called Bethel. Community. And that's near west Texas. Stayed there two years. Then we went to a place called Carthage. Stayed there one year. And then he went to Paint Rock, stayed there one year. Now he was his own foreman, foreman for one year. Then he decided to go and bid it for himself so he bought a house and moved it to Hex, Texas. And made the little neighborhood grocery store, had a gas pump out there. But that didn't last long. And then he started working, you know, day delivery out there in the fields with people. And then he got a job with Menard County so we moved to Menard. And then from Menard we moved to Melvin, Texas and we stayed there four years and then came to Austin. That was in 1933.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: How was it growing up during the Depression for you and your family?

BERN BALLARD: Oh it was terrible, terrible. I wouldn't want to impose that on anybody. But I never knew the difference. We always were. As far as the saying goes, we were always depressed because we were poor. And the Depression hurt us, like it did to everybody else but not as much as it did some of those people that we used to have with income. We generally

had to go out and do formwork and stuff like that to make a living. But whenever we got into Austin, you know, he started working on the WPA and then later he got a job through the WPA working with the University of Texas. And then you did pretty well after that.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So it sounds like you pretty much moved around a lot.

BERN BALLARD: Moved around a lot. In my lifetime, I moved from Inez to Ballinger, to Concho, to Paint Rock and to Hex. To Menard and to Melvin. But he had lived in Austin before bein' raised up in Lockhart.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you have a chance, then, to finish your education all the way through high school?

BERN BALLARD: No. No, I actually never got out of the seventh grade. But whenever I came back, I had pretty well educated myself. I took one of those, they didn't call it that, but what do they call it now?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: They call it a GED now.

BERN BALLARD: Well they didn't call it that, but was the same thing. And I passed it. And then, the VA paid for me to enroll in an advanced accounting course that was through correspondence through [indiscernible] University. I stayed in that. Well I completed it in two

years time. And then I had six months in a business college. But I kinda skipped from seventh grade. I got diploma. They gave it to me.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You got a what?

BERN BALLARD: A diploma. From Austin High School. That was the only high school north. And they gave it to me, so anytime people give you stuff, you take it. It's in my apartment over there. There was probably some stuff they taught in high school that I missed but I figured, well, aced it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Good. What prompts you to go into the service and why did you choose the Army?

BERN BALLARD: Well, what prompted me to go into the service, we foresaw that we was gonna have to go in the service. Four of us decided we better do it now and maybe get a little bit of rank or something or other. So we went out and joined the National Guard. Now that was myself, Ernest Judd, Gene Templeton, and myself. Started out there. And then we run into Sterling White was walking home. We lived out in Gun Valley, you know where that is? Out in east Austin. Used to be.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No.

BERN BALLARD: Well anyway, we were going to Camp Mabry and we run into him on the end of Sixth Street, about the 1800 block of East Sixth Street. He was walking home. We asked him if he would like to go with us. And he crawled in the car. We got out there and everybody joined up except Gene Templeton. He didn't join up. But the rest of us did. And old Sterling came out a full Colonel. A Bird Colonel. He was nothin' but 17 years old. Had to get mother to sign up for him. But he went into the Air Force. He became quite a hero in the Korean War but it was a little bit late for him for WWII.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What was his name again?

BERN BALLARD: Sterling White. Ray Sterling White.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Ray Sterling White?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Yeah, he should be mentioned in some kind of a book because he got a lot of notoriety in the Austin paper. When the Chinese attacked the Americans in Korea, he kept 'em out. He kept the Chinese away from American troops by strafing 'em until the American troops could get out of there. Quite a feat. Quite a feat. But whenever he was in the service, they looked at him as if he was a yard bird. He was kinda small. Last time I remember seein' him, in the camp, well he was [indiscernible] had his [sleeves] rolled up because they were too long for his arms. He had mashed potatoes all over him (laughing). That's the picture I have of him the last time I saw him before he went in the Air Force.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Sounds like they kept him pretty busy.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So, still, why the Army though?

BERN BALLARD: Well it was Army National Guard. Now, I went in with what was there and I couldn't join the Navy here because they didn't have any installations here. I don't know but what I think I might, I'd rather have been in the Navy. Now two of my brothers were. My oldest brother, he liked the Navy better than he did the Army. Of course, my youngest brother wasn't in 20 months. He didn't know anything but Navy.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So you entered the National Guard down at Camp Mabry?

BERN BALLARD: Camp Mabry on November 25th, 1940.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Now what did you have to do? Just signed papers and that was it, or what?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, we just signed up and they had their table of basic allowances already. We had to wait about 30 days before, until they got a new basic allowance. That is the number of people they could have in the company that would get paid. And whenever they got that,

well, both Sterling and I and Ernest Judd got on the payroll, so to speak. We were members but we weren't on the payroll, there, for about a month. And our main job was transportation out. Whenever we were out at Camp Bullis, I mean, Camp Mabry, we started going and hauling other National Guard units down to Camp Bullis that they had built for the 36th division. And we worked to death for over six months. Haulin' them down there. And finally they had the maneuvers. Went to Louisiana for the maneuvers and that's where I got my leg hurt. I was driving the truck myself and I hit a stump. And of course, this leg against the gear shift. It's been bothering me ever since that. I got by until 1982 when I had to have it operated on. And then I got by another 22 years, but, since 2004 I've been crippled. I lean in heavy on that cane over there. And it's gettin', it's not gettin' any better. But I draw compensation for it, that's the main thing. I injured this before the United States went in to World War II! It was July of 1941, and we didn't even go in until December 7th, 1941.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You mentioned, and I read it in several places, that you didn't go through any kind of basic training?

BERN BALLARD: No, I never had a day of basic. Not real basic training in my life. 'Cause as soon as we mobilized, we started goin' out in trucks. Anybody can drive a truck. Haulin' people in. The day that they got all that settled, and they were gonna start basic training, they sent me over on detail service to Mineral Wells, Texas at Camp Wolters 'cause they were opening that camp up and they needed a truck. And a driver. And I went over there on detail service. The [indiscernible] Air Service Command. And I'd picked those, I called 'em "draftees", they called

'em "selectees". Pick up those draftees and hauled 'em to their billets and then later on, you know, I'd haul 'em to town. They decided to make an MP out of me while I was in Mineral Wells waiting on those guys. And one of 'em wouldn't load up. I had the full MP authority to get him in. He wouldn't load up. He and I got in a fight. Boy we just hammered each other into the ground. They had him in compound all night long. When they got him back to camp. Next day they was going to Court Marshall my ass. And this Colonel, well, I started to find out they wanted to Court Marshall him but I told 'em, "I don't wanna Court Marshall him". I think come out at that point. But anyway, that was the extent of my MP duty, 'cause they were getting enough people in there, they could create their own MP detachment. I still hauled 'em back and forth to town. And that last three months, by that time, when I got back to camp, basic training was over. Now I don't know what kind of basic training they had. I don't know what kind of basic training helps you out to be a truck driver. I was a truck driver, base crews in the military 'cause it sure wasn't any rifle training or anything like that. We had rifles, but we didn't put the emphasis on 'em.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So you didn't get rifle training at all?

BERN BALLARD: Oh, yeah, I did. When we left France, when I left France, I went into basic training infantry outfit. France, Champagne, France. I didn't say that right. Chateau Chaumont. And it was snowing and sleeting and it did that for the whole three weeks and we never got out. We never went to the firing range 'cause you couldn't, for where they wanted you to shoot you couldn't see the targets. There was snow comin' down so hard. The only training I

got in that whole time was how to break down an M1 rifle and put it back together. Now that's the extent of my MP training. They shipped us out, anyway. And I wound up in Company C-309th Infantry Regiment. I think it was the second day after I got there I knew how to fire an M1 rifle. After that, well that was... Every time they'd pull us back out of the front, supposed to keep you busy, you know, and they'd have you up there in training. They told me that I was supposed to give a lecture on how to seal off a beating zone. That's where you'd use a lot of artillery on the specialist and then you'd go take the infantry division out. I had heard that lecture before but I didn't remember that much about it. And I got up there and did the best I could. Of course nobody else knew anything about it. After it was with, this young kid came up there and said, "Sergeant, you got that wrong." I told them that they had to attack the a frontal, after the beatings over and the artillery has stopped, they had to make a frontal attack on it. And he said, "No, you make a black attack two sides of 'em just like a "V". It gives the Germans a chance to get out of there themselves and pick up on the other side there in case there's a lot of land mines." I didn't know that.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What was it that you were teaching again?

