

Robert Goolsby Oral History Interview

JOHN FARGO: Today is April 29, 2015. My name is John Fargo, and I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today, I am interviewing Robert Goolsby concerning his experiences during World War II. This interview is taking place in Mr. Goolsby's home in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Educational and Research Center of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information, related to World War II. With that out of the way, let's start off, Bob, with you telling me a little bit about your early years. When were you born and where?

ROBERT GOOLSBY: I was born on March 29th, 1922, in Winters, Texas.

JF: Winters, Texas.

RG: Winters, Texas, in Runnels County.

JF: Winters, Texas. Where is that?

RG: Runnels County, and that's -- Ballinger is the county seat.

JF: In 1922?

RG: Yes, a few years ago.

JF: What was your father's occupation?

RG: My father's occupation was building construction. He built hotels and houses and whatever.

JF: Right in that west Texas area?

RG: Yes, and he did that until 1929, during -- the Depression broke out in 1929. Everybody lost their money, quit building, so we moved to a farm out in Levelland, Texas, which is in Hockley County, and he bought this farm earlier, and so he moved the whole family out there when he lost his construction business, and...

JF: I see. So that's where you grew up.

RG: That's where I grew up, out there.

JF: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

RG: I had one brother and two sisters, yes, and they're all dead. I'm the last one in the family.

JF: Last one in the family. Where did you go to school?

RG: I went to school in Levelland and Texas Tech University.

JF: You went to Texas Tech University?

RG: Yes. I have a degree in chemistry from Texas Tech.

JF: No kidding, OK. What year did you graduate from college?

RG: I graduated in 1949, after I got out of the Army.

JF: After you got out of the Army. What year did you graduate from high school?

RG: Nineteen-thirty-nine.

JF: Did you have any college before you went into the service?

RG: Yeah, I had one semester before I went in the service.

JF: What was your major, Bob?

RG: My major at that time was pre-med. I was studying pre-medicine, and...

JF: OK. So were you enlisted or were you drafted?

RG: The draft goes on, and I knew my number was coming up and some of the people had told me that if you enlist, you may get to go where you want to go instead of just put in the Infantry, so I enlisted.

JF: What year was that?

RG: And that was in 1941.

JF: Before Pearl Harbor.

RG: Yes. And luckily, they put me in the Medical Corps.

JF: OK. So where did you go to basic training?

RG: Fort Bliss.

JF: That's --

RG: El Paso.

JF: -- down in El Paso. Did you have any advanced training?

RG: Well, after basic, I went to different little schools that they had. For example, I just pulled out a little thing here, (inaudible), just one little thing that I went to.

JF: Medical course prescribed at the School for Medical Department Technician.

RG: Yes, yeah, finished that course. And then I just bounced around mainly.

JF: OK, so you had various medical type training.

RG: Yes.

JF: When did you finally wind up in a permanent outfit?

RG: That was in 1943. They were forming these malaria control units because they were having some trouble with soldiers coming down with malaria, and they had them all put together in Camp Harahan in New Orleans. And I was, at that time, stationed in Camp Harris, up in Gainesville, Texas, and they began to pull people out that they wanted to fill these units. I happened to be one of them.

JF: In New Orleans.

RG: Yeah, they pulled out and sent us to New Orleans, and we went to new Orleans and did all this malaria control training.

JF: What kind of training is that?

RG: Well, they showed us how to identify the mosquitoes, Anopheles mosquito, that transmits malaria. They showed us how to identify it, where to find it, its life habitat, you

know, those kind of things, how to drain swamps, how to collect larva, you know, just basic stuff. And...

JF: This was all training to detect --

RG: Malaria.

JF: -- the environment, where they originated from, and that kind of thing.

RG: And then go in and control it, to keep the solders safe.

JF: I see. What about treating malaria patients? Were you involved in that?

RG: We found a lot of patients. You know, they were mostly civilians. They just got their own treatment. But our soldiers --

JF: In New Orleans, you're talking about.

RG: No, I'm talking about once we got overseas.

JF: Oh, I see, OK. Yeah, uh-huh.

RG: At New Orleans, we didn't do any of that; we just got ready. And when they got us all ready to go, they shipped us up to New York and we got on a boat.

JF: What kind of boat?

