

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. William N. Gottsman

Date of Interview: October 3, 2015

National Museum of the Pacific War

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with Mr. William N. Gottsman

Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano, and today is October the 3rd, 2015, and today I'm interviewing Mr. William N. Gottsman at his home in Georgetown, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Good morning, sir!

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, good morning, sir (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), let me shake hands.

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, that's cool.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), oh that way.

Mr. Gottsman: Do you do arm wrestling?

Mike Zambrano: I...oh sure! (laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: No, I do; I...I...oh, I met a guy yesterday and I (unintelligible) but he was...and I couldn't move him, but...

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?!

Mr. Gottsman: ...I'm...I'm pretty strong there. Okay.

Mike Zambrano: Well, let's start with where and when you were born?

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, I was born in...Mil...Boston, Mass [Massachusetts] in 1918, April the 28th of 1918.

Mike Zambrano: April 28th...

Mr. Gottsman: 1918.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Gottsman: I had a brother...and a sister...(unintelligible), and he...was in the service and kill...I've got pictures of him. He was killed at the Battle of the Bulge. And I (throat clearing)...we corresponded; I was in San Antonio then...doing nothing; he was suffering badly...that...it was awful. And...but he...gmailed, so I got...a daily...where he...and knew exactly where he was; he had captured...thirteen Germans at...as...he...the Bulge...there were, yeah, two divisions there...two...two or three; I think it was three divisions there that got trapped my brother was...down with Patton to the south and they were preparing for the invasion (unintelligible) and the Germans came and...there were people that were warning them, and I knew about it, they were warning them that...that...the build-up, they could hear the tanks coming; they had...had...all of the Generals were over in Britain...Christmas partying...Christmas partying, and these poor kids are sitting there freezing, I guess, just waiting for the...next...next...whether the next...and the Germans attacked with...I think it was twenty-four divisions, and so we almost lost the thing then.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, we almost did. Your...your brother...was he older?

Mr. Gottsman: He was...couple of years younger.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, oh okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Alright.

Mr. Gottsman: But now...we were wonderful...to arm wrestle...but...that was the thing in those days, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Rough housing?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Rough housing?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, and he...how you get them to, you know? It was...and we were...I mean, buddies, I mean, I would steal his girlfriends; I would steal his girlfriends.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: I...I...so...so he went right...when he turned...all of his buddies joined the National Guard, so he joined the National Guard. (Unintelligible words), you know, the corner...group. In those days, we, you know, we didn't have a lot of...corner group...Saturday night then, so...so he joined and he continued to work and he was...stationed in the...Boston area. Uh, well, he...he didn't have to be stationed there because the war hadn't been declared, so he was just...National. We had a...a corner of Avenue F was the big...military kind of a headquarters for the...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...and so he was...and then when the war started in December, he was...oh, yeah, somehow...yeah, somehow or other...well, when he was called...they

called him and he was put in the Coastal Artillery. We had...Boston Harbor had...coastal...

Mike Zambrano: Coastal.

Mr. Gottsman: ...thing, so he was in the Coast Artillery, but...at the start of the war.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And then, as it developed, he was, you know, went on and wound up in the infantry and in...yeah. So, it was a tragedy when I lost him.

Mike Zambrano: It's hard.

Mr. Gottsman: I mean, 'cause we was close. I mean, oh, it's...it was bad.

Mike Zambrano: What about your sister? What was her name?

Mr. Gottsman: Her name was Ruth.

Mike Zambrano: Ruth?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, and she was very...bright, very...a bright type, very, and...and a sweet type, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And...and serious. She...she wasn't, you know, flighty type; she was a very serious person. And she died (throat clearing) quite young. I think it...I think my family has a family history from...wherever of...females having some kind of a cancer that affect them and she got that. I...I don't know, but there is a family history...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...of people we...have that, and so...so she died too young.

Mike Zambrano: Was she younger than you or older?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, she was...just a year younger than me.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, oh, so you're the oldest of the three?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, I'm the oldest, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: She...she couldn't have kids; she adopted two kids; married a...married a military guy.

Mike Zambrano: What about your parents? What...what were their names?

Mr. Gottsman: My name? Oh, I've got...(unintelligible) my parents. Uh, my dad was William N.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...N. Gottsman (throat clearing), and...he...didn't have a college education; he'd come over from Europe. And then he went to New York, and then we went to New York; used to fight Saturday nights like they're fighting now...those things that the...'cause they made money. That was...

Mike Zambrano: Like prize fighting?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: He had about twenty or thirty bouts...fights. And that, okay let me get into him because that's funny. It...it's not funny, but it is funny. He'd been a fighter when he was eighteen, twenty, you know, when he...and then...then he and his bro...he came over with his brother; they came over when they were about...ten or eleven years old, okay? So, they (throat clearing) they was...(unintelligible); they was...family, and then when they got old enough

to...the street..they made...then they came to Boston for some reason or another. And so, when they were...somebody would...do something...in...in those days, there wasn't...weren't any manners; they were...you know...you know what I mean? Just...guys...I was in the car; he had a Packard car, beautiful car, don't anybody...he had a Packard, and I don't know how he got it or whatever. Anyway, a guy...I'm sitting in the main corner of this city(unintelligible words), yeah, and he stopped there at the store. It...it wasn't developed like it is now, and...dirt...

Mike Zambrano: Brick streets?

Mr. Gottsman: Brick streets. So, this guy is coughing and he's (unintelligible) takes his...match out and (pop sound)...on my dad's car. My dad gets out; they guy is wearing...hat like that...thing; my dad goes out...(unintelligible) down over his head and hit...knocks him down; gets back in the car and...and he did that at least ten times.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: But...different...we...we were in a delicatessen eating...came out and there's a guy making a delivery and he's got the truck doors open. My dad asks...I'm driving...my dad...I'm sixteen at the time; my dad asked the guy to shut the door so we can get out, and the guy says, "Blah, blah, you old, blah, blah, blah." And my dad says...(unintelligible words); the guy drops and my dad shuts the doors; we get in the car and (unintelligible). He did about...I...I'm not kidding...ten times, in the middle of the street...diff...different incidents...because...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: ...you know, they...he was right. Shut the door so we can get out, you know? And...but...but that was his way of settling things. And he, you know, he didn't go to court (laughter)...(unintelligible words)...settle it right then and there.

Mike Zambrano: You were going to tell me a little bit earlier about your father and the sign business?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: You want to...tell that again, so we can just get it on tape?

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, okay, okay. Okay, well...my dad had...he tried everything, and...he...bought a fleet of taxis and had them painted. There was...there was an independent taxi operators association because it...there wasn't any transportation, so the taxi...to the airport...the whole thing, and so he had a fleet of about seven taxis. And he had them painted (pause) and...he was walking...after that fall...failed, he was walking down the street...broke in 1929 (throat clearing) 'cause that was...that was...and he met Henry Fuller (sp?) who was the...guy that painted the...everything was by hand then...(unintelligible) and it was a lot of work. So, he got the (unintelligible) and then into a Waldorf restaurant and he got about fifteen cents between them or something like that; no, not much and they had coffee and my dad suggested that they go in business together. Henry said, "Oh no, we couldn't do it and (unintelligible)," and...my...dad said, "Yeah, we could, Henry, we could." And he went and bought the newspaper, nickel

newspaper, looked and found this...store for rent, so he called...he...he called and (throat clearing)...I don't know how they called in those days...and...probably in the store restaurant had a thing there. He called the people and he got a six-month free rent.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, and it was just a store.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: It was just a...a store in a store block, and...he was an immediate success. Paper signs...that was every single weekend that...(unintelligible), the druggists, the...everybody had...sales for the...Thursday rush, you know? And that's what Henry was...pretty good at that...just slapping them out.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: And, you know, it wasn't...you know, he was good at everything, but...the papers...I have my kit...let me show you (looking through his documents). This is...what's left of my kit. Here's my tools of my trade.

Mike Zambrano: Your brushes, your exacto blades...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, and see, for the paper signs...you just dip it in and splash...(unintelligible). It was a bunch of these different sizes. This would be for the vinyl lettering, and this is for gold windows and...

Mike Zambrano: Of the little ones?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: The smaller brushes?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Yeah, those are...and these are old, old, old and pretty expensive. They were all French...something or other pens...pens; they're marked. But...there's...two different kinds. There's a gray one that...this black one here (unintelligible)...there's a black brush. Oh okay, here's a...a...let me see, I'll show you the difference 'cause they're...they're pretty...pretty much different; they're different brushes...for...for the college...quality work, we were working on a sign. Everything was painted by hand, you see?

Mike Zambrano: Right, right.

Mr. Gottsman: And so, we...for the quality work, we had...sables; let's see if I can drag one out. Well, there's two kinds...this is a sable here.

Mike Zambrano: So, how long did your...father own the shop, the sign shop?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, we...we are eighty-six years old.

Mike Zambrano: It's still going?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: My...but he had thirty-odd years; I had thirty-odd years; my son has...had...even more than that.

Mike Zambrano: So, your son's running the shop now?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Well, it's a big shop; we just added us all over the country – shopping centers, churches, all...all kinds of...

Mike Zambrano: What's the name of it?

Mr. Gottsman: Aetna, A-e-t-n-a. Let me give you a card.

Mike Zambrano: A-e-t-i-a?

Mr. Gottsman: A-e-t-n-a. Oh, I got a whole bunch of cards I'll give you.

Mike Zambrano: Why Aetna? Why...why was that name chosen for the shop?

Mr. Gottsman: Okay. My dad needed a name when he...when he met Henry and he wanted to be first in the telephone book, and...and he named it after the...first barbershop when I...when I was a kid, my first haircut was in Aetna Barber. Aetna is a, you know, some European thing there...that...and so he took that name.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Gottsman: I...I think...I think Aetna Insurance existed at that time, but it...it wasn't anything else that named Aetna. And you see, there's different kind...these...these are...(looking through cards) well, more...these are the ones we worked on...on the signs. That...these...these are window and...finer stuff.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: But the...but the...we have a range of sizes like that. This...this is...this is not the finished stuff; the finished stuff...much bigger. But when you're down to...doing hand lettering, these sables were the best ones. And these camel hair were for...yeah, see, there's another sable, you see?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: And...but...uh, so actually, I got involved with the...Lackland High...I was at San Antonio (unintelligible) Cadet Center.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: And...and it became Lackland, and...after the war, right after. And...since I had...they knew me 'cause I did signs. I did...I was well known down there, and so...what did I do?

Mike Zambrano: Uh well, we'll get to that in a second.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, okay.

Mike Zambrano: I still wanted to ask you about your...your mother. What was her name?

Mr. Gottsman: Evangeline.