BERN BALLARD: Well it was a tactic. You know, like you found some woods and had a bunch of Germans in it. You'd first call in the artillery. And then after you had used up as much artillery, you wanted to get the Germans that were left out of the woods. You didn't want to go in there yourself. I was teaching them how to get 'em out of the beatings. They called it "beatings", you know, where the artillery was hidden in the ground. I almost had it right. I just didn't know

whether I was supposed to hit in the front or in the back. Really it was supposed to hit it at the back and not the front. I got the other part of it right.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So this is all when you're with the 78th infantry division?

BERN BALLARD: Yes. That's the only training that I ever had was that. The training that we got after we came out, just to keep us busy. And a lot of times it was a critique of what had happened the time before. What we should have done, what we didn't do. I never had any basic training whatsoever.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Let me go back to when you're stateside. Do you remember where you were or what you were doing when you heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. I was here in Austin. On leave. They said to get back to the camp. I was at Camp Bullis. I went back there.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Were you with friends?

BERN BALLARD: Huh?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Were you with friends here in Austin?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, there used to be a place, they called it "El Patio" now. It was a beer joint. Run by two Jesuit boys. And we'd accumulated over there and people were going back in cars to drive back and pick up as many as they could. And that's where I was. I was trying to get a ride back whenever it happened.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay.

BERN BALLARD: I think it was on a Sunday but I'm not sure about it. But anyway, I was looking for a ride back.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Do you remember what the sentiment was? Where people really excited? Angry?

BERN BALLARD: They were angry as hell. But I don't think they were surprised. I think they knew it was coming.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Really?

BERN BALLARD: Because they'd had a delegation in Washington to try to iron things out with the United States and they wasn't gettin' anywhere at all. They wouldn't give any ground at all. But everybody in the know figured it was gonna happen. Everybody. I didn't know that much about it to know exactly. I knew that we was gonna fight Germany but I didn't know for sure

that we'd fight Japan at the same time. It turned out we fought Japan a little before we did Germany.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I remembered something else that I wanted to ask you. I just have to back up a little bit. You mentioned Louisiana Maneuvers. And that's where you injured your leg, when you hit the stump. What do you recall about the maneuvers or just how they went?

BERN BALLARD: Well I remember that when we maneuvered, we maneuvered with blackout lights. We didn't have lights on. And blackout lights were just a little bit of light in front and a little bit of light in back. And when you get in combat you have to prompt just the down beam on top of the truck in front of you. To make sure you're following. And with that in mind, what I did, I just got too close to him and he walked a little bit and I tried to walk too and I hit that stump. We were going through a stump forest where the trees had been cut out. And that was how close the trees were in Louisiana. And they took me to the medics and the medics didn't know anything about it. They didn't know anything in those days, and they put me on inactive duty. Didn't put me in the hospital. Then they sent me home on a furlough and when I got home, well I rejoined the outfit that kept up when they came back. And it gradually got so I could walk on it. I was on night duty for a long time. Then whenever they'd start to train to do the, actually, this was when they started doing the basic training, well I went to Camp Wolters.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. After the war breaks out, it sounds like you stayed in Texas for a while still?

BERN BALLARD: Mm-hmm.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What do you do between that and the time that the 36th gets mobilized?

BERN BALLARD: Well I don't believe I'm following you.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, let's see. That's right, though. The 36th is mobilized in November of 1940. Well, how does that change things for you? Are you actually living on Camp Mabry?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. We lived at Camp Mabry but we ate breakfast downtown. They didn't have any kitchens operating so they had a contract with different places to feed us. It was 1300 hours. They had several different places that we'd go eat breakfast and dinner and come back and eat supper. That was the best parts of that.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did they have like a shuttle that would take you downtown to eat?

BERN BALLARD: Well we had all the transportation we needed, so we'd just drive 'em all down there at one time. But they didn't eat at the same place 'cause there wasn't any place big enough to handle that many people at once.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Right.

BERN BALLARD: I was trying to think where I used to eat. It was on Congress Avenue. It was a well known place, but I can't think of the name of it right now.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Is it still open?

BERN BALLARD: No, that one's not. I would have thought it would be 'cause it's been there a long time. About the 700-800 block on the east side of Congress.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So, let's see, you do a lot of driving. What are you basically driving? I mean, men is one thing, but what other things do you drive?

BERN BALLARD: Well, when we mobilized, we had 34, 35, and 36 Chevrolet one-ton trucks. That could haul about 10 men. And it would haul a pretty good amount of cargo. And later on they gave us twin and a half GMC trucks. That were bigger. And then later on after that they gave us, no, Chevrolet trucks. And then later on we got GMC. I think they were two-ton GMC trucks. And they would haul a lot of people.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you have any preference for any of the trucks that you drove?

BERN BALLARD: I preferred them GMCs. They were, in technology they were probably ten years later model than the ones we had.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: When do you end up shipping overseas?

BERN BALLARD: Was in April of 1942. We left from Staten Island. And we were at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts at the time. I noticed this one picture up there on the beach. That's out on Washburn Island. Those two pictures are both at Camp Edwards.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: At the top?

BERN BALLARD: All them pictures up there are training pictures in Camp Edwards, Massachusetts. And the one with the guy standing there, looks like they was running a boat. That was at Washburn Island.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Which island?

BERN BALLARD: Washburn.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Washburn Island. Okay.

BERN BALLARD: It's just off Cape Cod.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So did you take, well of course you take a ship. Was it one of those converted luxury liners?

BERN BALLARD: No, it was just a regular ship. I don't know if it was built for troops but it looked like it. It was brand new and it looked like it might have been built as a troop ship. Now there's the old NORMANDIE. You heard about it, it's laying on its side in New York harbor. The second from the top on the right side. Got the note on it. (Looking at pictures)

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, okay. Oh.

BERN BALLARD: Now NORMANDIE, when France surrendered to Germany, they left France and went to another place and volunteered their ship to the Americans and the Americans brought it to New York. But they were trying to convert it over to a troop ship and they were doing some painting in there and it caught on fire and they pumped enough water in it to capsize it. And they never did try, they just hauled it out and sunk it. Used it for bombing practice.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yeah, I think I've heard of that.

BERN BALLARD: They said that it would cost more to right it and get the repairs done on it than it would take to build another one. So, I don't know. Seems like an awful waste to me.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So how long does it take to get across the Atlantic? And where do you go?

BERN BALLARD: It took us 13 days.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: 13 days?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. But they did some zig-zagging. That means they'd go this direction, that direction. Trying to miss those U-boats. The route that we took was an upward route movement, far away from German U-boats, so we didn't run into any trouble. We went from New York, Staten Island, to over in North Africa, that island. What is that, Algiers?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yes.

BERN BALLARD: Right.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What were the living conditions like on the ship?

BERN BALLARD: Well it was pretty close quarters. I remember they got some bad chicken somewhere along the line and everybody got sick. I remember that. Everybody had the GIs.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: The GIs?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, they called it the GIs. It's dysentery is what it is. Caused from unsanitary conditions. Tainted food, whatever. The food didn't taste bad, but it was, 'cause nearly everybody got sick.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I'm just curious, but up to this point, well, I was going to say, how was the food? But, I'm just thinking that from Camp Mabry they would truck you down to Austin to go eat, I'd imagine the food at that point was pretty good?

BERN BALLARD: Oh, eating in a restaurant, it was good! I would say it was better than eating out of a mess hall. But the food in those camps wasn't that bad. I kinda liked it. They would overdo it. They had one thing they called, it's got a bad name, but I can't think of it. But I kinda like that stuff. What was the name of that?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Spam?

BERN BALLARD: Spam! (Laughing). I kinda liked it. And I think it was pork or something like that.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So when you get to North Africa, what is your impression? I mean, it's really far away from home.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, well, the impression was it was a piss poor place to be because all we saw as a bunch of Arabs runnin' around and it was somethin' we weren't used to seeing. But there was enough Americans over there that we didn't have to spend any time looking at the Arabs. We stayed, in North Africa, we went all the way from Orient to Constantine. That's all the way across North Africa. And then we went, we pulled out the division and went to Italy.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: But in your time in Africa, I guess, you still had the same job. You're driving a truck?