RG: It was an English transport ship, and it was just a basic ship. (laughter)

JF: Thousands of guys crowded in there, huh?

RG: Thousands of guys crammed in these little old things, and it was a mess. But anyway, we all...and they had convoys.

JF: Well, let me ask you, though, how many people graduated from that training? How big was your group?

RG: OK, I'm trying to think. The units were made up of 11 people, different grades, and there were about -- I would say about 20 units, put together, down in New Orleans. Half of them went to the Pacific and half of them went to Europe, and once we got our training then they shipped us out.

JF: So you were in the group that went to Europe?

RG: Yes.

JF: And there were about 10 people, 10 or 11 people in your group?

RG: In my group, yeah, there were 11 people in my group.

JF: Eleven people. So only 11 men were sent over to Europe to perform these duties?

RG: No, there were about 10 units, so it'd be about 110.

JF: Hundred and ten, gotcha.

RG: Not many of us. So that's one reason you probably couldn't find us. (laughter) We were there, but nobody --

JF: But nobody knew about it.

RG: Yeah, but...so --

JF: So where did you land when you took off from New York?

RG: We landed in Oran, Algeria, North Africa, and the campaign there was just ending, you know, when they kicked --

JF: Rommel?

RG: Yeah, Rommel.

JF: It was North Africa, right?

RG: North Africa, yeah. Rommel was just about run out when we got there.

JF: So what did you do when you got there?

RG: Well, we went to...so, they put us through some more basic training. (laughs)

JF: Really?

RG: Yeah, and then they separated us out. We stayed there in Oran; some of the units went different places. We stayed there in Oran and did mosquito control from all along the North African coast there in Algeria, from Oran to a town called Sidi Bel Abbès. And Sidi Bel Abbès -- I don't know if you're familiar with it -- was the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. They were still there.

JF: They were still there?

RG: Yeah. In fact, we'd go there and eat with them sometimes, you know.

JF: Were they involved in the fighting?

RG: No, no. Yes, they were, but they were a separate unit from us.

JF: Did you see any combat there in Oran?

RG: No, it was just over when I got there, thankfully.

JF: So how long did you stay there?

RG: We stayed there about, I guess, seven or eight months.

JF: That long?

RG: Yeah, because, see, everybody was sort of getting together to go to Italy and Sicily at that time. Patton was there with his army, and the French were there, the Danish, of course, and us, and Canadians, Australians, they were all there training.

JF: Training for the push into Italy.

RG: Into Sicily.

JF: Sicily. So it was kind of an entry point --

RG: That's right. And, of course, all the prisoners of war were coming in. They were shipping them out. They were going to America. (laughs)

JF: Yeah, lucky people.

RG: Yeah. They were happy.

JF: So was there enough work for you guys to do in terms of --

RG: Oh, we worked continually.

JF: Really?

RG: Oh, yeah. There was a lot of malaria there in North Africa.

JF: There was?

RG: Oh, yeah. People lived with it for centuries, and they were all happy to see us, really.

JF: Describe a typical day. What did you do, exactly?

RG: I was the First Sergeant.

JF: You were the First Sergeant of your 11-person group?

RG: Yeah. And so I sort of got things going, and I tried to handle administrative work, and then when the crews would go out, and we'd had -- see, we had three crews. They would go out in their vehicles and search for mosquitoes. If they found them, they'd write it down where they were, and then they would come back, and we'd send out a control unit then to drain or spray, or whatever needed to be done to kill the larva of the mosquito.

JF: So this wouldn't necessarily be around where the troops were.

RG: We always tried to work within a mile, tried to control mosquitoes within a mile of the troops, to try to keep a free zone, a complete mile from the troops to the area.

JF: So you guys did that for about eight months, right in that area.

RG: Right in that area, yeah. And --

JF: Did you have to go back frequently to the same areas?

RG: Oh yeah, go back, go back, you know, depending on how good our drainage was, but some places you couldn't drain.

JF: How would you drain? Describe that process.

RG: We had German and Italian prisoners of war with shovels and whatever. It was all just manual labor.

JF: Is that right?

RG: But we didn't worry about it because they had to do it. So we used them, just hundreds of them, to drain those...

JF: Really? And you were responsible for those guys?

RG: Well, we...you know, they had guards that went with them.

JF: Oh, they did have guards.