Mike Zambrano: Evan...Evangeline?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes. She...

Mike Zambrano: Did she help with the business at all or was she...?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh yeah, she was a big help, oh yes.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: In those days, people...they didn't have stores; they just, you know, people that had little stores or something, they had the ground floor apartment, and they would put stuff in the windows, lettering on the window in...up...in the apartments and she would...do...decorative flowers and things that could be put in a window...on...on glass, you see?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And so, she was a big help. And those...and as a matter of fact, the colors were pretty...pretty much different, and she was the only one that could paint the background and get it smooth. She painted fast enough, everything was by brush in those...in those...pretty enough...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...and the colors were different, but she could lay a color down...pretty nicely, so...so, I've got a picture, I'll show it to you. It's...it's a family picture; I'll show it to you.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: It's my...it's got me, my dad, my sister and my brother...in the family picture of the sign crew...so...

Mike Zambrano: How...how does the...the Depression affect the family business?

Mr. Gottsman: Not at all.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Gottsman: Yes. I...I'll show you...my dad was an unbelievable. All I had to do was come to work in the morning and the workers there. And I mean, I'm not talking...little signs; I'm talking store-front signs. I've got a picture in...in one of my albums there of the Packard Motor Car Company headquarters and stuff.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Signs a hundred feet long, and all over the stuff. No, he was big, he was big time. He didn't...and...and it was just a small shop. We didn't have any big time...we gradually got sheet metal brakes (?) and do things as we go along, but just to start.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: But right away, he's...he's...in those days, the...on the...day of the new models coming out...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...then...then...somewhere in October...September or October they come out, and they would...Packard had a two...two big plants; Packard covered the front of their...(unintelligible)...(phone ringing in background)...things with...is that yours?

Mike Zambrano: Oh no, it's...your phone. (Phone ringing in background)

Mr. Gottsman: I got my phone here; that's...

Mike Zambrano: I think it's your house phone that's ringing (phone ringing in background).

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Gottsman: I have a phone here (phone ringing in background). I do a phone here...somewhere. Let me just see if I can get it.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. (Unintelligible)...pause it for the time being. (Phone ringing).
(Recording stopped momentarily.)

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible) for my mother?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, uh, here...I've just got to turn it on real quick.

Mr. Gottsman: My mother was very artistic and very...in...in those days, in the '20s, she was a...what them...hatter...making hats?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, oh, oh...tsk, tsk, I know what you mean.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, they were...hats were the big deal, and my mother was in the '20s, Roaring Twenties,...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...she...she was a beautiful lady; I mean beautiful! I didn't, you know, I knew it, but I have pictures of her I'll show you. She had perfect features

(unintelligible), and in those days, ostrich feathers, and she was a hatter, not hatter, I guess.

Mike Zambrano: Hab...haberdasher?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Is that it, a haberdasher?

Mr. Gottsman: No, hatterizing (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Oh well, I thought haberdasher was...

Mr. Gottsman: Clothing.

Mike Zambrano: That...that's clothing?

Mr. Gottsman: I think so.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. Well, go on.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Anyway, so she...made a living as a hatter and as a nurse. She was a nurse for...a guy that owned a big, big bottling company, Moxie. You ever heard of Moxie (unintelligible)?

Mike Zambrano: aMoxie? I don't think so.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, it's like...Coca Cola, it was...it was soft drink in...in the '20s, and (throat clearing) and so she was taking care of...he was a sick old guy. That was...that was the big...Moxie was a big drink, you know? So...so she did that, so she...she made her living...seamstressing; she was...very good at...and...and in the shop painted glass things that they put in the window. We'd do the lettering and then she'd do the decorative...

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...'cause everything was (unintelligible); she was good, very good at it, very good, so...

Mike Zambrano: So, that was...that was the thing of the day...of painting. Now when you say painting windows for example, you've got your windows here, uh, what would she do to them...painting around the edges or...?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, no these...we're talking about...I need to pull this; I need papers.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I've could...I've got a piece I can give you. (sound of paper being torn).

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, (shuffling sounds). Here's the...here's the doorstep.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Gottsman: Three steps up; had an apartment on this side of it and an apartment on this side; it's three stories, six-unit apartments. And the people on the ground floor...would have a window (shuffling sound)...like this...open...clear, clear glass...

Mike Zambrano: Right, (unintelligible) maybe a glass window.

Mr. Gottsman: ...maybe...maybe three feet by two feet...something like, you know, that type of thing.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And since there were no office buildings, dentist, doctors, attorneys had those apartments, and we would do...either...either white opal glass (shuffling sounds); doctor's name...things...whatever in...information.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And that...that's how...that's...so almost every apartment house had...those ground floors that had...any kind of a...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible) of business.

Mr. Gottsman: ...it's small, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: 'Cause there weren't any...there weren't any city blocks, you know, the city blocks came in the...in the '20s, yeah, yeah, so that's...and my mother was very good at...and...and they were all hand-lettered.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: I mean, you just didn't, you know, you just didn't buy letters and stuff. So, everything was hand lettered and generally, the letter style was something like this (showing the letter style). Kind of a classic letter with a little sera (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: At the top and bottom?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And that was the...that was the basic stuff. Then the...below that would be the...uh, straight lettering (showing the letter style), straight lettering like that, see? So...so I...I was...at very good at design; I could, you know, but...but we did...we didn't...we didn't lay out anything; we just...put a...a line across...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: ...and well, we could do it from a pattern or we could just...we had...we had...layout pencils. We had special layout pencils, and in those days the

pencils...came from Germany. I think I got...I think I got (laughter)...I think I got some; I'm not sure.

Mike Zambrano: Were...were you working with the shop when the Japanese had bombed...bombed Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, uh hum, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: That would have made you about...twenty...three, something like that? I think, you were about...twenty-three when that happened...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, uh hum, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...weren't you?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, let's see, when that happened, the...the sign business went kaput because you...Britain was fighting Europe, you know Germany, and...they...we was...we were...doing this...(unintelligible)...the sign business was...it was bad 'cause everybody was...the war...was concerned, and so, uh, we just (unintelligible words) well, in my job, I...my dad just didn't have enough work.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And I had a friend...well, the...he was older than me; he was a...he was a manager of a big...(unintelligible) manufacturing plant, and...and my mother...a friend of my mother's and...he put me on as a scraper hand...uh, on for the equipment. The equipment was...was a big, it was a big...thing like this (drawing out what the equipment looked like), and it had a bed down here, and that bed took care of the...machinery that...pumped out these fifty-caliber...bullets. That...that was the machine...what that did.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: So, it's pretty complicated, and that...and the...Providence Rhode Island was a manufacturing...you know, (unintelligible) before that they were...there were certain areas of manufacturing cities, and that was one of them, so I got a job there...with him, and I...I had an eighteen-year-old helper. And the scraper was...there's one there that...that wide thing there, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, but...but this is narrow there. They...they were about so big (drawing equipment again) and you...and you had a handle on it, and you...you gouged and...and you made little circle. You've seen how they...mirrored the metal?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: And that was the bed. The...the plant would come over to me, and we'd...there was about six of us scraper hands and we would be scraping these beds...to make them suitable to put the machinery that did the work on, so they...we were scraper hands; that was our job.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, I'll get to the scraper hand while I'm on it. I...I was pretty good. There were twenty hours I was allowed to do a bed because it's a lot of work scraping, and when you got to a certain point, you called for the thing and they'd come down; aimed it to show you where you could be cutting.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, there were twenty hours allowed. This kid and I...we're two in the morning, and I said, "You want to do some more, kid?" And said, "Yeah, sure." So, we're doing four a day. The Brits, the rest of the crew are all Brits, and...you know, pros, you know what I mean? And they told me, "Slow down, slow down." We had just lost a shipload of machines in the Mediterranean to...the Brits are saying, "Slow down, slow down." Said,...I didn't say, "Screw you," but I just kept doing...and after...uh, let's say a week, couple of weeks or something, my buddy, the boss, "Norm, come here," and he says...he's got a whole bunch of machines, he says, "These are all bad," he says, "you got to slow down," you know? He said, you know, "Evidently these are my machines and (unintelligible) slow down." I pulled my little...book out of my pocket; the machines had four numbers on them – not one of my machines, not one!

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: The Brits was...trying to screw me!

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Not one of those machines was mine. I...if I hadn't had that little pocket book...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...and that...I...

Mike Zambrano: You wouldn't have known?

Mr. Gottsman: ...you know?

Mike Zambrano: They wouldn't have known?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. And...they...that's what...that...so that...that settled that, yeah. But then...Pearl Harbor. Uh, well, Pearl...the day of Pearl Harbor, I was sitting at the Fort Devens (sp?) which was...in Massachusetts which was on the cape and that was...and it was...two of my friends. One of the kids that worked for my dad had been drafted and another one of my friends, so I had two drafted, active friends, and I'm sitting on a trunk...locker at Fort Devens at twelve o'clock or one o'clock...whenever it was...we were talking, and that's when Pearl Harbor happened. And that...that...division that...at the cape...was the first division to arrive at Guadalcanal with a Marine division. They were...they went over immediately. I mean, they were...there within a week.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. So that's...and none of them had any battle experience; they were just green kids, and so...so that's...that's the Pearl Harbor day, and, yeah...

Mike Zambrano: So...uhm...

Mr. Gottsman: ...and both of them survived! And they...and they went from...Pearl Harbor, uh, not Pearl Harbor...they went from...Guadalcanal...all the way up...up into...to Hawaii, the Hawaiian Islands [s/b Japan ?]...as a...as a...and they survived! Yeah. But the Japs...had them; they...they were fighters, they knew how to do it.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: We landed Marines and things, green kids like me, no experience; they...we didn't even have...they...that division didn't even have guns, I'm not kidding

you. They do not guns to practice; they were doing with brooms; I'm not kidding!

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: But when they went over, they had guns.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: But they had no experience shooting them; they...they were just bodies, yeah. So, it was...it was brutal. Yeah, okay, that's that story.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what...what...uh, what the feeling was like with the people around when they heard that...that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and that America was...was going to be at war?

Mr. Gottsman: What about it?

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what, you know, were they...were people excited, were they angry, do you remember how they felt?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh! It was only going to last six months; we were going to slaughter them.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Gottsman: Uh hum, uh hum, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: They say that about a lot of wars, don't they (laughter)?

Mr. Gottsman: No, we...we didn't...they didn't get real upset until they saw what happened...until they saw what happened. And that should *never* have happened! We had...we had...uh, the Navy, and I...I, you know, these guys down here doesn't even know, but we had Navy cruisers crusing around Hawaii, and...and out...and they just missed the fleet that the Japs had put together and came through.

Mike Zambrano: Hum!