BERN BALLARD: I was driving a truck, yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Driving troops, ammunition.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. We hauled ammunition, we hauled fuel, we hauled troops, and we hauled dead people back to the GRO, the General Register Office. Anything that needed to be hauled, we hauled it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And this was, let me see, the 36th division, was it, it's 111th quartermaster?

BERN BALLARD: It was when we went in but they later changed the 36th division from a square division, which was higher, to a rectangular division which was lower man power. I think they

went from about 20,000 down to about 12,000. So they cut it down from [indiscernible] quartermaster to [indiscernible] quartermaster.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Just curious, what friends do you have at this point?

BERN BALLARD: Oh I had a regular number of friends. You know, you accumulate so many friends. When I was going to high school, had a certain amount of friends. Neighborhood had a certain amount. It wasn't long till you got to know who your friends were.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay, so you mentioned that you get into Oran and you go as far as Constantine?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, we made a long truck haul, I guess it must have been about halfway across North Africa up to Constantine. From where we were. And then we came back after that long haul, we came back to Casablanca and that's where we shipped out to Italy. I'm going to tell you this, but I know you don't remember. Lyndon Johnson, the chief assessed him, he was laying partly in a stretcher. There was a guy named Clifton Carter.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: He's an aid to, Johnson, right?

[break in the transcription and conversation; coughing for a few minutes at 34:09 to 37:11]

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What was the weather like while you were in North Africa?

BERN BALLARD: It generally was pretty good. Wasn't too cold and it didn't get too hot, as I remember. But the weather was generally pretty good. It seems to me, like, as I remember it, when we got in to Italy it came up a siege of bad weather. Water, rain, everything.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So the 36, it goes into, do you go to Salerno or straight to Italy?

BERN BALLARD: Well we went through Salerno. You couldn't get in unless you invaded. So we made an invasion at the beach with the 36th division. In Salerno.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm confusing you and myself. You don't go to the island of Sicily first?

BERN BALLARD: No, we didn't go to Sicily. Sicily had already been taken by old Patton and Montgomery. They had already taken Sicily.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So then the 36th goes directly from North Africa to Salerno?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. To Salerno and we went up to where the Fifth Army had established a line. At Casena, got a stalemate. And we couldn't go any further. General had made a line and was holding it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: How many days after the invasion at Salerno do you and the quartermaster unit come in?

BERN BALLARD: I think it was the next day.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: The next day?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. It was still not raised on the beach when we came in. They hadn't pushed away from the beach. Day one after. Military always comes in first and then they generally try to get the artillery in after. And then the other support units after. The quarter unit was a supporting unit. It wasn't a combat unit.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Right. So you come in to the beach. Do you remember what you were hauling in your truck?

BERN BALLARD: We had all the supplies, ammunition, gasoline, and like I say, the dead people trucking them back to the cemetery. That was all we were hauling. And anytime there's an invasion that's what you always would haul.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I read that in one of the interviews, that, I guess I never thought about how it is that you get your dead back from the front.

BERN BALLARD: That was a chore that I did not like. Sometimes they'd been dead for several days, you know, and they stunk good. And then you'd drive up and have to stop or what, that odor would work its way up to the cabin. Boy.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And I guess you'd have to make several stops, up to the front, just to collect them. How full?

BERN BALLARD: Well they loaded them all at one time but on the way back to wherever you unloaded at the cemeteries, you already had to make several stops. The MPs were out and they'd stop you. The traffic lights didn't hardly work. Some of 'em did I guess.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: How full was your truck?

BERN BALLARD: I don't know how many people they put in. But it was at least 20. They'd just lay 'em in there, like wood. Cardboard. They didn't have 'em on stretchers or anything. They just take 'em and had 'em in bed sacks is what they had 'em in. Laid 'em on top of each other.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: When you weren't hauling in supplies and things from the beach, where, was there like a central point where all the trucks would go?

BERN BALLARD: No, they had what they called “dumps”. They’d go up there and established dumps and that’s where you’d haul the fuel and then the units would come over there and pick it up. But we just hauled to the dumps. We’d pick it up at the port and haul it to the dumps.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: When you were driving, do you always have a helmet, rifle and everything else you need?

BERN BALLARD: Regulations. But we didn’t wear the helmets as much as we should have. And the rifle would sometimes get covered up by stuff. (Laughing). But that was the norm. That’s what we was supposed to do. Now, old Patton, he was a fatalist about helmets. You never saw him without his helmet on. He’d penalize you if you were out on the street and didn’t have your helmet on. Of course I never was around him.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: How does it work? Do you just drive alone or do you always have somebody with you?

BERN BALLARD: Sometimes we have a relief driver. It depends on what the haul is for. On those long distance hauls, we’d always have a relief driver. They’d give us K-rations to eat if it was longer than a day or two. We used to pull off to the side of the road and warm water for our coffee. And after that we would eat our K-rations.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So what rank are you about now? When you first get to Italy?

BERN BALLARD: I was a Private, maybe a Private First Class. I don't remember. I was a Private First Class twice. They probably oopsed. I was a Private. In the Quartermaster I never got to be anything more than First Class Private. But that was different. It was safe, more or less, in the Quartermaster. Those guys, they wouldn't even go to camp, they'd get drunk and lose their rank. Half of 'em would. They didn't give up their rank. So somebody had to give it up before other people got it. I never got any more than First Class Private out of it but it was different. First time we went into battle, when we came out, the First Sergeant come to me and said, "Ballard, you're a butt-charger." (Laughing) I went from private to butt-charger. That's four ranks.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So you mentioned Casena after –

BERN BALLARD: Well that's where we stalemated, Casena. It was kind of a religious compound. Catholic Church. The Germans had taken it over and they were, they was holding it. I remember we were about seven or eight miles from Casena itself but you could see it clear as day. They wouldn't let us sleep on top of the ground like they used to. They made us dig trench stations. Foxholes. And sleep in them. And you'd hear Mount Vesuvius. Started erupting about that time. And the ground was vibrating under us. Which you didn't know what was gonna go first, the artillery or Mount Vesuvius.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Is it raining a lot in Italy at this time?

BERN BALLARD: It rained when we first went in but it didn't continue on rainin' a lot.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: After the break through at Casena, does the 36th keep going north? Or pulled out?

BERN BALLARD: No, they pulled out and went in to France. But they didn't go in with Normandy. Now that's where all the notoriety is, in Normandy. We went in Southern France and you seldom ever hear about it. But we went in to Southern France and I stayed in France four and a half months. To the day. Went in August 15th and came out the first of the year.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You're right, the invasion of Southern France doesn't get the same notoriety as Northern France.

BERN BALLARD: No. No. Most people never heard of the invasion in Southern France. They know all about Normandy.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Right. Well, again, you come in on the beaches in Southern France, when? A day or two after –

BERN BALLARD: It was the day after the infantry had gone in there. And there wasn't any sign, at Southern France there wasn't any sign of any dead German soldiers. There wasn't any

American dead soldiers and there's just one or two vehicles that had been knocked out on the beach. The Germans knew that we were gonna push on them. They started moving back. And they got the artillery in and they started arresting. We made the drive down the road at that end. It was one German vehicle after the other that would show up. The Air Force, the artillery. They were trying to get away but they couldn't pull it off.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So basically the Germans pulled back from the beaches?

BERN BALLARD: Yep. Well, they pulled back in Southern France. But I don't know about Normandy. They pretty well fought all the way out in Normandy.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No, I mean Southern France. Because, you're right, I mean –

BERN BALLARD: Southern France they didn't put up any fight at all. They just, they put up just enough fight that you just wouldn't run over a whole fleet of 'em I guess. But they fought more in that big push, went in to Paris.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So you're in France, you're still driving your truck, and at what point do you actually, I just want to make sure I'm not missing anything here. You didn't at any time go to Anzio, did you?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah! I did. I did. We didn't go in as an invading force. It was after they had already secured Anzia that we went in to reinforce people at Anzia. And we broke through that and went to Rome.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I didn't ask, what did you think of Italy? The old country.