RG: Uh-huh.

JF: So every day the guards would bring over a contingent of prisoners?

RG: That's right.

JF: And they'd go to work for you?

RG: Go to work for us, yeah, and no pay.

JF: No pay, right. (laughs) Were you guys inoculated, or did you take quinine?

RG: We took a drug called Atabrine every day. Everybody had to take one pill every day. Somebody had to see that

everybody took that pill, because that kept them -- helped keep them from getting it.

JF: Well, did it have any aftereffects, side effects?

RG: No. They didn't say about any, but I took it every day and I didn't have any.

JF: Did any of your people ever come down with malaria?

RG: No, never.

JF: So Atabrine worked.

RG: Yeah. And, of course, there was only one mosquito that carries malaria, Anopheles mosquito.

JF: And you guys were trained in order to identify --

RG: Identify it, yeah.

JF: I see. Where did you go from there, Bob?

RG: We went from there... The Sicilian campaign had just ended, and so we didn't have to go to Sicily. They sent us over to southern Italy, to -- let's see, what was the name...Foggia -- Foggia, Italy.

JF: Foggia, sure.

RG: After 70 years, I have trouble remembering some of these towns. (laughs)

JF: I know what you mean. So in Foggia, was that your home base for awhile?

RG: Foggia, we sort of got together, and they sent us -- at that time, the British -- it was the British 8th army, was on the Adriatic Coast of Italy, pushing the Germans, and we were back on this side pushing the Germans. And the British wanted some help with malaria, so we went to help them on the Adriatic Coast, and so they sent us up further north of Foggia to some of those towns -- San Marino, and some of those towns, Serracapriola, that little town.

JF: So you were attached to the British.

RG: Yeah, and just for food and a place to tent, put up tent.

JF: Oh, they set up tents for you guys?

RG: We carried our own tents. We carried everything with us.

JF: So you lived in tents.

RG: We had to had someplace to eat and go to the bathroom.

JF: Yeah. You had your own trucks and all your equipment.

RG: Yeah, everything. So we went up and did some work for them, and then we came back. So I'm trying to remember where we were at that time. This was at the Rome-Arno area, you know, Rome-Arno Campaign, where they had so much trouble with the guys up on the hill, you remember?

JF: I don't remember that one.

RG: Well, it was pretty rough going there for the infantry.

JF: Were you pretty close to the infantry?

RG: I could hear it. You could hear it.

JF: You could hear it.

RG: Yeah, we were close enough to hear it, but I never did get...

JF: Never got shot at?

RG: Oh, I've been shot at, I guess, (laughter) but from a distance. Yeah.

JF: What about artillery and stuff like that?

RG: Yeah.

JF: So you were exposed to any --

RG: We were exposed to it sometimes. Just depends on how close we had to get to the front lines. But we never had to get right on the front lines, luckily.

JF: That would have been difficult to do that, you know, if you --

RG: Well, they didn't want us to get killed, because...

JF: Yeah, right. Plus, the fact that you were working there doing other things, you couldn't defend yourself, right?

RG: Yeah.

JF: Did you have any of your troops with rifles...

RG: We had no guns whatsoever. We just had a red cross.

JF: Is that right, a red cross on your arm?

RG: Yeah.

JF: OK. That's interesting. Which -- it makes sense, though, you know?

RG: Of course, there were some times when the Germans would shoot at.

JF: Yeah, yeah, true, true.

RG: Kill the aid people.

JF: So how was it living with the British people?

RG: It was fun. It was different.

JF: Why?

RG: Well, they just have a different set than we do. We had -- I know we loved to eat with them because they had real bacon. And where did the bacon come from? The United States. (laughs) They would send it over to England and England passed it to the troops. The only time we'd get it is when we ate with them.

JF: So was the food pretty good, then, in addition to the bacon?

RG: Well, it was just food.

JF: Just food. So it was hot?

RG: In Italy, it was cold in the winter and hot in the summer.

JF: No, I meant the food. Was the food always hot, or did you have to eat C-rations?

RG: We had to eat C-rations a lot. At that time, they changed it to K-rations. They were a little better. We still had C-rations, but the K-rations were a little better, so we had those.

JF: And you lived in tents?

RG: Yeah.

JF: Did you run across any Italian civilians that you interfaced with?