Mr. Gottsman: I don't know why...because it was a Sunday or something, but the ships weren't out there, well, the ships were in the...harbor.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: They weren't...they weren't out cruising

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: If they'd know, they should have picked them up. It...for the Jap to get them over, they could have easily been spotted. We had Boeings flying around...spotting, and they didn't pick them up. So...so, everybody was partying...on...on...on Hawaii (unintelligible); what...what am I trying to say? Was it Hawaii?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, on Hawaii.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah. That island, they were...they were partying, and the ships were in the harbor, ships were in the harbor.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you...you were...you enlisted...into the service, right?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes, I did, yeah. Had my (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Can...can you tell me a little about...

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: ...well, uhm, let's see, what service did you enlist into?

Mr. Gottsman: Air Corps.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Did you try to enlist in the Marines before...did you say?

Mr. Gottsman: What's that? Well no, after Pearl Harbor.

Mike Zambrano: Right, after Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Gottsman: I...my brother's in...now we're at war, and...I've got a pretty good job, but I...had to be...in...I'll show you...that...see, and if you're...we had three categories. If you enlisted...one, one; my number is 1106. My brother was...212. The draftees were three something, and I still got my dog tag.

Mike Zambrano: And I got mine (laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: (Looking for dog tag). I'm really not all there, so, I'm sorry...(unintelligible words) or something, but...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that's okay.

Mr. Gottsman: ...I said I had my dog tags (unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you got them right there?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes...(momentary pause). And my son, no my...my...one of my grandson's had...one of mine and this is mine, and that's all it is. See, 11064112.

Mike Zambrano: Norbert W.

Mr. Gottsman: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: And the T43-44?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: What's that? The...the T43-44 on there...would be what?

Mr. Gottsman: Protestant?

Mike Zambrano: Hum?

Mr. Gottsman: Isn't it?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I don't know (chuckle).

Mr. Gottsman: Where...where do you see that?

Mike Zambrano: Right here; it says...T43-44. Oh, you're holding it upside down. It's that one right there (pause as they look at the dog tag.)

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, P...protestant, isn't it a P?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, which one you looking at?

Mr. Gottsman: Uh, these.

Mike Zambrano: Oh no, that's a T. It says T43-44.

Mr. Gottsman: Hum.

Mike Zambrano: Well, that's okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, I...I think this...I enlisted in...'42.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what month in '42?

Mr. Gottsman: I...I...the...Air Corps had a very strict regula...uh, registration; you had to have a college education. I did not have a college educa...right after Pearl Harbor, they changed it...two years of college or...an equivalence.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: So, I didn't have the two years either, but I...I signed up and I...the...I signed up in Providence, and...we had to wait till they had...enough. They had a class with about a hundred and ten or something like that and we took the exam; so, we would have taken the exam...so we're not in yet.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: We're just...just, you know, signing up. So, I signed up; I signed up in February I'm pretty sure.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And then...I probably had to wait till March to take the test.

Mike Zambrano: And what test was this?

Mr. Gottsman: It was a big test, uh, education...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, like an aptitude test?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: But big time and medical, and medical...the whole test.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And my grade was...the highest there was...up like 97 percent of...it...it...up in the 90s, really good.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so...

Mike Zambrano: Was...was the Air Corps your first choice?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so the more...

Mike Zambrano: And you...

Mr. Gottsman: ...I wanted to be a pilot and fly these...and you know why? My shop in Brookline, our shop, was on the...fly way; we were flying...planes to Britain and they flew right over my shop all the time, not...not multitudes of them, but all of the time, and they would fly 'cause they were going to Greenland and across. They'd come across from California...wherever they made them...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...landed in Boston, and...they flew right over my shop. That was it. And the...the ones that I liked the best was that two...(clanking sounds)...two-winged, two-winged things like that (showing a drawing of the airplane). You know, the...

Mike Zambrano: Oh the, uh, the P-38 Lightning?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was...that was what was coming over mostly, yeah, and they were going to England, yeah. So...so that...so...but that...and that...but that was, you know, and...actually, the Graf Zeppelin...before that, a couple of years before that...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...flew right over my shop and about a hundred feet level.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, and...an hour later...bingo! So, I saw the Graf Zeppelin that close. I didn't have any pictures. I wish I had pictures of those, but these...

Mike Zambrano: Must have been something!

Mr. Gottsman: ...but seeing these things going overhead...gorgeous things...on their way to England; they were...they were going to...Greenland...I think was the airport there.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, they'd go, I think, in transit up there and from there they'd go to...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...to Europe.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, so in March of 1942 you...you take your test and your physical and you do really well.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, where do you go from there?

Mr. Gottsman: We...see, the problem is...after I passed it, I figured...well, I better...I quit the job, so it was another month before...’cause I took the...I’m pretty sure I took the test in March...and went down to...Cadet Center with the whole class and we...we took train...we took the train down.

Mike Zambrano: Now, that’s the San Antonio Aviation...

Mr. Gottsman: Cadet Center.

Mike Zambrano: ...Cadet Center.

Mr. Gottsman: I’ve got a picture of it; I’ll show you.

Mike Zambrano: So, did you take a train to get down there?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, we took a train and we were all in training in civils, you know, nothing.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, you hadn’t been issued anything yet?

Mr. Gottsman: No, we’re going into Cadet Center to be...signed up as Cadets, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Okay.

Mike Zambrano: And...how long...how long did...does the train ride like that take?

Mr. Gottsman: Quite a while. As a matter of fact, I think we got into trouble in St. Louis; they had flood, I think...they had floods and we were delayed or something. Anyway, but...but...but we got...we got to San Antonio and the trains were...oh, ten and nineteen, you know, horse...whatever ten and twenties...whatever they call them.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: They had a name for those...for those trains. They...they weren't...we didn't have...much of a passenger situation.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Well, we did from Boston to...whatever, and...but in the country down there in..the...(unintelligible)...

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. So, when we got to the Cadet Center, (pause)...it was a Cadet Center...it was kind of in the country then at that time, kind of in the country.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Gottsman: And so, we were taken out to the Cadet Center; tents...lived in tents for quite a while. They were just building the...the Cadet Center.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, okay so, it was...starting like...very...very beginning.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah...

Mike Zambrano: There isn't any place for anybody to stay (laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: ...muddy...mud and...when it rained, uh, mud was just...thick on our shoes, you know, and we didn't get uniforms just right...right away either. They

didn't have uniforms right away for us. So, whatever we had...that was it, yeah. So, it was in tents and...then...we had all...more tests, but deeper tests now, 'cause, you know, to really establish, and I...I did very well on the intelligence, and I'm done, I'm in, okay? One last question, the last question, "Allergies?" I said, "No," and you know what I did? I pointed to...I get a little tearing here in October whenever they...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...allergy clinic...*allergic to everything*, and I'm grounded, GDO, I'm not kidding you.

Mike Zambrano: Ground...GDO stands for Grounded...?

Mr. Gottsman: Only...ground...grudione (sp?)

Mike Zambrano: So, uh, well, did they do some kind of like...pin test on you to see what... 'cause that's what they do these days; I don't know if they did it back then.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: The little (unintelligible words) pin tests and...

Mr. Gottsman: No, they...they...tested for...tested me for...everything. I mean, and again, it was a young doctor.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And they could have slipped it over, you know, it wasn't...it wasn't that big. My eyes bothered me that's all.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: It's...but...the test...go by the recipe and GDO. And so, I opened the envelope that I was taking back to where I was supposed to take it, and...and read it, and I didn't know what GDO was; I was...so anyway, it said, "GDO but not necessarily DDD (disability discharge...some...whatever." Not necessarily those; I'm physical; I can stay in the service.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: So, I...I didn't figure that out for...for a little...what the GDO meant, you know, it just didn't...but it was...but my paper was...and I opened it and read it and put it back in and...so now, I'm in the holding pattern and people coming in and...to the Air Corps and being assigned and shipped out from the Cadet Center; not the Cadet Center...that side, [but] the other side of the street was where the draftees and stuff were all coming in. And...so, I'm looking...since they're building...doing all this building and I had all kinds of experience doing it and they didn't have any signs, so I went into an office that was built and told the officer there that I...I do signs and stuff like that, and he said, "Oh, the Provost Marshal...has a shop," and he called him right then and there and he says, "Major," Major Dawes (sp?), "Major, I got a...," ...he talked to...just as though he knew me, "we've got a wonderful sign painter." He didn't know one..., he said, "Send him over." Major put me right on...right then...on the spot, but I had to go back over to the Signee area...to...before I could be assigned to him; didn't matter. Staff Sergeant...on the spot.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. I go back to the...I go back to the...by then we have our uniform, but in, no we didn't have our uniform...well yes, we did have it 'cause I had a Cadet...a Cadet's uniform, yeah. I had the Cadet uniforms. Because they were nice, I mean, they were almost officer-type hats and stuff, so I...I had that.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, they are nice.

Mr. Gottsman: So, I go back over there. And so, all these draftees that...are coming in...musicians and actors and all the big shots and had enlisted in the Air Corps...wanted to be in the Air Corps, and that was the...the...group that I...I was in. And I...I was...Drill Sergeant for Gene Autry, Enos Slaughter. Do you know the names?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I remember Enos Slaughter.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: You were their Drill Sergeant?

Mr. Gottsman: I was his Drill Sergeant.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: I used to joke with him; I said, "How the hell can you get around if you...you..., you see, he was a short, dumpy (unintelligible); I mean, he...what a ballplayer (expletive).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: But...but all kinds of musicians. I mean, big, big time musicians. And I played sax and...they...when they got into...when they got a band together,

they wanted me to sax, but I couldn't play that...I wasn't...I would...I would just...kid...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...I just played.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember anyone else that came through?

Mr. Gottsman: What's that?

Mike Zambrano: Do you any...do you remember anybody else that was famous that came through?

Mr. Gottsman: All kinds of big names. Uh, let's see, the guy...what's the...uh, when they closed down the field in Florida or transferred Florida, they came to...our field; all kinds of names. Uh, what's the big star, the movie star with the...big...the biggest movie star, Clark Gable!

Mike Zambrano: Clark Gable?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: But, oh...oh, all kind...all kind of...they were all, you know. But they were going in...they were...they were...went into Dan's and whatever (unintelligible) they...they had a...I played...I played baseball with Enos.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Well, because we had, you know, we just played...scratch but it...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: And we not only had Enos, we had a catcher for the Red Socks; I think we had two catchers for the Red Socks that were pretty good. They were all

coming...going into the Air Corps; they didn't want to go in the infantry, so they...they were putting...they wanted...that was...deliberate, you know, situation.

Mike Zambrano: Did you...how did you feel that...that...you...you couldn't go on to fly the way you wanted to?