BERN BALLARD: Well I kinda liked Italy. I didn't like it as much as I did France. I liked Italy. And I might of liked Germany better than either one of 'em if I had had the chance to see it. I didn't get to see Germany because when the war was over, ten days after that they shipped me home. So I didn't get to, I wasn't there long enough to see when they removed that No Fraternizing law. We weren't supposed to fraternize with the Germans but they removed that order soon after I left. They started going with those German Euros. The only time I had anything to do with a German girl, we were running across the country and we'd ride tanks and get all those tanks, form a line and go sweep through the town and if there was a soldier, then we'd take a prisoner and then we'd get on the tanks and go to the next town. But anyway, we went into this town and secured it. We was waitin' for other people to catch up with us so we would have a straight line. And this little German girl, we told her she had to get out of the house, we was taking it over and so on, and she didn't. She was just hanging in the kitchen area, you know? Finally I had to get a translator to find out what her problem was. They were talking and I was talking and couldn't understand what they were saying. And she stomped her foot and said, "Dumb clod!" (Laughing). I understood that. But what she was doing was trying to warm some milk to feed to her baby. And I couldn't understand "bah-bee" as "baby". She

kept saying, “bah-bee”. Went over to this guy, he was my translator and he found out what she wanted. Well we let her go ahead and do it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You mentioned prisoners.

BERN BALLARD: I have taken so many German prisoners, I lost count. I took 150 at one time. But it wasn't no problem. They wanted to give up. Went into a school house. Perfect school. It was on a school day, I saw the smoke coming out of the chimney. So I said, “I'll go upstairs and take the upstairs of this three room school house. You take the basement and the first floor. I'll get the other.” And I got all the way to the top before I found anything. And this cafeteria was full of German soldiers. And there wasn't a weapon in view. So I said, “Well where's your weapons?” The guy that is speaking is the only one that could speak English. And he pointed out the window and I looked out the window and those weapons were staked. Have you ever heard of stacking weapons?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh yeah.

BERN BALLARD: It's got a little cliff and you have three to a stack? It was as if they didn't have a prayer. They just stacked the weapons out there. I took a look out there and said, “Well you all just come on down. Follow me and I'm going to take you down where the truck is.” We had trucks that were following us and taking prisoners back to prisoner of war camp.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Really? So it's driving around picking up prisoners?

BERN BALLARD: Sometimes they died of hunger before the truck got there. They didn't have any food. Half the time I was hungry myself.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And this is when you're with the 78th? Right?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay, I just wanted to be clear.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, we didn't have anything to do with the prisoners in the 36th division. I saw a few. Well, when we made that haul to Constantine, we hauled Italian prisoners of war back. And I'll tell you one thing. I could get along with those Italians a lot better than I could with my own Americans in France.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Really? Why do you say that?

BERN BALLARD: Well they weren't bitching at me. The war was over for 'em. (Laughing)

MIKE ZAMBRANO: (Laughing) Okay, well that's a good point.

BERN BALLARD: Some of those guys in the end of the company, as you know, being away from home and everything, they'd get grumpy. You soon found out who they were and you just stayed away from 'em. You didn't have anything to do with 'em.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Let's just go back to France when you were with the 36th. At what point do you actually, well at what point do you go to the 78th and why?

BERN BALLARD: Well we went down the Rohne Valley and then we headed out, I think we was going west, I'm not sure. I'm not sure what direction. But we went to Alsace-Lorraine, you know where that is? On a map?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yes.

BERN BALLARD: That's where we wound up. In a saw mill town. And then all of a sudden they said they were cutting our troops and were sending 50 men to this training camp in Southern France. So I was going up. Being a Private I couldn't say anything, so I went. That was going to be three weeks. That might have been in October in 1944, I'm not sure. Might have been October. 50 of us. And then later on they dumped another 50. So that left 'em with just 100 people. But 100 people driving trucks was enough because all the infantry and service companies had trucks so they could pretty well haul their own supplies. Just whenever they were traveling fast across the country did they need artillery trucks.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So how did you feel about, you know, you're driving a truck pretty much one week and the next week you're –

BERN BALLARD: I felt like a victim. I felt like a victim. One week I'm driving a truck and I'm safe. The next week I'm laying in a foxhole with some mortars bustin' all around me. I felt like a victim. And I knew it had to be done, I knew they were actin' on orders but I actually had hard feelings towards some of those people that decided who had to go and who stayed. And I don't know who made the decision. Had to go through two or three hands, but I got, I later made friends with all of 'em. Old John King was one who had the final decision and he's come to visit me here in this house. Just at that time, First Lieutenant.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: John King?

BERN BALLARD: John King. I was looking through my files in there and I've got letters from him. He was from upstate New York.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So Alsace-Lorraine is where you make the transfer over to the 78th?

BERN BALLARD: No. Well we didn't go directly into the 78th. We went first down to that training camp at Alsace-Lorraine. Am I saying that right?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yes.

BERN BALLARD: Okay. And then we rode trains all the way through Holland and Belgium into, I guess almost into Germany as far as Americans were at that time. And they were pretty close to the boat at that time. They mugged the boat that might have started 'em, I'm not sure. But we were about 50 miles below the bug. Hurtgen Forest. That's where we were then. And I couldn't understand why so many people were getting killed and had reinforced for a down force so I asked this [indiscernible] down in there why. And he said, "Well you tied up about 30,000 German troops and you're facing onslaught now." He said, "That's straight in your ear. We're not trying to take Hurtgen Forest. We're just trying to keep these Generals in here. And it kind of made sense I guess.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What's it like fighting in the Hurtgen Forest?

BERN BALLARD: Well anytime you got trees, you tree bursts. Artillery and mortars. They hit the top of the trees and they spray the ground with shrapnel. That's the way I got hit. They didn't really have to aim that stuff at you and in fact they can't. They just know where you are and they'll shoot it into the trees and the spray. Now those mortars were made so that when that thing burst, it burst in a whole bunch of little, small pieces. And it was, that was the biggest threat. We didn't get much artillery. Artillery goes over, comes this way out and then it hits the ground and blows up usually in the ground. If it hits the tree, it blows up, but it's bigger pieces of shrapnel and doesn't hurt many people when it does.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Now how did you get wounded? That was in your hand?

BERN BALLARD: Yes, my right hand. It's still in there. I don't know if that's the scar to it but I think it is. And it's down between these two fingers. I can't feel it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Does it hurt at all or bother you?

BERN BALLARD: No. They tried to take it out by just probing it. And then they gave me a local and they cut and couldn't reach down there far enough to get it. And they finally said, "Well we'd have to put you to sleep to get it out." Said, "We're going to sew you back up, put some dressing around it and you'll never know it's in there." I knew it was in there when they x-rayed my hand. Don't tell me that. It doesn't bother me in the least.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So, what were you doing? This is a mortar attack?

BERN BALLARD: I was laying right on the ground! With my hand spread out on the ground. It was a mortar attack and that's what you did. You laid down on the ground. And I don't know why they did that. I thought maybe it would be better to get up next to a tree, where the spray wouldn't hit you. But I couldn't have got up next to a tree anyway. It was a bunch of brush and stuff. But I got a Purple Heart out of it. I didn't get away from the front for more than two hours but I got a Purple Heart out of it. I got a Purple Heart. (Laughing).

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So the medics take a look at it and says what?

BERN BALLARD: Well he wrote it up as being a combat wound, which it was. And he said we could take it out if they put you to sleep. Do a probe. And I said, "Leave it alone. Shit, I'll just-" And I was thinking he was going to say, "Well maybe just take the rest of the day off." But he didn't. He sent me back to the place on the front lines.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So Hurtgen Forest-

BERN BALLARD: Hurtgen, H-U-R-T-G-E-N. I don't know. I got a book on it over here someplace. It has a chapter in there that, they say the Americans lost 30,000 men. And it's all in that book, a little small book. Might be the last of narratives, *The Boy Soldier* I think is the name of the book. There's a whole chapter in there about Hurtgen Forest. We'll look at it later.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. Weather. What was it like?

BERN BALLARD: Well there was snow on the ground the whole time in Hurtgen Forest. Oh, up to 18 inches! And we waded through snow. We tried to dig foxholes. Couldn't. On account of too many tree roots. We just found places that would have a tree or a bunch of trees between us and where the mortars were coming through. And we'd dig down as deep as we could. It was just park in these trees. That's where we stayed alive. 'Cause it was taking its toll. It was nearly all mortars and not any small arms hardly at all. Now you break out of the place, you can

pick up a lot of machine guns. I remember one time, well the first day that I was out, I was being downed by a machine gun. Then the mortars began 4:00 that evening. Every time I'd look away there was a crack down my machine gun. I was staying low, I kept my belly on the ground. In 18 inches of snow. And I think that's when my feet were frozen because they never did feel right after that. And they don't till this day. I don't have any [indiscernible] on account of my feet.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you get trench foot?