RG: Oh yeah, daily.

JF: Daily?

RG: Yeah, especially when we were doing malaria control work along their farms, stables. A lot of times, the mosquitoes, we'd find them roosted in their stables because there was plenty of blood around for them. And so they were always happy to see us, because DDT had just been introduced, had just come on the market, and we got it. And it killed flies by the millions. Of course, they were just covered now, flies, and we'd come out and spray for the mosquitoes with the DDT because it killed all the flies. "Oh, here come the *mosche* people, *mosche*, *morte mosche*."

JF: What is that, Italian?

RG: Kill flies.

JF: Kill flies people.

RG: So they were happy to see us. We got along with them real well.

JF: I'm sure you did.

RG: The German POWs, they were pretty hard to get along with.

JF: Why? In what way?

RG: They were just standoffish. They didn't have much to do with you, you know.

JF: So you used the POWs in that area also?

RG: Yeah, every place, yeah.

JF: Every place you went.

RG: Yeah.

JF: And they were a little difficult to...

RG: Yeah, but the Italians, they were real easy to work with, yeah, happy.

JF: Happy people.

RG: Yeah, happy the war was over for the,.

JF: Yeah, that's right. So how long did you stay up in the Foggia area?

RG: I stayed there most of the time, I guess. Part of the time, we were near Rome, and part of the time we were near Naples. And I was in Italy about a year and a half, I guess.

JF: Total time in Italy, a year and a half.

RG: Yeah.

JF: So did you get to see much of Rome?

RG: When the war was over, they didn't have enough ships to send everybody home at once, so they had camps set up, and there were all these soldiers with nothing to do. So they formed tour groups, and they set them up with an Italian tour guide. They'd have a sergeant like me, who had no knowledge of tourists, but they would assign me or a sergeant, and then the troops would...we had about 40 or 50 at a time that would come, and we'd get on these Italian buses, and we'd go to Florence, we'd go to Venice, we'd go up to Milan, we'd go over to Genoa, and on down the coast back to Florence, just round trip, staying in luxury hotels, (laughs) come and take it over.

JF: Well, that sounds like a great [duty?].

RG: And on top of that, we could draw rations at different places, and with the rations you got a carton of cigarettes that you didn't have to pay for. Maybe you had to pay 50 cents for them, but you could take enough cigarettes and those boys would get the cigarettes and sell them for \$20 a carton, and that was the money that they had to spend and go around. So they loved it.

JF: Everybody loved it.

RG: Everybody loved it, yeah.

JF: So how many trips --

RG: We did that for six months.

JF: You did that for six months?

RG: Yeah, until everybody got home.

JF: Wow. How many trips did you make?

RG: Golly, I must have made 40 or 50 of them, more.

JF: And how many people were you responsible for?

RG: About 50 people.

JF: Fifty people. For six months.

RG: Yeah.

JF: Well, let's back up. Before the war ended, what else did you do in Italy?

RG: Well, you mean...

JF: I mean, pretty much, you went from the Foggia area to...

RG: We just kept working the area. As the troops would move, then we would move, and we'd have to find new places to work, new places to work, till I was...

JF: As you said earlier, you tried to work within a mile of where the troops were.

RG: Mile, uh-huh.

JF: So, am I correct in saying, then, that you could be a mile from the front lines?

RG: We could be, uh-huh.

JF: OK, but not always.

RG: Not always. I ran across one of my neighbors over there, that I --

JF: From Texas?

RG: From Texas. We were living on a farm up in Levelland. They lived on the next farm, two boys and a girl. And one of these brothers, I ran across him in Foggia at the USO Club, and I just happened to go in there, and there he was, so we met up. He was a tail gunner on a B-24.

JF: No kidding.

RG: And they were stationed south of Foggia at a base there. And where we were, just north of Foggia -- you remember this Negro fighting unit with P-51?

JF: Oh, yes.

RG: We were camped right next to their camp. In fact, we visited them a lot. But anyway, talking about Nolan again, I went to visit him down at his camp. He took me in his tent and everything, and beside their tent they had a mock grave, soldiers' grave, beside the tent. I said, "Nolan, who's buried out there by your tent?" He says, "The last

crew." You know, he says, "Everybody that's been in this tent has been shot down."

JF: Oh, no kidding.