Mr. Gottsman: Badly. I felt very badly, yeah; that's what I went in for. I was, you know, and I'd seen, you know, these planes coming over and I went in...hoping to be a pilot. Well, I wouldn't necessarily been a pilot either; I could have been a bombardier, a gunner or something.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: But no, I...no, I felt badly, very badly.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, now what was the rationale? Okay, you have an allergy, what...what did they think was going to happen if you went up in the air?

Mr. Gottsman: Well see, all I did...I remember what I did...'cause...you can tell, couldn't you tell...that my eyes are (unintelligible)?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, no, not really.

Mr. Gottsman: Oh really? Well, anyway, I...I can feel it, you know. It's...I can...I can feel it. Said...so they said allergies, so I just pointed to them, I said, "Oh, no, don't have any allergies...October...I think it's October that...I...I get hit bad.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Right over to the allergy clinic and everything is brand new, and...I...figured I'd just...you know, he'd just look at it and..., "Okay." And he tested me for every...I was allergic to everything, everything; every, I don't know, twenty,

thirty, forty things...whatever. He...he tested me for...I don't...I don't remember how...what the method was, but I...I was allergic to everything. And I had to open the envelope going back; he put it in an envelope and signed it, and I opened it and...read it and I saw the GDO...I didn't know what GDO...I didn't know what it meant, but not necessarily DDD or whatever. I remember them now...I did after I picked up on it. And...and I was the only one in that whole group of a hundred that...that was...that failed; only one!

Mike Zambrano: So, now you're there at the...at the Aviation Cadet Center.

Mr. Gottsman: Uhm, I'm waiting...

Mike Zambrano: What did you do?

Mr. Gottsman: ...I'm waiting now; I'm...see, I'm over in the...uh, when I was rejected, I'm over in the...pool to ship, a shipping pool...take away for assignment, but I...I wanted around the field and I see...their building it; they don't have...the...every building had a...sign that had four numbers on it. They...they were...everything was bad; the...everything that (unintelligible) doing was bad, so I...no sign...saying Cadet Center, and so I left; went into an office that was Social Service guys...something, and he called...he knew there was a Provost Marshall had us...had a going business there; he was doing... 'cause they couldn't get Engineers enough...the Corps of Engineer, I mean, whatever...who was there building those...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: ...couldn't...couldn't get enough help, so I...found that I could paint signs; put me right on, and got me out of that pool and into...as...I was an MP the rest of the service.

Mike Zambrano: That's how they classified you as an MP?

Mr. Gottsman: No, they classified me a...they classified me...I was in the MPs, but then my classification was...something to do with what I did.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: Uh, not a mechanic, not a painter, but in that category, a general, you know...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...that...that was... 'cause that's what I wound up being, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Huh.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Interesting.

Mr. Gottsman: The Maj...yeah. The Major would come in in the morning, and...give me some, "Take care of these, Norby (sp?), Nor...Norbert, " he says, "Norbert, take care of these; just give them to me." And I'm supposed to figure out...what to do with them. Well, I had two black guys (unintelligible) one was...a very, "yeezuh, master, yeezuh," one of those...guys, sweet, a sweet kind of a guy just...but he...he lived across the street a mile up the road. They had to walk to...it was hard...it was...that was...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Gottsman: ... at...at lunch time...my lunch was a hundred feet; he had to walk back to the...his area that was...that was...now...see, the President...you wouldn't think...you'd think the President could just say, "Cut the crap," and "No," that was the...that's the way it was.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And the other one was a very sharp guy; he was a minister and...very...oh, I mean, one of those guys, and he was eventually...transferred out into some outfit, and he made Master Sergeant; that...that's...the other guy. The poor other guy, I come into work one morning and there's Willy down in the grass mowing around, and I said, "What...what are you doing, Willy?" And he says, "I was looking for my fingers." He was mowing the grass and it...stuck and he went and pulled the twig out...

Mike Zambrano: Oh my gosh.

Mr. Gottsman: ...tips of his fingers.

Mike Zambrano: Oh my god.

Mr. Gottsman: "I was looking...I was looking for my fingers." And just as calm as...you know? Poor, poor guy. Now, I (unintelligible)...I loved him; I mean, that...that...they knew I loved them. I...we...part of my job...patrolling...was a big field; it was something, you know? It...we...we had kind of a weird space, and...the...here the two of them would go out riding...on the fence line...to keep them, you know, and they'd come back with rattles and...all kinds of...they had all little animals and...

Mike Zambrano: Like...rattlesnakes?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, this big; I'm not kidding you (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: No, I believe you, I mean...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Come back; I...I got a picture of my first (unintelligible) holding up a rattlesnake like that, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Ah.

Mr. Gottsman: I don't have it now; I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: So, sometimes you would even...you...so you...you patrol; that was be...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, see, I would patrol; I would get...

Mike Zambrano: ...see, all these different duties...

Mr. Gottsman: ...I was...

Mike Zambrano: ...that sounds like.

Mr. Gottsman: ...see, the boys were awesome. We...we had a Corps of Engineers, but we didn't have it up there. We had it at Kelly...Kelly Field; we were attached to Kelly field; we were a part of Kelly Field.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: They...we were at the top of the hill and they were down...down at the bottom, and...

Mike Zambrano: So, you...would you do some patrolling with the MPs?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: You would do signs; like...what...what kind of signs would you do for...for...

Mr. Gottsman: I'll show them to you; I'll show them to you, yeah. And...well, all the buildings that...they...they didn't have anybody; not...nobody...no...but...and the numbers were, you know, when you're doing stuff like that, you'd make

simple, and the numbers like one would be (drawing out the number), two would be (drawing out the number).

Mike Zambrano: Hum!

Mr. Gottsman: Simplicity, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: It's (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: It's almost like you blocked them first?

Mr. Gottsman: It was like "L", and six...six would be...yeah, they were blocked letter.

Mike Zambrano: Now, did they set you up in a...in a shop or did you put it together yourself ...to serve the needs (unintelligible)?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, that's an interesting question (chuckles). They put me in the...the...we had...we had a...the Provost Marshal's office...the...the Sergeants that...we were in charge of a big field, and we had...a few thousand Cadets we were...we were...MPs. I had...a...here's the...it's a pretty big building like that (drawing picture of building), so they put me back and gave me a whole...suite...this whole suite for my...designs, my (unintelligible) that...that was...and I had a jeep and stuff, and the Provost Marshal was...let's say here (drawing picture), big office and stuff. But I had...and...then this was the prisoners when they have...when they have prisoner question room or, you know, a room for the guys; that was their...their room there, see? And they would come into my room and sit down and they had a hole in the...thing there.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible words)?

Mr. Gottsman: The...the table is there and the...so, the prisoners are talking to each other, and...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so they eavesdrop?

Mr. Gottsman: ...(unintelligible) they're there (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: That's kind of odd to have a little room right next to...you.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah. Some...some sitting there listening to the...because there was a lot of...uh, I'm trying to think of the biggest crime...the biggest crime, 'cause the soldiers, you know, screwed up or something. But...there's...there's some pretty...it was a rough year (unintelligible word) it was just...yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it's '42. I mean, trying to gear up for a war.

Mr. Gottsman: Oh, I...I...was coming back on the bus...I was coming back on the bus on a Saturday night...from San Antonio, and we had to go through Kelly Field and up the hill and stuff, and...you got a bunch of drunks, and we had nurses; we had a nursing...unit there. The nurses came in; the nurses are sitting there and there's this big Polish guy and...another...smaller guys, there's three of them, and they were swearing...and they were standing and swearing and nasty as hell. I mean, it was disgusting, and the girl to...right there. I said, "Hey, guys, cool ass; we got ladies on the bus." The big Polish guy said...yeah, they knew me, you know? They...he says, "You're the only lady on this...(unintelligible)...swearing, blah, blah, blah." He grabs me, and he lifts me out of the chair, and the other kid pulls a knife. I tell the bus driver, "Turn the lights on and go to the...," uh, what do we call it? Our...the jail to go...go to the (unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: You know? My...unit there because I...I'm an MP, and he turns the lights on and goes over there. I go in and tell them what happened. They come out; drag the guys out, and...uh, they were in the infantry.

Mike Zambrano: The guy that...

Mr. Gottsman: That took...

Mike Zambrano: ...lifted you up... ...starting trouble?

Mr. Gottsman: ...yeah, yeah, that pulled out and pulled (unintelligible). And one of the kids...that...there was another, there were three of them; one of the kids...he didn't get picked up, and he called and apologized the next day. He says, "You...we..., you're a guy, a nice guy." But...but...I was right; I mean, you don't swear in front of a bunch of, I don't care how drunk you are, you don't carry on like that.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And I...I put up with it...long enough, and I just told them...I...was a gentleman...just, "Hey guys, cool it," you know, "we got ladies here." And they..., "You're the only lady here," you know? Well, I...I wasn't the only lady, but he was a big guy.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: I mean...and the other guy pulled a...pulled a knife, and that...those two...the other guy, he called me...next day...and apologized and said...but they went in the infantry. I didn't...intent to, I just...wanted them to...behave, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so that...that's...the kind of...we had a...kind of wide open...wild, you know? It wasn't...yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, when you said...when we talked on the phone earlier in the week, you mentioned prisoners. I guess I was thinking German prisoners, but these are all...uh, basically American prisoners; well, soldiers that get in trouble that go to the stockade, that kind of prisoner, right?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, what...so, what other...what other MP stories you have?

Mr. Gottsman: Okay. Well, the nicest, sweetest guy, but...I've got pictures, a few pictures of some of them, and this is a...they're kids; they're eighteen-year-old kids, you know; he's a kid. And then...they were sweethearts; they were just...gentle kids there...just...and...and they just basically they're just...standing guard duty, signing people in and out and stuff like that. And this eighteen, nineteen-year-old kid was...close but he, you know, we lived in the same barracks. I had...we had officers; we had rooms, a Sergeant's room. I had a...another side. There was four Sergeants and this kid...they went in...he came back, and he had a message from his mother and his girlfriend...and they were going to come up and he could be married.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, he had gone into town and gotten married.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And...so he went to the...Provost Marshal's office, you know, for advice. He was sad, so sad and stuff, and...well, see, there...there were ladies in town; they...they probably were married to five or ten soldiers, you know what I mean?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you mean, well, he went into town and married somebody else but he was supposed to marry...?

Mr. Gottsman: Just a street walker, street walker, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Why?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Why...why did he do that?