BERN BALLARD: No, not trench foot, that was World War One. But I had frostbite. I was in the hospital two months with frostbite.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Wow. So what friends do you have at this point? With the 78th?

BERN BALLARD: At that time I think I was squad leader and some of 'em I remember. Some of 'em. They were comin' and goin' so fast I never got to make friends. But there was some of 'em stayed long enough, I got friendly with.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And you said there was, let's see, 78th Infantry Division, 309th Infantry Regiment, Company C.

BERN BALLARD: Right.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And you were a Squad Leader?

BERN BALLARD: I was Squad Leader and then later on I got to be a Platoon Sergeant. That was close to the end of the war.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: How many men did you have in your squad?

BERN BALLARD: 13. I was the 13th man.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Lucky 13.

BERN BALLARD: (Laughing) Yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And what was it's make up? I mean did you have a BAR man?

BERN BALLARD: Well, we had a BAR man. But he got killed and I took his BAR, so I was a squad leader and the BAR man. And I liked that because that BAR had a lot of power.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yeah.

BERN BALLARD: You could shoot it in the direction of the Germans and they'd soon find out that they didn't want any other. But that was, the BAR, I don't know when it was that I decided I wanted to take it over myself. But no one else wanted it. It was heavy. I decided, shoot, I'll just take it myself. I didn't even have an M-1 rifle. I had a little light rifle. My Murdoch .32 caliber. No, it wasn't a .32 caliber. Kinda like a .22. Small, light rifle. And I traded that in for a BAR. I never did get the chance to really use the BAR on anybody.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Was everybody else in your squad a rifleman?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Everybody out of my squadron was a rifleman. Now, in every company they had the mortar platoon. No, mortar squad. They had Embark mortars and Bazookas. But mine, mine was just regular rifleman.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. What about when you had a platoon?

BERN BALLARD: It was the same thing. It was a platoon of rifleman.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You told a story in one of the interviews about when President Roosevelt dies.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. We didn't know it until we were marching out of Hurtgen Forest. We didn't know he died. Didn't know he was sick or anything. I had such a head cold, I couldn't

hear. We was walking along there and the guy in back of me punched me and says, "Repeat this to the man in front of you." And he told me that President Franklin Roosevelt died. And I said, "Say that over again!" You know, I got "Roosevelt." That's all I got. And he had to holler it out and I managed to get it to the man above me that he had died.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What did you think?

BERN BALLARD: Well I was kinda distressed about it. But you don't tolerate that very long. You just go ahead and do what you got to do. In other words, the present takes dominance over what could be happening in the future. But nobody knew who Truman was. He was the Vice President and he got to be President, but I'll tell you, he was a good person that got to be President. He was a good President.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I always like to ask the closing question. What did you wear in the Hur-

BERN BALLARD: Hurtgen Forest?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yes.

BERN BALLARD: I wore a blouse and an overcoat. And the sweatshirt that they had for us and I think some [indiscernible], khaki pants, all winter wear. But I think that was all we had. Oh yeah, we had a white veil they would put over us. And that was one thing I wanted to touch on.

Because the Germans did the same exact thing. They'd take white clothes and put it around their head and push that little fiber thing in there to hold it up. And when you saw it from a distance, you never knew whether they were Germans or not. And I remember one time we were trying to cross some [indiscernible]. And we got the word that we were going to lay here until a platoon passed. And they said it was a merchant platoon, patrol. And we let 'em pass and then all of a sudden they just had some kind of disruption in there and they started talkin' German up there. We let a German Patrol pass because we thought it was Americans. We never fired at 'em. We could have killed a half a dozen of 'em but we didn't. But that's the way it goes.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So what happened to them? I mean did they captured?

BERN BALLARD: I don't know, they haven't told me. They probably called 'em back to their camp for taking shortcuts across to no man's land. I don't know what happened to 'em. We never heard. Or saw anybody we identified as patrol units after that. And another thing is, I don't know what American patrol would have been doing out there. I couldn't understand that. Why would they be sitting, never did know.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you think that you were pretty well supplied the entire time you were with the 78th? As far as ammunition, clothing, boots, whatnot?

BERN BALLARD: No.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No?

BERN BALLARD: Food, we never got enough food. With our clothing and ammunition and everything, I had to say it was adequate. But we went sometimes days on end without any food at all. They're supposed to get K-rations up to us and then if you stayed out too long, they'd get C-rations to us and sometimes we didn't see any food. And I bitched about it one time to a Colonel. About we just weren't getting enough food. But there wasn't anything he could do about it 'cause it was so fluid. You know, we were moving so fast that they just, I forget what it is by line, but something like you just have to make do with the best you can. But it was pissing me off 'cause I was hungry all the time. I thought I'd never get enough.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And you pretty much at this point are living in these foxholes that you're making, right?

BERN BALLARD: No, we weren't. We were moving. On the move. Sometimes, if it was an area that Germans had been in, they'd leave the foxholes and we'd sleep in them at night. But when we were going across riding those tanks, we never stayed in any foxholes.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Where'd you sleep?

BERN BALLARD: Just whenever they'd stop the tank, sometimes. You'd crawl in the tank where ever you could. But if it was in a town, we took houses over and slept in them. And that was where I was telling you that we took a house over and this girl was kind of walking around, called me a dumb clod.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Who commanded the 78th? Do you recall?

BERN BALLARD: Well if you'd ask me five or six years ago like I told you to. I'm thinking of his name but can't come to me. I was within of two miles of him when he was killed. Rose!

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Maurice Rose?

BERN BALLARD: Yep. Maurice Rose. Now he was somewhere in the upper echelon of command. But who the lower echelons, I just don't remember. I remember our Captain, one time. We never had a Captain. We usually had First Lieutenant as Commanding Officer. And I remember having a First Lieutenant that was from North Carolina. And I remember he chewed tobacco all the time. That's the only think I remember about him. He was a nice fellow. But when I got furlough to go from there, I went to London. For a week. I was doing my leave and I walked up there to him. They were going to attack next and you know, I said, "I'd sure hate to leave all this time. Because I know you're fixing to go into attack and I'm going to London to kick my heels up." He said, "You go and have a good time." And I started leaving and he said,

“Hey, hold your left testicle.” You know, that’s supposed to be, you hold your left nut to give people luck. It’s a luck thing.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Hold your left nut?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay (laughing).

BERN BALLARD: But anyway, I came back and they’d lost a lot of men. I think that, that was the time I came back to gunman after the, the time I was in the hospital, I came back and the guy that was in my platoon was a First Sergeant. And I couldn’t understand how he got out to being a First Sergeant. I asked the head, cause here’s [indiscernible]. I was in the hospital so they couldn’t give it to me. I never did get to to be First Sergeant. I never really got to be a Platoon Sergeant ‘cause the war was over. But they do that just to fill up the blanks.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You said that you had gone to London?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. I was there a week.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Tell me a little about that.

BERN BALLARD: It was fun. A lot of fun. We had a hotel down close to, what's that square?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Piccadilly?

BERN BALLARD: Piccadilly, yeah. And we had fun. Me and this old boy in this picture right here. This guy, oh wait, not him. This one. His picture is here. I really needed him when we loaded on the ship. Then on this great big picture. He'd been my first Sergeant in my Squadron.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: This one?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. That guy right there. Joe Sanders. Joe Sanders.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: On the far-

BERN BALLARD: Left. I'm the only one of that bunch that's still alive. And old Joe, I met him when I loaded on the ship. He'd been my first Sergeant in the Quartermaster. And we painted London red. (Laughing). Had a good time.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: (Laughing). What did you think of the English people?

BERN BALLARD: I liked 'em. I didn't have trouble with the people. I don't know any of the people that I had problems with. Of course I had problems with the upper echelon. Anybody

that thought Hitler had done the right thing, I had a problem with. But I never got a chance to find out about that because I was out and on the way home before they'd lifted the fraternization law. So I didn't have anything to do with the Germans. But, I'll tell you there was a few people that thought that Mussolini was right in doing what he did. But not many. Most of 'em tagged on to the Amerians and couldn't run away. Because Italy dumped a lot of people into America over the years. You know, a lot of those air guns are still Italian. Mostly.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Speaking of Italy, when you're there, was there a lot of destruction to the buildings? Like in Salerno and so-forth?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. In Naples there was quite a bit of destruction.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Was there poverty? Or homeless people?