RG: "So we put this grave out there to tell them that we've already had it now, so let us alone." And a week later, they went down over the oil fields in Germany.

JF: A week after you had seen him?

RG: Went down.

JF: Is that right?

RG: Never saw him again.

JF: That's a shame. Yeah, yeah. It's a lot better being on the ground, in spite of the fact that you've got Germans shooting at you.

RG: Yeah. I know I wanted to be...I decided when I was at Camp Barkeley, I didn't like the medical field so much anymore, so I said, well, I'll go for pilot training down at Hondo. That's where they were training at the time. I was at Camp Barkeley at Abilene. So I applied. Me and some other guys applied, and I passed everything and they got me to try to line a depth perception thing they had on board with arrows down here. You had to line the arrows up. Well, I swore I had them lined up, but they were...well...

JF: Really?

RG: And so I didn't pass. My buddies went on down to Hondo, and so I guess that may have saved my life, too.

JF: Yeah. So you don't know what happened to them?

RG: No. They went on to be fighter pilots, whatever.

JF: Well, you're right. Fate works in strange ways, you know.

RG: So I didn't have very glorious frontline-type experience in the war.

JF: Well, very few do. Of all the interviews I've had, and I've had, now, 25 interviews -- you're my 25th -- and only a small portion of those ever saw combat. I left this morning, had an interview with a fellow who was on Tinian Island, where the B-29s took off to bomb Tokyo and Japan and so on, and Nagasaki and Hiroshima, but he never went up in a plane. He just was in the ground crew, you know. But, you know, there's not too many that can say that they were combat people.

RG: I really felt sorry for those guys, because they had it bad, bad, especially...

JF: So with the medical training, though, you never had any responsibility for working with patients.

RG: No, never did, except when they were just sidelined at Camp Barkeley at the hospital, we helped with patients some.

JF: Where was that, in the United States?

RG: Yeah, Abilene, Texas. Camp Barkeley.

JF: And what did you do there?

RG: Well, we just sort of -- gophers, mainly.

JF: For the nurses?

RG: Yeah.

JF: Well tell me, do you have any funny stories or incidents that you can remember, Bob, that you might want to talk about?

RG: Well, I can't...so many things happened, I can't -- it's hard to pick my memory. I got put in jail one time.

JF: (laughs) Where?

RG: In Oran.

JF: In Oran?

RG: Yeah.

JF: What happened?

RG: Well, we decided we had some free time one Sunday and so we decided we wanted to go over in the Sahara Desert and see what it looked like. So me and some guys, we got in a truck, we went. And we got over there, and the MPs got after us, ran us down. "What are you guys doing over here?" "Well, we're just looking around." "You can't do that." So they took us back, put us in jail in Oran.

JF: Really?

RG: We spent the night in jail. Had to call people to come and get us out the next day. That was it. First time I'd ever been in jail, in a French jail at that.

JF: It was a French jail.

RG: Yeah, they had taken over. It was pretty rough.

JF: Was it?

RG: Yeah.

JF: How long were you in jail?

RG: Just overnight, yeah. That wasn't very funny, but...

JF: Wasn't funny at the time.

RG: No, but I don't know...

JF: Talking about a little organization of your unit, there was a commanding officer, of course.

RG: Yeah.

JF: What was his rank?

RG: He was a captain.

JF: Captain. He was in charge of how many groups?

RG: Two, usually two. And then, we had... Let's see, my group, there was first sergeant, there was a staff sergeant, and then about three what they called T4s, which was a sergeant with a little T on it, remember?

JF: Yeah, yeah.

RG: And then there were a couple of corporal technician [2's?], and some privates to make up the group. And we usually had somebody there who maybe had been an entomologist or knew about -- you know, that's when they picked us out, they usually picked people, you know, that knew something about...

JF: Yeah. Yeah, bugs.

RG: Yeah. It wasn't a very exciting group. We stayed busy, but -- I guess we did. I was going to let you see a little thing --

JF: You said you were in Italy and Algeria for a total of, what, about two years?

RG: I was over there for a total of -- in North Africa and Italy together two and a half years.

F1: (inaudible). Have you talked about that?

JF: Huh?

F1: Have you talked about that, about you stayed over there after...?

RG: Yeah, I told him about the trips we used to make.