Mr. Gottsman: The war...the war...the women downtown...you go into town...they...they would just...that's all they did; they came in from all over, St. Louis...they came over from...all over the place into be in a military city and they got married. And he...married one of those ladies; she probably was...had another marriage, but it was a legal marriage, and he was upset. And they calmed him down 'cause he was going on guard duty. They calmed him down and said, "Well, it will be alright; we'll take care of it in the morning...to...tomorrow, don't...don't worry about it." And he goes and shoots himself.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Nice...I...I, you know, just...the nicest country kid, eighteen years old...just...just, you know, he went in and got laid and something, and the woman had busted, you know, and...and they were...and...I'll tell you, the

girls were nice; I mean nice! They were just...average girls that'd come in to be in the city...around soldiers, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Gottsman: So...so he was married he felt, so...and he had a girlfriend back home and she was coming up to get married. So, that was one of the...and there were others; they...gosh, I'm trying to think. In my instance, I had to go to Asheville, North Carolina to pick up a prisoner, a...a soldier who went AWOL, and I...well, two of us had to go because if...if you've got a gun, you can't be (unintelligible), so...we went into Asheville, North Carolina through the hills that the trains were...it was something funny...on...even on the trains...going there, I was...we were talking to some...lady that lady told us, you know, they...they...I don't know what they were...whatever, the...the ladies.

Mike Zambrano: Blacks?

Mr. Gottsman: And we...well, they were friendly and beautiful and...but we had a good time, and...we...started to climb to...my lady climbed into the bunk and talk, and my buddy was climbing into...the MP that was on the train, you know, (chuckle) that's...that's how (unintelligible), you know, but. So anyway, uh, so then when I got to Asheville to pick up the prisoner, I went to the courthouse and stuff and I came out and there was a black lady, young lady, hollering up to her soldier, uh not soldier, prisoner in the jail...hollering up...talking back and forth. So, I stopped to talk to her; I'm from Boston,

I...she says, “I can’t talk to you; he’ll kill me,” that’s what she told me. “I...I can’t talk to you; they’ll kill me.” That...that was the way it was.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: And then...so that night, I went to the barn dance; I’d never been to a barn dance. Holy Moses...fun! I was ready to take back to San Antonio about six girls or something; they were...it...they were gorgeous, lovely, oh god, it...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...no really, it just...just a barn dance. I...I didn’t know what a barn dance was and stuff, but that a big deal there!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And...so, one of them attached to me – beautiful little sweetheart of a girl! All night long...went to a little hotel there...all night long. I just hope she didn’t get pregnant or (chuckle)...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...but, no, I mean that...she was just so...she was just so...such a sweetheart, and we were just...when you got that...kind of shoved at you, so you know, you just...I was...you know, you fool around, and...they...they’re gorgeous; I mean, you know, just...so that was...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...but that was...but little things like that.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And my buddies...on...on Saturdays, we’d go...every day we had Kelly Field, Randolph Field, my Cadet Center, Brooks Field; we had a whole

bunch of fields...all kinds in San Antonio. So on a Saturday...four streets – Market Street, blah, blah, you know, just four streets around; that was...that was it. You walk around to the bars, stopped at every bar. I...I'd stop and I'd have a coke, I wouldn't drink.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And...uh, that was...that was it. I got tired of that, so I started going up to Austin, hitchhiking to Austin, and...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Gottsman: ...yeah, and...because well, you know, you got thousands of secur...and the infantry at Fort...those couple of other fields were infantry troops just coming through, so you got...you had a hundred thousand...guys on four streets and it was...it was...pretty...so, I came up to Austin. Treated me like a king! I went to the Driscoll Hotel; picked up the...brochures for things; the churches to carry the people...to carry. I remember some of the restaurants that they took me to that...were on the River that they're still...their famous stuff, and...and it...it...and Austin stopped at the university; that was the end of it. Beyond that would be nothing.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. But they treated me so beautifully. I was going with...Miss Texas...from the University of Texas, Miss...Miss Texas...gorgeous! And the family was wonderful; treated me like a king. And I had one or two buddies from...the port here...whatever it's called up here; they...they came in. They were permanent parties, so they'd come in.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: But no, not...not much of any activity at all. And then I was...I ran the dances on my field. On, and this was back in (looking through documents) March in...no, uh, '43...somewhere in '43, I...I ran the dances and so I had to stay in San Antonio and run the dances. The bus would come up...I had to go in town...to the Gunter Hotel; pick up all the girls that were waiting, two busloads; take them out to the dances...enlisted men's dances. We didn't have...we...we...so we had our own groups. And I met this...there were three or four girls...standing around a post and...I'd...hadn't shaved and I was ready to just come in and see how it's going, and I ran the dance. Being Boston...French cabaret style, and they had white top cloth (unintelligible) on the thing...that, you know?

Mike Zambrano: I think so.

Mr. Gottsman: These...these guys from Oklahoma and Mississippi and all...hated it. "What the hell, the old (unintelligible)." No, what the hell was that, you know, but. Well, these ladies standing there, so I...I wanted them to have a...so, I asked her to dance, just take her out, and we sat down and...she was gorgeous, skinny, skinny, pretty, but...not striking, you know, just a pretty girl. So, we sat down and...and dancing with her, I knew right away...I...it...it just...she...she...everybody...everybody was cutting in on me; every few minutes I have to get back in. So, we sat down and I asked her for her telephone number; she says, "Be sure and use it," wrote it down.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: We got married.

Mike Zambrano: Be sure and use it (laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: And we got married, and she's fantastic! Ah, and I'm not kidding you, she was gorgeous; I mean she...she was as good...good looking as any movie star. I mean, she...just...absolutely gorgeous, and not...not...enamored of her, that's...that's just what she was. She was a country girl from Arkansas and they'd come down because of the, you know, the economy, and...and since I'm...and we...eighty-four years; no, not eighty-four years...sixty-four years...

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: ...of...just no question. I mean...I've got...I'll show you my family pictures; I've got a bunch of...bunch of...I mean, a bunch.

Mike Zambrano: What was her name?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: What was your wife's name?

Mr. Gottsman: Eileen Brashear, B-r-a-s-h-e-a-r, and that's a...they...I thought that was a funny name, Brashear, but come...come to find out, her family had come over in 19...1908...16... '37, '38 (unintelligible) Virginia.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! That's long ago!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, and...one of the Brashear's women married a Ball, B-a-l-l who was a...that was Washington's mother's name – Ball. So that...so a lot of the Brashear's are...Ball...Ball, there's a whole bunch in there. But...but...and...

Mike Zambrano: Hum. So, uh, okay, so...MP duty; signs; you go pick up prisoners; you arranged dances; what else would you do there...at the Center?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, uh, we had payroll. You know, we had...we had payroll for the whole field really, you know? And so, we had to do...guard duty, so I would do guard duty; I'd be stationed at this spot just in case...because it was...it was a big...we weren't...we weren't (unintelligible); we were the guards for the payroll as it came in...'cause...because...and...now my...my wife to be was working...at Fort Sam and she was...doing the payrolls for the German prisoners that we had; they got paid!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. She...and she was doing their payroll, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And she was a sweetheart; she was innocent; oh god, just...but it just...it just (unintelligible). But I...actually, it could have happened with almost any of them; they were all, so, you know? But I was just...lucky that...she just got...she just got more and more beautiful and...and intelligent. I mean, she was a country girl from the back woods of Arkansas way up in the woods. And...she...things were so bad that they had to come down to San Antonio and, okay, so what's important...what's important, but...my married...I...I'll show you pictures of my married life if I can...I have three albums that I cannot find them, honest to god, I don't know what I did with them. I'm...they're white albums; I've been looking all over...for them,

and... 'cause I wanted to have them to... I do have something. I... I do have some stuff that I can show you.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I can get this for you.

Mr. Gottsman: Is that mine or yours?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, these are yours, you dropped it a while back.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah (clanging sounds). So, as far as the war effort, I... was... what I did I was pretty good at; I was pretty good at. Well, I see in the paper... uh, "Innocent Men's Representative Bill Gottsman," no Gottsman. I was the... I didn't... I didn't know I was the innocent man's representative.

Mike Zambrano: No, what... what man's representative.

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible words). Huh?

Mike Zambrano: What man's representative?

Mr. Gottsman: Norbert.

Mike Zambrano: Norbert?

Mr. Gottsman: Gottsman.

Mike Zambrano: Oh no, can you... can you say the... whole sentence again? What... or the... this article in the paper you say.

Mr. Gottsman: Oh yeah, well, we had a paper called "The Yardbird." We got... I picked up The Yardbird, I (unintelligible) I went on line to try and get... get a copy of The Yardbird.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh...

Mr. Gottsman: And... I got a copy and I tried to pick a date... when I met my wife. Sure enough, and I'll show you the article in there; you'll die laughing. I'll

it...it...it's about my trips to...to Austin...that...my buddy was...he was...and he was the...uh, in charge of...of...shippings out, you know, that was his job, shipping and things like that.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: People, and he was my buddy, close buddy. And when...toward the end of the war when we were shipped up to South Dakota, Sioux Falls, and I took Radio Operators, Mechanics course there 'cause the war was over. They...so they were breaking up the...so we went to...so, I can still do codes just as easy as...dit-dah-dah-dit-dit-dah-dah.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Gottsman: Seventy years...never left me. So...so anyway, uh, my...I got a call...I'm on...I'm on code, taking code, and Doris Day is singing out...over the loudspeaker, "Going to Take a Sentimental Journey," I remember it, and...dead silence, the whole field, everything, dead silence. Finally over the speakers and over these loudspeaker, I mean the speakers, "Sergeant Gottsman, you have a telegram – 'Honey, I'm coming up and we can be married on your birthday.'"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), just like that?

Mr. Gottsman: Just like that; that was it! And she came up and we were married, and fortunately they'd had a Christian Science...reading room in downtown, and at the time, I was Christian Scientist. My mother was...turned Christian Scientist, and so I would go. And they had a great paper; do you know the paper, "Monitor"?

Mike Zambrano: I've heard of it, yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, it was...it was a great...it was...it was better than the New York Times. I mean, it was really good. And I would go down and sit in the bridge...ready room and read. So, now I've got a girl coming up to be married. Well, where am I going to live? So, I...mention the fact to one of the girls working in the store. I says, "I...I've got a...I'd," and this...I mean, Sioux Falls is loaded with motels, right and hotels? (Chuckles) Maybe a cow barn you can sleep in or something like that.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: But anyway, so I...mentioned it to her and she says, "Oh, Mrs. Haas has a house, and she's got a...little apartment in it...H-a-a-s. So, she called Mrs. Haas for me, and sure enough, I had an apartment out of...I...I'm blind, so I...I don't know what I would have done. (Unintelligible) and so she came up and we were married, and my buddy that had been transferred up with me, the shipping guy, he was my best man. And then that...so...but I didn't have a big wedding; I just...just me and her.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And now, this was at Sioux Falls Army...