BERN BALLARD: I never noticed anybody that, it seemed to me like the Catholic Church was probably taking care of all the – I never saw anybody sleeping on the streets. I never had anybody begging me for money. So they were evidently getting food. But those up there on the front might have been a different story.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. I couldn't help but notice the picture of the Eiffel Tower up there. So I assume you got to go to Paris?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, I was in Paris several times.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, okay. How'd you like Paris?

BERN BALLARD: Oh, if you don't go to Paris, you don't go to France. Paris is France. And that's what I told that guy when he pinned that medal on me. He kind of snickered about it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You're talking about the, Chevalier?

BERN BALLARD: Chevalier! Chevalier!

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Chevalier. And you're making reference to the, well the article in *Statesman* says, "Austin World War Two veteran, Bern Ballard, receives French high honor".

BERN BALLARD: Yeah.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And, you said you didn't know why you got it?

BERN BALLARD: Well I have determined since then, I didn't know at first. I have determined since then that it wasn't for valor or heroism or anything like that. It was for honor. And they had been giving that medal out since 1802. Napoleon started it and it was a hunter thing. And the reason that we were getting it, now I wasn't the only one, I might have been the only one

that got it this year, I don't know. But there were several other people got it. It was, when we first went into France, the Germans were blowing up all the railroad bridges. And the only way to get supplies from the harbors up to the troops was to haul it in trucks. And that's what we were doing. We were working 16 to 18 hours a day. We barely had time to eat. Never had time to take our clothes off. Take a shower or anything. For three and a half months. And I think that might be the reason that they gave it to me. They cut it and give it to everybody. But waiting this late, most all of 'em are dead anyway. It was an honor thing. And now it compares to the Congressional Medal of Honor. See, that's not a real military medal. Military people get it. But it's not really a military medal. But I read a comparison between the two and I couldn't really see that much difference in it. I know that the Congressional Medal of Honor, from the time you get it, you get a \$400 annuity with it. And this one doesn't pay any annuity but if you get in hard shape, you can apply to the Chevalier Society and they'll get you out of the hole.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well that's a nice benefit.

BERN BALLARD: Well I don't know how much you'd get. But anyway. It's a high honor, I can tell you that. I was glad to get it. Although I did have a hard time determining just why I did get it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: The 16 to 20 hour days that you're talking about, was this one of those instances where you did have another man in the truck and he would switch on and off?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, we had two people. We'd drive night and day and we'd relieve each other. And we'd eat, we'd pull off to the side of the road and got the K-rations to eat. But what always struck me as funny was how we could make coffee and drink it in 15 minutes. Never could understand that.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well I'm sure you had plenty of time enough to practice it. To get it down to a science.

BERN BALLARD: Well that's what it could do that. See, one guy would jump out with a bucket and the other guy would jump out with water and the other guy with the coffee would throw it together.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So everybody's got their jobs.

BERN BALLARD: Everybody had their job to do the coffee. And that coffee wasn't that bad. A lot of people said it wasn't any good but I made coffee myself that's the best in town. I think it's pretty close to what I make.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Let's see. Where are we? After the Hurtgen Forest, where do you go?

BERN BALLARD: We went, and I don't remember what place it was but it was on the Rhine. It was east of the Rhine. It was after they crossed the Rhine. And the First Amour Division. And

we started riding tanks and they asked when they started making the boat to cross Germany. They'd get as many as they could on a tank. Sometimes you'd have just barely enough room to get your butt sitting down. You hold on to what you can. They took off. They didn't hardly ever fire shots. They'd drive up to town. If it looked like it was peaceful, then they ate their way through it and of course, the first shot that was fired was supposed to get them taking defensive action. But I don't remember us ever doing that. I remember we'd drive up and combed those towns, go through 'em. And that's when I took a bunch of people out of that cafeteria in the school house. But I took so many prisoners I couldn't even tell you. That gun that I got over there, you can look at it, by the small box. I took that off a German prisoner of war. And he was an Officer. And I don't even remember what town it was. We were going through the town, out the 152, parked. Keeping a straight line, combed it. And I see this German vehicle there. And this passenger was German-Austrian. And he smiled at me, you know, and I walked up to him and said, "You want to surrender?" He said, "Yeah otherwise, looks like I'm going to have duty." Said it almost in perfect English. He said that they'd run out of gasoline. The driver was out looking for gasoline. And he said, "I guess surrendering would be the same between the two." I said, "Well I'm ready to take you prisoner." And I said, "Get out of the vehicle so I can search it." I said, "Have you got any pickles in your pockets?" You know, that was the thing about like a small gun or something like that. I took it out there. You're supposed to turn that stuff in. But we didn't turn 'em in. We'd save 'em and we'd leave 'em with the kitchen. And when we got a chance to go to Marseille, down at the harbor down there, we'd sell 'em to sailors.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Now you said a minute ago when you asked him if he had any beakers? You were asking if he had a gun? What term did you use?

BERN BALLARD: I asked him if he had any weapons. I thought I was thinking in terms of a small pocket pistol. Something like that. I knew he didn't have a dagger or anything like that. And he did like that (slapping sound) and he had a .38 caliber, it had it in a .38 shoulder holster. So he unbuttoned it and gave it to me. Had to take his clothes off to give it to me. The shoulder holster.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So he was pretty happy to be surrendering?

BERN BALLARD: Oh yeah. And he was a nice fellow too. He stayed with me for about four hours. He moved along with me, going across town in front of me. That's the way it's supposed to be done. And we got on the other side, there was a team there to pick him up, with trucks. And I guess, yeah it was about four hours that it took us to get across the town to where they was going to pick him up. I left him, I shook hands with him and I left him. Nice fellow. Nice fellow.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you get his name?

BERN BALLARD: Never got anybody's name, I wish I had.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Do you know what rank he was?

BERN BALLARD: I never did know any of those German ranks. I just never knew their rank. I never knew the English ranks either. See, they had different insignias for different ranks. I never knew either.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay. When he surrenders, had Germany already surrendered?

BERN BALLARD: No.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay.

BERN BALLARD: Germany hadn't surrendered until the Russians were coming in on Berlin. That's when they were surrendering. And I think that was after Hitler committed suicide. The war wasn't over. It was over, but it was the mop up. That's what they called it, the "mop up". And I remember us crossing the Rhone river two or three times just like you can go 71 out to cross the Colorado river two or three times. But we crossed the Rhone River up North.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So do you remember what you were doing or where you were when you heard that the war in Europe was over?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Yeah, we weren't engaged but, I don't know the name of the little old town we were at. It's not going to be a name on a map, it's not going to tell us where in Germany. Drei Haus. Drei Haus. It was the name of three houses. And that's about how many houses there was in that little town. But they did have a school house and my company was billeted in the schoolhouse. And that's when I found out that I was going to come home. Hadn't been there but a few days.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you say Tri Haus?

BERN BALLARD: Drei like "Dry".

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Drei.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, like the clothes are dry. That's the way you pronounce it. I don't know how you spell it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So you're there for only a few days –

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, and then they told me that I was coming home. See, they had a points system. And the 78th division didn't get over there until October of 1944. I got over there in 1943. I had points running out my ears according to them and they didn't have enough points to come home. I was the only one, the only man that had enough points in the company to

come home at that time. So they told me that I could go, so I – but I thought it was going to be a quick trip. Got in the Maginot Line, you know, and they're doing all that paperwork. Three weeks to get out of Maginot Line.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What did you do in the mean time?

BERN BALLARD: Well we went to town, there, to the little town in the Maginot Line that we went to. Not much of anything. Just waiting around. I couldn't type. Everybody that could type, they gave a job. Typing. Typing the records. But I couldn't so I just waited around till they got it all done.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did they put you up in some sort of barracks or something?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Yeah, it was an Army facility. It was first the Maginot Line and then the German built the Siegfried Line. But it was an antidote to the Germans is what it was. But the German's weren't around it so it didn't do much.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: As I mentioned, I did a little reading last night. There's someone called Tom Blackwell?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah! Thomas Blackwell. He was a Judge here in Austin.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And how do you know him or know of him?

BERN BALLARD: He was a Second Lieutenant, my platoon leader, in, let's see, Company A, 111th Quartermaster Regiment. And I knew him over the years. But that's where I first knew him. He was in our company. As a Platoon Leader. And he went to North Carolina on a maneuver with a few of us and we didn't all go. I went, and he went with us. And that Tom Blackwell keep showing up every once in a while. He remembered me and I remembered him.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You mentioned the Carolina Maneuvers.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. North Carolina.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So was it a lot like the Louisiana Maneuvers?