JF: Six months of tour guide.

RG: Yeah, tour guiding. (laughter)

F1: Went all over Italy, huh?

RG: Yeah, we did, Northern Italy.

JF: So have you ever been back there? Ever been to
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

RG: I always wanted to go back, I just never have had the
opportunity for some reason.

JF: Nor interest. You saw --

RG: Well, I would sort of like to go back, but...

JF: So when did you come back to the States?

RG: I came back to the States in 1946. It must have been the
latter part of 1946.

JF: And it was so late because you didn't have enough points?
Is that what it was?

RG: Well, I had enough points to come back earlier, but since I
was on this tour business, I was enjoying myself,
(laughter) you know, so I passed up some.

JF: I don't blame you, I don't blame you! That was good duty.

RG: Yes, free everything, you know.

F1: Did you talk about your trips over there and back on the
boat?

RG: Oh, the boats? Well, going over was the scariest part for
me because you could hear the depth charges going off when
you're down here in the bottom of the ship. Boom, boom!

JF: Were you in a convoy?

RG: In a convoy, and I kept asking the British sailor, "What's going on out there?" And he says, "They're trying to sink us." (laughs) And --

JF: German submarines.

RG: Yeah, German submarines. And our guys were out there, dropping depth charges. And that happened all the way across.

JF: Did it really?

RG: Yeah.

JF: How many days were you on...?

RG: We were on there about 10 days, I guess.

JF: Really? From New York directly over.

RG: To Oran, yeah. And --

JF: Well, how about on the way back?

RG: On the way back, they loaded us on some Liberty ships. You remember those ships?

JF: Sure.

RG: And they were slow, slow. And when we went across from Italy to Africa, and then to Morocco, and it took us -- let's see -- almost six weeks from the time I left Italy till I got to Newport News, Virginia. Just...

F1: Tell him where you slept...

RG: I slept...you know, they had these bunks down below. Not much area down there, and I couldn't take it.

F1: He was six-foot-five. He didn't have any room. (laughs)

RG: So I made some friends with some sailors, and they said, "Well, come on up and we'll let you put your bunk up here on the fan tail," and it had sort of a roof over it. And -
-

JF: What time of the year was that?

RG: And this was in about October or November.

JF: Must have been pretty cold, then, wasn't it?

RG: It was pretty chilly, but I --

F1: You were down by the equator most of the way, weren't you?

RG: Well, about like we are here. So I rode on the fan tail --

JF: The whole way back?

RG: -- whole way back, yeah.

JF: Six weeks.

RG: Yeah.

F1: Up there under the stars.

JF: Same ship?

RG: Yeah, same ship.

F1: What about going over? What was your (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

RG: It was on the English transport.

F1: Yeah, but where did you sleep and all that? What did you do then?

RG: I slept... (laughs)

F1: You stayed downstairs? (laughs)

RG: Yeah, stayed downstairs. I remember the English, boy, that food was something else. We had beans for breakfast. We had beans for lunch. We had beans for supper. And they were always these lousy navy beans --

FJ: Were they? Wow.

F1: It was easy to store.

RG: Or pinto beans or something. But we had beans seemed like every meal.

JF: So when did you get discharged? What year? Forty-six?

RG: Yeah, I kept saying... I keep saying '66, my thing...I got in '46. Let me see what my thing here...

F1: (inaudible) papers (inaudible)...

RG: What month it was...

JF: I recognize the form. Is that it? No, here.

RG: Well, that's my service record.

JF: Report of Separation. November 5, 1945.

RG: That's right.

JF: So '45, and you went in in '41, so you were in a total of four years, I think.

RG: I was in there about five years.

JF: Closer to five.

RG: Yeah. They said '45 on that? I kept thinking it was a later date.

JF: Yeah, that doesn't sound right, does it?

RG: Must be '46, I was thinking.

JF: Let me read that form again.

F1: Was the war over in '49? (inaudible).

RG: I can't remember what I did with my discharge. It was here a minute ago and I've misplaced it.

JF: Well, this says date of separation, November 5, 1945.

RG: Well, I guess so.

JF: Yeah.

F1: Where did you go when you came back?

RG: I went to Fort Bliss.

F1: Back to Fort Bliss?

RG: Yeah.

JF: There, it's on the other side.