Mr. Gottsman: South Dakota.

Mike Zambrano: ...Army Air Field?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah. It really wasn't an...it was just...at that school, the scholarly type; we'd do...we were doing...code (throat clearing), electric...radio and...radio and elec...you know, we had...there was...it wasn't a field.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, it was just...training for radio operators.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. When...let's see...and...when...when did you leave San Antonio to got to Sioux Falls?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, okay. Pearl Harbor...uh, that...that Pearl Harbor, no, not Pearl Harbor...Battle of the Bulge, Battle of the Bulge.

Mike Zambrano: Battle of the Bulge, Battle of the Bulge. .

Mr. Gottsman: Battle of the Bulge...15th, uh middle of December.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Okay? Okay, that's the story. Middle of December...half of my squadron was swallowed up quick. There's this...half my squadron...plane go...no training, we would...we would just, you know, we didn't have no gun there and no training...went right over to the Bulge, and they formed a new division. No training, just...just bodies, and they were...and they were captured immediately.

Mike Zambrano: And when you say half your squadron, you mean...

Mr. Gottsman: Half of the...

Mike Zambrano: Folks that worked...worked at the Center?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, my half of the...MP squadron.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Gottsman: But there wasn't much of a need to...that. And...and it was in the middle of December, 15th or somewhere around there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And there were just...they got a notice, and my buddy that I was telling you about, he was the one...he's...shipping; he make...he's take the names of...and this is the ship, and that was he...he did; he was a...whatever the job is.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: So, he's...he gathered...well, somebody gave him the names of all of the guys that wanted to be shipped out, and they were the guns...were...were not necessary for MPs anymore.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And they put them right in the infantry; shipped them right over to...no...no more...they was...they was in a day or two, and I knew they were casualties; I knew they were casualties, yeah. And...and that, as a matter of fact, that division was wiped out immediately.

Mike Zambrano: So, you relate that because...about...it was mid-December when you were shipped to Sioux Falls?

Mr. Gottsman: No, I wasn't shipped; I was still there. I was...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: ...I was still there. We...we were the remnants; we would do...we were the Sergeants and a few people that we...there wasn't much need for us. So, the remnants of us, basically the ones that weren't needed, they...they weren't

even bringing anybody into the field. It was...just emptying out, so they wanted to do something with us. So, they sent us to ROM, and so...

Mike Zambrano: ROM?

Mr. Gottsman: Radio, Operator, Mechanic.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. And that was in...January.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay. (Pause) ROM...so, what...were you excited to go?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, were you excited to go?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, oh yeah, taking code and (unintelligible), you know, that they start you off slowly and slowly and you build up. And pretty soon, you're doing thirty, forty words a minute, you know? I can still do code. I can do it back and forwards, and...yeah. I...there's a lake in Massachusetts...that's the longest lake and the name...in the...country; it's a...famous for being...having...and I fooled around with that. And that...'cause that was at...that was a doozie to try and do, Lake Chaubunagungamaug.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Spelling it out!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: That's a lot of letters!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I never heard of that lake.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. You never heard of it? Never heard of it?

Mike Zambrano: Maybe 'cause the name's so long (laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: Right, no, I...I...would do it backwards; I could usually do it backwards and forwards (pronouncing the lake). So, and that was the lake back home, very near my house and we used to hang out at, yeah. So, let's get down to the serious stuff (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), so, did you see this as your way of finally get flying?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, to go into Radio Operator School.

Mr. Gottsman: I had no choice; they took the remnants of us and shipped all.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: They had...they...that was it; they...I mean...

Mike Zambrano: But I'm thinking...well, you're in the Air Corps; they send you to Radio School.

Mr. Gottsman: I had no choice; I mean...they...had a shipment and my buddy made the shipment, you know...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...'cause he...that's what he did. And he told me, he says, "You're on shipping orders; we're going to Sioux Falls."

Mike Zambrano: Well, I just ask 'cause I...I would think...that, I mean, you're going to get to be an operator on (unintelligible) or something. Did you think that?

Mr. Gottsman: Not really because it was pretty much...over by then; not really over, but yeah, I would think...but since I was ground duty, GDO, well, there...there's still radio operators, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Hum, yeah, I guess...I guess that's a possibility, too. So...

Mr. Gottsman: So, I took radio, ROM, and when that's...when the...when the war ended in...April, I think the Germans surrendered in April...

Mike Zambrano: Uh, yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: April, May.

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, so when they...so when they surrendered, they closed...Sioux Falls, and...and halfway through that course and they shipped us down to...(sss sound)...oh, what's the...what's the field in St. Louis? Scott Field, Scott Field!

Mike Zambrano: In...St...St. Louis or Illinois?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Was it in...

Mr. Gottsman: In Illinois, I think.

Mike Zambrano: Illinois? Scott Field.

Mr. Gottsman: Scott Field.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. So, I was shipped to Scott Field, and that's where I was released from. And they started me over on that same course; they started the ROM course over...from the beginning. So, I'm...right?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: We'd already had thirteen...weeks of a lot of...lot of...but the whole thing just... 'cause that's...I guess that's the way...it starts over, and not everybody had had that then. So, they...so they started...so I was taking the same

course over again. And then...then I would just...this is in December, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Did you...did you take your wife with you down from Sioux Falls?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh yeah, yeah. Oh, well, she came up to Sioux Falls.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: But...but remember she was there. And...and my buddy had his wife which he was married (throat clearing). Well, now we're stripped from Sioux Falls to Scott Field, and...uh, I had a car in San...San Antonio; I had a car in San Antonio because I...that's another story, but anyway, I...I was the only one in the field that had a car and we used to go to...well, we used to go to Fredericksburg...and Bandera...four or five or six of us in my car and have a ball!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: I'm not kidding, you man, I'm telling you. And...so that's why I know Fredericksburg and that area very well, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And I was the only one that had a car, and four or five of us and we'd go there. My...my buddies would stand up in Bandera on the coffee table there singing and acting; they were drunk, you know, but that was...so where am I at? I'm at...okay so we...we're shipped down to St. Louis...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, or uh...

Mr. Gottsman: Scott Field.

Mike Zambrano: Scott Field.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, and...I stayed in...I found a house in...uh, in Mascoutah; you know Mascoutah; have you heard of it?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, no.

Mr. Gottsman: It's a little town, very small town. So, I found a quarter there for my wife and I. And then my mother came down and she drove my car up to Mascoutah, so I had my car from that time on in the...in the service, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And I don't...how my mother get back; she was good enough; she...she brought my...she went and...she went to Sioux Falls; got my wife and brought her down to St. Louis, and (pauses) but she did that with her car. And then somehow, she went to St...San Antonio; got my car back to me somehow; I don't know how; I don't remember. So, I had a car...thank god!

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Just to be clear...is...is Scott Field in St. Louis or is it in Illinois?

Mr. Gottsman: Scott Field, Illinois.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Alright.

Mr. Gottsman: Uh, that...I don't remember the name of the city; I'm not sure (unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: So, and your discharge, you said about January of 1946?

Mr. Gottsman: Decem...

Mike Zambrano: Dec...December of '45?

Mr. Gottsman: Uhm.

Mike Zambrano: So, all this time you're a Staff Sergeant in the Army, right?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, but all of...of all of this time I'm a Staff Sergeant with fifty percent extra pay. I didn't tell you that one, did I?

Mike Zambrano: No, why were you getting that?

Mr. Gottsman: Well, the...we had a post exchange.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And they were in need of...the lettering cards, and signs, the whole works, you know, 'cause we...they...no...no printers, nothing like that; everything was hand lettered.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Change of price...so, since I was the only letterer in the field, they asked me if I would...mind doing their...signs, post exchange signs...the signs and all the interiors, everything had to be...marked; it was just a lot of work.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: So, I said, "Oh, I don't mind doing it." Fifty percent extra pay, and it lasted. I'd go to a new field, tell them I would (unintelligible)...that...I had that...I had that my whole career.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle), so, what was your regular pay like...before the fifty percent?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh, let's say ninety dollars.

Mike Zambrano: So, you made like...another forty-five dollars?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, a hundred and fifty or something like that, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So...like...it's...

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible)

Mike Zambrano: ...pretty good back then?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Was that considered pretty good or...?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh boy, was it! Uh, I...I was lending these guys money; I was a lender.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: I'm not kidding; I was a lender...because they used to play on
a...payday...poker game. And the First Sergeant and the...and the Master
Sergeant there were sharpies and they cleaned these kids out with...and these
kid...they got no money at all, and I...I'd make loans of ten or twenty dollars
or something to the kids. They...they had no money at all. And ten or
twenty bucks, in those days, was *a lot of money*; I mean, it was a lot!
But...so that was...so I had a...a pretty good paycheck. And they all came in
my paycheck, you know, it was after...fifty percent was on my paycheck.
They didn't pay me separate; it was bottom line pay.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, if...this is per month, right?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: That...that amount is per month, right, the hundred and fifty or so that you
would make?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, but that was as much as...the Lieutenants and, you know, lower grades were making.

Mike Zambrano: You would think so.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Did you ever think of staying in the service?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: Did you ever think of staying in the service?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: But you got out.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, (pause)...got married, and they asked me...they offered me Master Sergeant, but I'd had enough of the military and I had a trade and I can do, you know? I could do things and stuff, so I decided against it.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And it's a good thing I did because...uh, but see, next war came right along...after that.

Mike Zambrano: Korea.

Mr. Gottsman: Uh, what's the war...that...right after that?

Mike Zambrano: The Korean War.

Mr. Gottsman: Korean War.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Just after (unintelligible).

Mr. Gottsman: I would have been in the Korean War, too, then. Then, yeah, no, I thought about it 'cause...but I knew I had a trade; my dad has a sign business to go back to, and...yeah so...so that's why...just stayed. Okay, what else am I going to show you? I got some books; I wish I could find those darned books!

Mike Zambrano: Oh! I meant to ask you, uh, do you remember what you were doing or where you were when you heard that the war had ended?

Mr. Gottsman: Do I what?

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember where you were when the war had ended...where you heard it?