BERN BALLARD: It was the same thing but it was different units. They sent us up to help the referees. We weren't part of the maneuvering force. Now, when we were in Louisiana, we were in one of the maneuvering forces. Had two sides. You know, just like you do in the war. But up there, we were helping the referees. All the trucks we took up there was to be used by the referees. I never did see old Tom after we got to North Carolina. I don't know what he was doing then. But I saw him when we got back.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: I forgot to ask you, you spoke of the Louisiana Maneuvers. Were they equipped enough, I mean for those maneuvers, did they have all the equipment that they needed to actually pull the maneuvers off or were they having to –

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Had everything they need to pull it off. I couldn't really see any difference between what they were equipped with in the war. We had the same equipment. But you know, they'd been manufacturing that stuff for a couple or three years. So they got it to us. I'm not sure about the rifles. Seems like we still had 03 rifles. But everything else, there was 2-ton GMC trucks and all that. That was the same all through the war.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Going back to when you're getting discharged, how many points did you have?

BERN BALLARD: 108.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: 108 points. How many did you need to get out?

BERN BALLARD: I think it was 90. I think it was 90. It might have been 80-something but I believe it was 90 and I had 108 but I had been, now the Quartermaster didn't have that many points. Because I got the benefit of those infantry points. Infantry was getting more points and I don't know how we got 'em, but anyway, I know I had 108 points. It seems to me like, I didn't see any Quartermaster men in Austin for two or three months after I got back. I was the only

man here. I would walk the streets, never see anybody that I knew. It wasn't long until the streets were full of 'em.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So at what point do you get discharged?

BERN BALLARD: Well I was discharged on the 18th of July. I'd been in the Fort Sam Houston about a week. And then I was a week getting to Fort Sam Houston, so that's two weeks. I was three weeks in Maginot Line. That's what, six weeks? It must have been two months after I left my outfit that I was discharged. Because it was a slow, slow process. I never did lose my patience with them because I knew I was going to be spending a lot of time with them.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: During your entire time in the Army, did you ever see a USO show?

BERN BALLARD: Oh yeah, a lot of times. Marlene Dietrich. Humphrey Bogart. I saw several of them.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Who else did you see?

BERN BALLARD: I was trying to think. Those were the two most important ones I remember. I'm thinking I might have saw Frank Sinatra but that was before he was very well known, but I'm not sure about it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So Marlene Dietrich, I guess she sang and stuff like that? Talked to the troops?

BERN BALLARD: She sang and many more things.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Ahh, okay.

BERN BALLARD: She wasn't really a singer but, Lili Marleen was kind of a talking song. And she did a good job.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And Humphrey Bogart, what did he do?

BERN BALLARD: Oh he played some skits from some of his previous movies. He was pretty good. Pretty entertaining. He wasn't a comedian of course, but -

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Do they mingle with the troops after the show?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, yeah. I'm just trying think who it was that appeared with, he was a male star. I can't remember who he was, but he came out, had lunch with us, with all the USOs there. I don't know whether they did with Marlene, but she was something else. Boy, she was beautiful, she was talented. She just wasn't really a good singer.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Where was it that you saw her?

BERN BALLARD: Let me think. I want to say Italy but it wasn't Italy. It had to be in France. It was the only two places I could have seen her. It had to be in France.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Wow.

BERN BALLARD: And that was after the slow down after we'd gotten soldiers to take showers, you know, and eat at the mess halls, etcetera. It wasn't too long before the end of the war. But she was native to Germany, you know, and she never showed any signs of being committed to their way of life.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No, she was very anti-Nazi. So you get back to the states and you're discharged in July of '45.

BERN BALLARD: July 18, 1945.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: When you hear about the atomic bomb being dropped, and I know it was a secret and not a lot of people, I mean, I think to myself, okay, there's this bomb now, it could take out an entire city. I guess I'd feel kind of shocked. How did you feel?

BERN BALLARD: Well I felt kind of shocked. I didn't even think about it until after it had happened. I knew we had it but I didn't think about it being dropped at that time. The Japanese had a chance to surrender and they didn't so they dropped a bomb on 'em. I guess you can't blame 'em. I heard Japanese people say, Japanese commentators say that it was the best thing that happened because there would have been a lot more people killed if they'd drawn on the war. See, that ended it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Right. Do you remember where you were when you heard about it?

BERN BALLARD: I was trying to wonder. I was livin' right out on South First Street out there but I don't know where I was the exact time when I heard that. We had the radio and we must have heard on the news. But I know it was, when did it happen? Do you remember? August?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: August the 6th.

BERN BALLARD: August, okay. That was before I went to work. I didn't work for six months. I went to business school. I never should have done that 'cause I never did use anything I learned. But anyway, I was in the place that we were eating at, whenever we were eating meals and that was when we was first mobilized. And Roy Ray went to my church. He was walking down the street as I walked out of that place. And we walked half a block together and he offered me job. And I told him that I'd go down and talk to him the next day. I went down there and took the job. And it was working in the office. And I'd had bookkeeping training.

About four or six months. And I was a bookkeeper first and then later on, well I got to taking a correspondence course in the county. And he made me the Assistant Accountant. He was the Accountant and I was his assistant. They had seven stores that we kept books for, kept records for. But at first I was just working on the Austin store. I never did know what happened to that company. Last I heard about it, they had a store over on Manor Road. And now they sold it to Napa and I don't know where they put it. They were a big company.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Did you use the GI Bill when you got out?

BERN BALLARD: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Every way I could. This house was built on the GI Bill. The main part of it, see, we're in part of the main part of the house. But it was just a house then. Now it has an apartment and a couple other things. A house, I bought a piece of land up there at Burnet County. That's what I ought to tell you about, my ranch up in Burnet County. And Trevor Zarue was the mayor. Here in Austin. And he had a piece, almost 300 acres that he wanted to sell. So I talked to him, well, not to him. I was talking to his agent. I went and looked at it and I decided to buy it. I even had to go into the savings account that I had when my folks died. You know, I got a little, didn't get much, but I had just enough to make the down payment on that ranch. And I didn't have any idea that I was going to be a good fit or anything. My dad didn't think I could do it. My mother was dead. And the month that I spent on it was the inheritance that I got from her. But she wasn't around to all my brothers and sisters to ask 'em if they could help me when the time comes to take care of things. (Laughing). But after I

bought it I sold about half of it off before I had to make a payment. And I got to keep the other half free inside of a year's time.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Wow.

BERN BALLARD: I still have it. And Burnet County says it's worth \$1 million. I don't know if it is or not.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well property values have sure gone up since –

BERN BALLARD: That's hill country land since Lindon Johnson kinda had something to do with the land.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Do you remember where you were when you heard that the Japanese had surrendered and that the war was over?

BERN BALLARD: No, I don't. I don't remember it. It was soon after they dropped the bomb, but I don't remember where I was when they dropped the bomb. I know I was here in Austin. I wasn't away. I remember that. And it'd be the same thing whatever day they surrendered.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You know, this box with your medals here, I happened to see a picture where you're holding it online, and I couldn't help but notice the bronze star. What's the story behind that?

BERN BALLARD: Well they just gave me a bronze star. That's all I know. And it might have been a companion piece to this up here, I don't know. They never said why they gave it to me. Half those medals in there, they never said why they gave 'em to me. But I got papers on all of 'em.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, I see you've got four stars on the –

BERN BALLARD: ETO?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yes.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. That was North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany. Each one of those stars.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: And I didn't know about this one. It took me a little while to find it.

BERN BALLARD: Oh that one's National Guard, yeah, National Guard. They'd give us, now, I just crammed that in there and I didn't know this thing was going to stick up because I thought the tape had enough to keep it stuck down, but I'm not going to worry, I'm just going to hang it.

My brother's coming by with one of those outfits. It's a little bit too high to reach to try and hang it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well I feel like I could hang it for you.

BERN BALLARD: No, no, no. I don't want to take a chance on you getting hurt. He's going to come by here with one of those outfits to hold it up.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well the Chevalier is a beautiful medal.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, it is. It's twice as pretty as any others.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So did they send an official here to your home or did you go somewhere to get it?