RG: Yeah, November '45, yeah. I lose a year somehow or another.

JF: So the ship arrived in Newport News, and then, you went by train back to Fort Bliss?

RG: Yeah.

JF: And you got discharged down there?

RG: Yeah, and they gave me my \$100 and I went home.

JF: What do you think of that four years, closer to five? You obviously didn't enjoy it, but at least, you were out of harm's way most of the time, right?

RG: Well, like I say, I was just barely 19 when I went in, and of course, everything [do?] and is with kids, you know, enjoyed most of the stuff. And I don't know, it... I wouldn't want to do it again, but I enjoyed a lot of it.

JF: Did you keep track of any of your buddies?

RG: You know, I tried to, but it never did work out. They were just too far away.

JF: That's interesting. Everybody I talked to says the same thing.

RG: We tried for a while, but it just got to be too much, I guess.

JF: Well, people go different ways, you know. It's difficult to keep track of people.

RG: Yeah.

JF: So after you got discharged, you went back to college?

RG: Yeah.

JF: And got your degree in chemical engineering?

RG: Uh-huh, chemistry.

JF: Chemistry?

RG: Uh-huh.

JF: And what did you do then?

RG: Well, I started to work for a chemical company, but some of my buddies that I went to school with had somehow or another gotten in with the State Health Department, and so they called me. I was up in Oklahoma working for a chemical company, and they called me and they said, "Come on back and we have a place for you here in the Health Department."

JF: Texas Health Department?

RG: Yeah. And so, I wanted to come back to Texas, so I came on back and went to work for the State Health Department and worked for them for 30 years.

JF: Is that right?

RG: Yeah.

JF: OK. Where did you live most of the time?

RG: I was living out in La Mesa, Texas and worked in that area out there. And then --

F1: What was your job out there?

RG: Well, my job out there was -- sanitarium, inspections of all kinds, food, drugs, and city sewer plants and things like that.

F1: And then what?

RG: And then, they moved me back to Austin.

F1: No, you were a director of five counties out there.

RG: I was talking about out there.

F1: But you didn't say that, OK.

RG: They moved me back to Austin, and I went to work with the local health departments over the state. I just traveled around to each one, worked on problems, administrative problems, personnel, whatever.

JF: At what point did you and Mrs. Goolsby get married?

RG: My first wife died our first six months here in Austin; this was back in 1973, and I met Jill later, and we...

F1: Were you married when you went to Oklahoma?

RG: Yeah.

F1: You were married by then. Because she was from Amarillo.

RG: Yeah. So I met Jill, and we've been married since '74, '73.

JF: Good. Well, you've had a tremendous life.

RG: I didn't realize I was going to make it to 93.

JF: Ninety-three, yeah, well...

F1: Did you tell him about before you joined the Army, you were in college and then you decided to go to California? Did you tell him about that?

RG: No.

F1: That's an interesting part of your life, I thought.

JF: What happened there?

RG: She's talking about me and a guy. We bought a motorcycle and we decided we were going to go someplace, and we went to California on --

JF: On a motorcycle.

RG: -- a motorcycle.

F1: Two on one motorcycle, and no money and no jobs.

RG: Not much money, no jobs. Anyway, we picked cotton and did a whole bunch of stuff, you know, to make our way. And the motorcycle played out on us in California, and I wired my dad to send us some money to come home.

F1: You couldn't find jobs out there, wasn't that was the deal was?

RG: Yeah. So he sent us some money and we came home and joined the Army.

JF: Oh, this was before you went in the Army?

RG: Yeah.

JF: I see. Well, that's just nice --

F1: Seventeen or 18.

JF: -- good conditioning for Army life, right?

RG: Yeah. (laughter)

F1: Just a kid of 17 or 18 or whatever your age was. You'd been to college for a short time, couldn't get a job.

JF: Well, good, Bob. You had an impressive military career, in spite of the fact that you weren't shot at, (laughter) and certainly, a civilian career, as well. So I want to thank you for your service --

RG: Well...

JF: -- and thank you for taking the time this afternoon to talk to me. It will be a nice, good addition to the archives at the Fredericksburg Museum.

RG: Oh, I hope so. I wish I could remember more stuff, but...

JF: Well, it's difficult. I understand that.

END OF AUDIO FILE