Mr. Gottsman: Yes! Yeah, uh, we were in Mascoutah and that's a hick town, one street, and...that's where I was...and I took a picture of my wife dancing down the street or something. I've got it on...in Mascoutah...I have a picture somewhere of that. Yeah, that...that (unintelligible). And when the...when the war ended like that...my barracks...I was a Barracks Captain and every morning...I...from Mascoutah...see, Mascoutah was not close to...the field; it was...pretty good drive, and...but I had my car. So...and my buddy also had his wife and his...and his car, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And so...being...I was a...Barracks Captain and I had to be there at...four or five in the morning to role call and stuff like that.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: But I had my car, so...I...I found a place in Mascoutah. A...a woman had it...just this house that...to live in and stuff, and...so...I...how did I do it? (Pause), yeah, my wife had the car in Mascoutah and she would come to visit me on the field at three o'clock; that's...the...the day...at three o'clock she'd come over and go in and they would stop her at the gate every time...'cause she couldn't...it was a standard shift, and she could not drive worth a damn!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle)

Mr. Gottsman: So, they'd stop her every time 'cause...'cause she was gorgeous, you know, and (unintelligible) and I'd see her coming in across the field. And she would come at three o'clock and...come and get me and I would go back to Mascoutah and sleep over (unintelligible). We did our eating and stuff; delicious food! Oh god, the restaurants! Just (unintelligible)...oh, it...it's...(unintelligible), and then we'd go driving in the country. It was...what was the...I'm...I want to say apples; I think it was peach trees. We...we'd get a bushel of peaches or something, delicious, you know? And...so I drove all through Mascoutah and we'd go into San Anton...uh, St. Louis on a weekend...gorgeous, you know? It's...across the bridge...there was a...there was a bridge there...(showing map)

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so...

Mike Zambrano: So...where was it exactly that....

Mr. Gottsman: Oh, oh yeah, but for me to get...see, they...we had gas rationing, right?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. Okay, so...I...

Mike Zambrano: Even military?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: Even military had gas rationing?

Mr. Gottsman: Everybody had gas rationing.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Nobody in the military had cars. I was the only one of the few that had cars.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that's right, you said that.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, okay. So anyway, I...I...want...I had a furlough...early on...early on, you know? It was in a year or something. I...went back by train; I had a...furlough...by train, so I decided to hitchhike from San Antonio to Boston.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, well what...what point is this?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: Is this...

Mr. Gottsman: My furlough.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, for your furlough.

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible), I...I...

Mike Zambrano: But you're...you're still at...uhm...

Mr. Gottsman: Cadet Center.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah. So...I don't know why I decided to hitchhike to San Antonio, I mean, to Boston.

Mike Zambrano: That's a long way.

Mr. Gottsman: (Laughter), I didn't realize what I was in for! Man! But I get out on the...Broadway at the (unintelligible) the road going...nineties...no, 9171...whatever it was, and I got a ride from there; a soldier was going up to...Maryland to be shipped out with his wife, so I got a ride with him. And...then I had to switch off because he, you know, I was going to Boston, and so...and...so I got to Boston and my dad still had the sign shop, but he was...doing repairs to, you know, he...he was doing other things; there wasn't any sign business to speak of.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And the car dealer, a guy by the name of...I had it now...T.C. Baker, he was a car dealer, and he'd been in the Air Corps. I have...I have a copy of his...his letterhead, and he gave me his letterhead. Anyway, he had a car for me; a hundred dollars. That...a woman had left a car there with him and the car was available for a hundred dollars, so I bought the car.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, and that's...that's the car you take back with you?

Mr. Gottsman: I came back in the car. Well, my dad gave me his books...which...we had books of stamps, so he gave me his books. So I had some books, a couple you know? And...that was... 'cause you had to have stamps...and so I'm...driving back and I got into Nashville (pause), I think it was Nashville. No, no, Pennsylvania; I got as far as Pennsylvania first day, and...truck driver says, "You want some stamps, soldier?" I says, "Yeah!" I...(phone ringing in background). I mean (phone ringing)...unbelievable! So, I had

stamps for the rest of the way. Hello (answering phone). Yeah...is what? Is this Texas? Sir, is this Texas? I am talking...I am in the middle of an investigation into a serious crime that's happening down here, and...so I'm...is...wait...wait a minute! Wait, now who is this? Yeah, wait a minute, is this Larry or...or Ron? Oh, Chuck, oh...

Mike Zambrano: Okay, well, that's not...that little part won't be on tape, so...let me just turn it on again. Uh...(unintelligible).

Mr. Gottsman: Oh, he's got something for me; what the heck's he got for me? He's got something...something for me. I don't...

Mike Zambrano: So...so you bought your car for a hundred bucks.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And you drove back down...

Mr. Gottsman: I got to Pennsylvania, somewhere in Pennsylvania.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: Pulled into a gas station. Oh, and my dad...we loaded the car with gas tanks...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...in the back...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...which was bad.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: But we...I had gas for a while. But I pulled into a gas station because I didn't want to use my surplus, and...the...it was a sedan, nice, not bad,

'36...almost like new, a hundred bucks, and so...I'm getting gas. This truck driver says, "You need some stamps, soldier?" I...I says, "Yeah."

And...enough...I had...truck stamps to...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, plenty.

Mr. Gottsman: ...so, I...so now I had gas for the rest of the (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah. And it was a good thing. I hadn't met my wife yet, and...so I got back, and then we're...now we're running all over Texas – Fredericksburg, uh, the country scene was gorgeous; I mean, it was...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it is.

Mr. Gottsman: ...wonderful; the little towns...out of Bandera. I forget...Mar...Mar...what's the...Bandera...Bandera and then there's a little town that's before the next big...before Fredericksburg; it's on...

Mike Zambrano: Uh, Johnson City?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Johnson City?

Mr. Gottsman: No, no, not Johnson City; this was back in the hills on the...on a...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: ...on a...(unintelligible) town. I knew Johnson City 'cause...as a matter of fact, when I got out of the service...I...be...going to...Austin all the time, I knew the sign painter there, and he promised me a job...when I got out, so I took it...when I got out, but it was too much hassle going back and forth.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: My...my...you know what my first...jobs were? LBJ plates, (unintelligible) every...everything, you know, LBJ; I'm not kidding. I was doing LBJs on...everything that they...they owned.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, oh, again getting back to when the war was over, uh, you said you were at Scott Field.

Mr. Gottsman: At Scott Field. Okay, and...and it was in December; one of the worst winters ever...ever! I mean, it would...and the road from...Scott Field...what was that highway that went across...70?

Mike Zambrano: Oh...

Mr. Gottsman: I...there's a highway it...that was the highway that went across the country...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Gottsman: ...country. I...I think it was 70; I'm not sure. Wasn't 40, yeah, it was...it was probably 70 and it was from...from St. Louis through...to Springfield, Missouri...it's through.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: And hills and...I'm talk...and...it was...ice; the roads were ice, and we didn't...and...you just couldn't make it. I mean, I actually went off into a ditch and had to be pulled out and had to slow down and go...and when I got into...my wife's hometown...her...grandparents lived in...Delaney, Arkansas and that's where we were headed...near Fayetteville. And so...when I got into Fayetteville, I bought a set of chains; good thing I did...because I had to go out in the country...twenty miles in the country; put chains on and I got

there so that...but...so that was...it was a...and the...cars were...trucks
were...they...they couldn't stay on the road, you know.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: But I made it...thank god. It was...it was a...'cause my wife was pregnant
then.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Gottsman: I...we didn't know it, but...and...so what's...where...let's get to the
interesting stuff. What am I...missing?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you were...well, well...the war ends in...oh, I almost didn't ask you
this one. The atomic bomb...when they dropped it, do you remember
hearing about that?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's see, I'm trying to place where I would have been.
Probably...probably would have been at Salt...Scott Field.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah...

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible), that's kind of...followed the time line.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: But you...but you...you remember...first hearing about it or, did you just...

Mr. Gottsman: I...I knew it was a...a big deal, but see, we didn't have...radio, TV; we didn't
have...we didn't have any visual on, so...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm yeah, that's true, I guess.

Mr. Gottsman: But...and then...as I recall, wasn't there two bombings on the...

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: There was a second.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: When the...when the war ended, do you...do you remember what the feeling was like then? I mean, you know, three and a half years of war and, I imagine, everybody around you at least...

Mr. Gottsman: I got...

Mike Zambrano: ...when you heard about it was pretty...

Mr. Gottsman: ...yeah, if I...if I can find my picture album, I've got a picture of me leaving...holding my discharge papers. And I've got my discharge papers. I'll...I...I've got two or three books...'cause I keep books and...and...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: ...and I...I'm, as you can tell, I'm not very...efficient.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I bet you know where everything is though.

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: I bet you know where everything is though.

Mr. Gottsman: Well, that's...that's a big...I mean, this here...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...I'm...I did...I did a big job, a big sign job recently; what the devil was it? Oh yeah! In town here...the...do you know the Six Hundred Degree Pizzeria; have you heard of it?

Mike Zambrano: No, but it's here in Georgetown?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, and I just...a month ago...did a sign, and that's what...I'll show it to you; you'll be amazed. And it's the biggest hit in the city; it's the first electric sign downtown, first electric...see...

Mike Zambrano: Is it (unintelligible)?

Mr. Gottsman: ...I've been...I've been doing business with Hark (sp?), a historic architectural review and they turned down, no matter how good it is, they turn it down; I fight them and I beat them. But this one here, the businessmen have now taken through...control. I got the first electric sign in the...in the city,

Mike Zambrano: Hum! Well, where's...where is this pizza place?

Mr. Gottsman: It's...it's on...it's...right downtown. Uh, it's Eighth Street and Main.

Mike Zambrano: Eighth Street...

Mr. Gottsman: ...and Main. Eighth Street and Church, I think it is; you got to see it. I've got a picture of it.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: I've...well, let me get my...see if you can help me find some...anything that looks like a book because I've got stuff in there that...shows...I...I hope...I hope I haven't been stolen; I mean, they...they're very big on stealing stuff over here. But I have wonderful books. I pick up these books at the...Senior Center...for like a dollar and...(searching for books)...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, here's...I...I saw that picture there, and you've got a bigger one by the door (unintelligible words).

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, alright.

Mike Zambrano: It's a coffee shop in town?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, it's a coffee shop in town, and it's hip to be in squares. Okay, this...this hip...you know what the hip is? A hundred year old guy playing a twenty-five year old black – that's the hippest picture they could get.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), (unintelligible words).

Mr. Gottsman: (Unintelligible)...front page.

Mike Zambrano: So, it's a newspaper article it says, "It's hip to be in squares for historic area towns."

Mr. Gottsman: And it's hip; look...look it!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: That's the hippest picture they could get. And do you want to know something? That picture was published in every paper in the country!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Gottsman: Yep! I'm not kidding. My son was getting letters, calls from all over the country, "Is that your dad?"

Mike Zambrano: Huh! I'm just going to jot down the...the...the writer's name. So, this was in the "Statesman"?