BERN BALLARD: Went to Houston. At Legation. In Houston. And when we got there, they were prepared for 15 people. They thought I'd bring 15 people. Only had eight. So he dismissed about half of 'em. And we had a regular ceremony there. They investigated me. I didn't think they'd do that but they investigated me. They told me things that I hadn't, that I'd forgot about, about me. He said he wasn't going to read it all but he read some of it. You can kinda, if he'd of read all of it, we'd have been there an hour. But it was really about 15 minutes of it. One thing that I've thought at the time he was reading it – they had to have talked to somebody

that was in the service with me. Because he brought up things that I never had told anybody. About hauling the dead people back. I never had told anybody that. I wasn't ashamed of it. It was just something I didn't like to talk about. I didn't tell anybody that. There was two or three things there that he mentioned. He had to have gotten from somebody that was in the service with me. Never said who it was. Or he didn't get it, or it was some company investigating me. But they liked me. Because I had never been convicted. I've never been arrested. Never been charged with anything. And that was to him, honor. And that was the reason, one of the reasons that they proved it. After they investigate you, if they come up with one thing, that disqualifies you. You're finished. They're gone to the next guy to investigate. (Laughing).

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You didn't happen to get called back for Korea did you? The Korean War?

BERN BALLARD: No, no, no. I was out. See, I came out with compensation for my knee.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, okay.

BERN BALLARD: I was out. I didn't go back into the National Guard. Some of 'em did but I didn't. My old Company Commander now, after Cliff Carter had left and gone on as a Colonel. Lee Allison took over as Company Commander. And he got called back. But he stayed in Reserves. I was smart to not do that because I'd of had to give up my disability in order to do it. So I'd rather have the disability.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Right. I have to ask about your museum. The camera doesn't pick it all up but what prompted you to put all of this together the way you did. I see you have your uniform.

BERN BALLARD: Well I was working over at the Texas Military Force Museum and I got the idea over there and there's all this stuff around. So I started putting together the museum. Now, you see this guy, the goggles over there? That was my wife's first husband's. He was killed in the war. I married her and she had all of his favorite stuff. I didn't get any of his medals. I went ahead and made that outfit out of that. Anne's two brothers come over and look at it and they brought their wives. They took one glance and they come over here and sat down. The wives, they were overwhelmed by it! But those guys, it didn't make a damn to 'em. So I just said, "Well, after I've done what I did for your brothers." It wasn't that they didn't appreciate it. It was just they weren't turned on by things like that I guess. They were service men themselves.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So all your brothers come back except one from the war?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Three brothers came back. And the one that, the Captain there, that's his box there. His battles. He occupies in pictures, the second from the top. I have three and he has two lines. And that's his books right there to the right.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay.

BERN BALLARD: He didn't come back. He was shot down, which I guess was somewhere in Holland.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: What unit was he with?

BERN BALLARD: 8th Air Force I think. I can't be sure. I don't even know what kind of plane he was riding in.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Really?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, it was either the B-24 or B-25. I just don't remember those things.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, I see you have your Ruptured Duck?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah! That's what they gave us when we got out. Get to pin that on.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: You mentioned in our telephone conversation that you volunteered at the Texas Military Forces Museum.

BERN BALLARD: Well, I'll tell you. Harold MacFarland was a friend of mine from the 111th Quartermaster. I will show you that right here. He stayed in. He became a Brigadier General. Now this was Tom Beshers. Did you ever know him or hear of him?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No.

BERN BALLARD: He was a major General and he used to be the Adjutant General. And after he decided he was going to form that museum so he was Chairman of the Board. And I don't know who was President. No, when he Adjutant, and left, he was President of the museum and the Chairman of the Board. [Indiscernible], that's what it was. He was Vice President and this was the Curator. Now that's old General Scribner. All three of 'em were Generals.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Scribner?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. Scribner was right, he was kind of like the Jeff Hunt now. Anyway, at this point I was a fundraiser. And I got on to raising some funds with Exxon, and I had just about give up on it because they required so many papers being filled out and everything. And I already had so many papers filled out. I was just about to chunk it. Had about half a million dollars. It was a lot of money. And then all of a sudden, got the money from the government.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Wow. That's something.

BERN BALLARD: Exxon had sent it to the government and the government sent it to us.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So it was-

BERN BALLARD: Anyway, when the Treasurer quit, over there, well MacFarland and Bishop wanted me to come over there as the Treasurer and I stayed over there 30 months. From the '90s. It might have been over 30. I went over there in '88 I think it was. When did it first form? About a year after it was formed is when I went over there. I stayed there for 30 months.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So what did you work as for all these years after-

BERN BALLARD: I retired from the Post Office.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh the Post Office.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, I'll give you my work record. I worked as an Accountant for six years. But it was too damn confining, I was gaining weight. And didn't feel good. And I decided I would go into the Service Station and Garage business which I did. And I was in that 30 months (laughing). But I decided to get out of that because I couldn't get anybody to work over the weekends. Every time I'd have a set of people, I'd designate people that were supposed to work over that weekend and people that would be off and I'd always have to work. For one of 'em 'cause one of 'em wouldn't show up. So I got out of the Service Station Business. What's that?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, I think the camera ran out of film but that's okay because we're recording it on the audio there.

BERN BALLARD: And I stayed over there and we had a little old restaurant right beside that we were going to run. So we sold that out. And I started selling insurance. I did that for 30 months. And then from the insurance I went to the Post Office. That was in 19-, I was discharged in 1945 and it was 1955 when I went to work at the Post Office. But my knee kept giving me a little problem. It wasn't bad but in 1972 it had gotten where it was problematic. So I took an early retirement. I worked 18 years and got credit for my service time added on to it. I was offered an annuity. 22 years. And then after that I bought that ranch. And I fooled with that for about a year. And I started buying land and subdividing it and selling it through the Veterans Land Board. That's where I made some money. Never did make any money before that. Post Office didn't pay any money. But I made some money when I started selling land.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Well I think that pretty much wraps up everything I was going to ask you.

BERN BALLARD: Well I'm glad lasted it out. I'm in pretty good shape now but my old nose kept acting up on me.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Yeah, I think a lot of people are having those allergy problems.

BERN BALLARD: Anytime you want to come back over and go through this thing, I'll point it out to you. You see that book over there that says, "Ballard's War"?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Ballard's War? Yes.

BERN BALLARD: Yeah, I saw that in the bookstore and bought it and read it. It's not a bad book. It doesn't have anything to do with me. That's just the name of it. I thought it would make a good conversation piece so I bought it.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Ballard's War. Well who's Ballard in the book?

BERN BALLARD: I don't remember whether there was a Ballard in the book or not! But it's somebody else wrote it and it's not his name. I don't believe there was a Ballard. It's mostly about a German. Germans.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Oh, okay. Alright, well Mr. Ballard, on behalf of the museum and myself I'd like to thank you for your service.

BERN BALLARD: And now this will come out in the newsletter?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: No, what we do is we archive all these recordings for the museum. And, well it becomes a part of the archives. And anyone who wants to do any kind of research like write

a book or, you know, is just writing a paper or just wants to know more about a particular unit or something, can ask to look at the transcript or listen to the tape.

BERN BALLARD: Well I might do that but I've got two or three tapes as well. But I want to tell you this. I didn't mention it before because the papers, it came out in the paper, you know, but he wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole. But I have a book that's in print now that I wrote. It's in print now. They'll have it out within four or five days. And I'm trying to get as much notoriety as I can to help sell the books. I thought that old boy from the newspaper might mention it but he dismissed it. It's alright. They don't do that. That's double dipping to them, you know?

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Really?

BERN BALLARD: Yeah. If there's a chance that you're going to make a profit on it, they don't want to touch it as a news item.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: So, is the book just about your experience?

BERN BALLARD: No, no, it's a novel. It's fiction. It's about five guys I was raised up with. Out in Coal Valley. Which is east of Austin. It's part of Austin now. I take 'em from 1937 to 1967. 30 years. And I followed 'em, you know, what all they did. But the book is styled after five real people. Six actually, when you get right down to it because one of 'em married a woman that I

knew. I styled her after. But I wanted to say this: every action that I mention in the book as military actually happened. And I was there when it happened but it didn't necessarily happen to anybody that, it didn't necessarily happen to any of the five. I sometimes showed it happening to them, but it didn't. I'll send you one after we get 'em back.

MIKE ZAMBRANO: Okay, I'd be interested. Well let me turn off a few of these things and I have just a little bit of paperwork for you.

BERN BALLARD: Alright.