Mr. Gottsman: That was in the Statesman, but it wound up in every paper.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Gottsman: And the young lady that...oh, oh, how it happened to be taken...I was leaving a restaurant and these...I know these two...two black guys...they come down from (unintelligible), and I knew them, and they were getting ready to be picked up, religious group...guys.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And so, they were waiting for a ride back, and the kid says, “You want to play a game?” Well, I didn’t, I was leaving but...but I says, “Yeah, sure.” I sat down...I sat down and we played and a lady comes along, “Do you mind if I take your picture?” I said, “No, we’re just sit...,” she says, “Well, I’m with the “Statesman.” I said, “That’s okay.” Four or five months later, they...they...I go into the corner shop, “Hey, you made the front page!” That’s...that’s...

Mike Zambrano: Wow! (laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah, ...so, that’s...

Mike Zambrano: Well, you know, I’m curious because you said at the beginning that...that the business has been around for about sixty years you said.

Mr. Gottsman: Eighty.

Mike Zambrano: Eighty.

Mr. Gottsman: Eighty-five.

Mike Zambrano: So, did...did you move the business from Boston down to Texas?

Mr. Gottsman: Okay, Boston, okay. Uh, I was in San Antonio, and on my weekend...spare times and stuff; my wife’s from San Antonio; my...her folks...when I got out of the service, I stayed there a little while, so I became...I joined the union; I worked for Coca Cola painting billboards outside.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And I was a...guys with the big hats and stuff like that, so that was my first job. And...so I...used Aetna...I’ve used Aetna for...eighty years, you know?

Mike Zambrano: The...the name of the business?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so I...I've got a card I'll give you, and...it's...it was...I was pretty successful. I...uh, there was a toll company, not a toll...a...yeah, a toll company...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: ...they...they would go up to Detroit to pick up for Chrysler or General Motors...had twice the products and bring them down to San Antonio. They had...the...trailers that hold, and they had to be lettered with the name of the...they had a...let's see, what was it? I think it was...any...anyway, I...I had to...and...and everything had to be done by hand. So, they wanted to letter the doors of the trucks and the (unintelligible) and things, and it was all done by hand, so, I got that job. So, the sign people knew me; I was in the union; I'm...I'm...you know, well known in San Antonio (unintelligible). So, I went back...home...I was going...actually, I...I bought...I got out of the service and I bought a piece of land in Austin, north Austin, and it was five thousand dollars...for...a house to be built in a (unintelligible) work area; five thousand. The house and this building...to be built...on a road in north Austin...and the road goes off ...off toward Taylor there or whatever. Well, north Austin was right across the street from...the university.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: That's north Austin. And I had this big farm, and...and the owner was that writer that's famous...(unintelligible) Duval or something; he's very famous...writer, very famous writer.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: And it was his place, and I had to drop the deal. My dad wanted me back home. So, I...if I'd of kept...kept that I'd been worth twenty million.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I'm sure.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: The...the prices in Austin have gone up quite a bit.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So...so, how...how did he get the business from...or...or did you start anew or did you get the business from Boston and bring it here then?

Mr. Gottsman: No, no, no; my dad had the business in Boston.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: But he was...he was suffering 'cause he needed me.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: You know, it...I'm a top...I'm a top letterer; yeah, I'll brag; I'm top notch...upper level.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible)...(laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: Well...

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, okay.

Mike Zambrano: ...but how do you end up back in Texas though?

Mr. Gottsman: What?

Mike Zambrano: How do you end up back in Texas? I mean, if...going back to Boston.

Mr. Gottsman: I...I didn't...do...I was just picking...like this guy had a fleet of trucks he needed lettering and I'd get the job. Uh, what...uh, and my son...when I had my son, when he got old enough...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Gottsman: ...we...we came every year. I don't...it was year in and year out, I don't care, every year...I waited till the summer when the kids were out...out of school, and I came down to Texas and I...I didn't...I left my guys up there to just do what you want; I didn't care...that...because I would be gone for five or six weeks, and there's always work for...a week or two and then they'd...(unintelligible); I didn't care about it; it didn't matter. I came to San Antonio to be with her folks 'cause I wanted to...her to have a life, too.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And so, we did that all the time. So, Larry went up...wound up...going to Trinity; he wanted to go to Trinity. He wanted to come down...so, he stayed...come down...stayed with...his...my folks, her folks rather, and he...went to Trinity. And...one of his classmates was...uh, an (unintelligible). Eventually, we got him a...apartment in...Austin and one of his classmates was Alice Walton and it didn't...there were no stores then.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: And we'd come down and visit Larry, and this girl came over and says, "Larry around?" Well, that was Alice; I didn't...we didn't know who it...didn't mean...anything. That was Alice Walton. And to this day, he still corresponds...he still...she...take he is a farmer, she has a farm up in Waco or

something; he comes down and she...flies him up; go out to the farm, so...so they still...still, so that's...that. And then, oh, that...oh, the reason that he...he came to San Antonio...he got in the business; he was...he was in the business with me in Boston and...this Mexican guy down in San Antonio was...he kept...he knew I was getting ready to retire; I was sixty-ish, and he called me without fail once a month, "Billy, when you coming down? Please." You know, 'cause he wanted me to come down and go in bus...and I was set to; I mean, I was...I was open to it.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: But...and so I...handed the phone to Larry, I says, "Larry, Jimmy wants somebody to come down and see him." Larry...Larry is part of the business up here, and...Larry flies down...sees Jimmy. Well, he knows Jimmy knows this sign guy who has his shop and owns the business...downtown, and...so Larry stays there and buys that property and he's got a...and...and the he sold off part of it to a big brewery that had to expand, and so he's very successful...nationwide. And he got into the big signs. Up at...up...home, everything is small.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Gottsman: Down here, everything is...big, hundred-foot-high; I mean, big stuff. So, that's how Larry got in...

Mike Zambrano: And...and Larry is who?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Is Larry your son?

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, so he's running the Sun (sp?). He's a son of a bitch, but...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...I mean it; he's a...he's...he sold the business down here for...I retired...I've been retired for thirty-five years or something. Never got a job out of him, never. I get my own jobs. I just did this...pizzeria. He made it and did the...all the...(unintelligible), but I...I designed it. He...he could have given me a job for a week for crying out loud, no.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: So...so, my will is coming up; he's getting nothing.

Mike Zambrano: Oops (chuckles).

Mr. Gottsman: No, so, okay, so that's...yeah, so that's...that was...pretty good story; went all over the country.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, a newspaper...

Mr. Gottsman: And the woman that took the picture she loves me; she wants...she...she wants...send me somebody like you to talk to. She...she's a sweetheart...for some reason. You know why? Because I'm the only guy, like you, that looks like a guy; the others...tubs...lard...shirts...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: I...I mean shirts and shorts and blue jeans and...and sneakers or something and beards, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Gottsman: I...am I right?

Mike Zambrano: Well, you can...(laughter).

Mr. Gottsman: Kind of, yeah, yeah. So, as a coffee shop, I've got the love...I wish we could have gone for coffee...'cause I got...well, she's not working today; I've got the sweetest little woman you can...we're friends, we're buddies.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Gottsman: I mean, and when she goes by...(unintelligible) so, we're buddies, and that's...because there's nobody else; the other guys are...talking and reading the sports page and talking about the games and stuff like that...that...I can talk; I can do...oh, you know I can talk (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah, okay, let's...try and find some of my...now I found that; we found that. And this, now see, what...what happens here...the reason...everything I do gets published.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Gottsman: Everything I do gets published. This sign here...I called on these people, these kids, and they had this great little thing where they fixed...fixed all kind of electronic stuff; they would...it was a going business. They would...and they were brilliant, and they're very hippy, I mean very, no, what's the word I'm looking for? What's the dancing that's gone beyond hippy?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, hip hop?

Mr. Gottsman: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Hip hop?

Mr. Gottsman: No, no, it's another...even worse than that. I mean, way back. I mean, the...the girls, well look at the girls, you know what I mean? The...the girls...they were...they're hugging me because I got the sign and the business picked up. Well, they had no sign; I put this...I made the sign. They jumped from two people a day to thirty-five people a day.

Mike Zambrano: That's very good!

Mr. Gottsman: And they were doing fabulous...right down on the square, right down on the square here. And (unintelligible) Code...Code Enforcement come along and tell them, "You can't have the sign on the sidewalk. Honest to god!

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: So, they put the sign...had to take it off; put it...inside this thing. Couldn't even put it near the window so they could see it; two a day; they folded.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Gottsman: The business world.

Mike Zambrano: That's too bad.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah. So, this article is about that. Uh, yeah. Yeah, I guess this was the letter I sent them, but they did an article on it.

Mike Zambrano: So, is there anything else that you remember about your time in the service?

Mr. Gottsman: There's all...a whole bunch of stuff; god darn (looking through documents).

Mike Zambrano: Any other interesting stories?

Mr. Gottsman: Uhm, before I...when I...when I signed up, my brother was...already in the service; now I'm in the service; I'm signed up; I'm going to go...so my dad

had the business and...we put a sign out, little sign out in front of the door, two stars. My dad was so proud of that, honest to god. And then when he was killed, it (unintelligible). But...and I have a picture of him, my brother and me, standing by that sign; let me see if I can find that 'cause that's...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, oh, that's...that's okay; well maybe one more when we wrap up.

Mr. Gottsman: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: But...is there...is there...any...anything else you remember about your time in the service that...that you'd like to share?

Mr. Gottsman: Oh, I...I did not have a rough time, you know? I mean...all...al these poor kids that are in the trenches and stuff like that, I did not have a...rough time, but I had specific things that I...I'd just come in and do it. And...lot...like dances...put somebody in charge of dances...me. See, things like that. So, that means getting two or three buses to pick up the girls and bring them out; that's once a month. I didn't...militarily...I got into a jam once or twice with...guys. Like the guy that was coming back...I picked up in...in...what town was it? Uh, he was a big...(unintelligible); I handcuffed him to take him back, and on the train coming back he complained to the...complained to the (unintelligible). If I hadn't cuffed him...uh, handcuffed him, he'd of been gone. I mean, he was a big, country boy, he (unintelligible) something, and I...I handcuffed him. So, we...my buddy...the...the gun, we had one gun, we had to stay away from that, and he would have taken off, I wouldn't have got him back.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Gottsman: And...uh, but that's...and he was hollering all the way back on the train about how bad it was...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: ...about how I was. I wasn't bad; I...I wanted to bring him back. The guy that went to Chicago to get his prisoner...didn't, and the guy took off, so he didn't...

Mike Zambrano: Oops.

Mr. Gottsman: ...make it.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Gottsman: Just...just...it...I really didn't have a...a...bad...career, you know what I mean? I had a...a...yeah.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
CD – #OH04455 – Mr. William N. Gottsman
Transcribed by: K. Matras
Houston, TX
September 10, 2019