

**Veteran:** NIETO, R. C.  
**Service Branch:** ARMY  
**Interviewer:** Coy, Marisa E.  
**Date of Interview:** April 9, 2004  
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Terry Moore  
**Highlights of Service:** **World War II; Combat engineer, Germany; & Korea: Infantry; Wounded in friendly fire incident; POW**

Interviewer: This is Marisa Coy interviewing Mr. Rudolpho Nieto April 9, 2004, at Mr. Nieto's home. Are you aware that our conversation will be recorded and that the tape and transcription will be placed in the Lee College library, and do I have your permission to do that?

Veteran: Yes, you do.

Interviewer: Thank you. What is your name and age?

Veteran: R. C. Nieto, and I am 78.

Interviewer: What was your rank in the military, and how long was your service?

Veteran: If you're talking about how long, I served in two wars. The first one was a little over two years, and the second one was about eleven months, but all totaled it was seven years that I was in the service.

Interviewer: How old were you when you went in the reserves.

Veteran: When I went in the reserves right after World War II, I was 20.

Interviewer: How old were you when you joined?

Veteran: When I joined in 1944, I was 18.

Interviewer: Why did you choose this area of the military?

Veteran: I didn't choose; I was drafted.

Interviewer: Was there talk about being a draft and then it just happened?

Veteran: No, there was a draft going on, and everybody was going to be drafted when they were 18. As soon as you turned 18 you were gone during World War II.

Interviewer: What wars did you participate in?

Veteran: The European war with Germany, and the Korean War with North Korea.

Interviewer: What did you think when you were informed about the war? Before you went, did you support what we were fighting for?

Veteran: In World War II, I was young, and like everybody I was ready. In the Korean War, I guess I stayed in, but I should have gotten out. During World War II, I was young and didn't care. During the Korean War, I thought I got a dirty deal. I didn't think I should have been called back in because I was inactive. When I went back, you didn't go into the same service that you was promised. It wasn't only me, but there was a lot of the young guys that were there were dissatisfied with the way the government was doing. If you joined the reserves, you were promised that this is what you were going to do. Like me, I was a combat engineer and I ended up in the infantry.

Interviewer: What did you do as a combat engineer?

Veteran: We built bridges in Germany during World War II, fixed roads, or any kind of construction that needs to be done.

Interviewer: What was the infantry like? Were you trained for that at all?

Veteran: Oh, yeah. You have basic training when you first go in, and then you take whatever you're going to take—like basic engineer training, where you're trained to build roads, bridges, pick up mines, and things of that nature.

Interviewer: How did the military train you for each of your jobs? How were they alike?

Veteran: When I was in World War II, and I was a combat engineer, we did that. In the Korean War, it was totally different because I went into infantry. In the infantry they assigned me to mortars, which was a good deal compared to being a

rifleman. You don't want to be that. We could do a lot of damage, and we were in a safer place, but if the enemy ever breaks through—which they do—you're down there by yourself.

Interviewer: What were the conditions like in World War II where were you stationed?

Veteran: I was stationed in different places. When I first went overseas, and I didn't stay long in these places—first I went to Scotland, then I went to England, and from England I went to France, and then to Belgium. That was in December of '44, which was cold, cold, cold. Then we went to Germany, and when the war ended, that's wh

ere I was—Germany.

Interviewer: What about in the Korean War? Where were you stationed?

Veteran: In the Korean War, we was moved pretty fast. They called me, and I went to Fort Hood, which was Camp Hood at that time. Then I was sent to Camp Drake, Japan, and from Camp Drake I went to Korea. You get there one day, and you're in it.

Interviewer: As you were fighting, did your perspective change on the involvement in the war?

Veteran: No, not really. The only thing I didn't like was the way they put me from the engineers to the infantry, but that was the only thing, but everybody was getting the same medicine—not just me. There were bugle boys in the infantry and things of that nature that most of them were complaining about.

Interviewer: Did they not have enough people?

Veteran: They didn't have enough people. That was one of the things. Another thing was they were getting the hell beat out of them. When I got there, there was nothing but, "go back, go back, go back, go back."

Interviewer: What were some of the experiences you remember in World War II?

Veteran: One of the things I can remember is going into Germany and building this bridge and dedicating it to Ernie Pyle, a war correspondent that got killed that month, so we dedicated the bridge to him. It was a strong and a long bridge that could hold tanks or hold convoys, but you worked seven days and seven night. Everyone pitched in to build that.

Interviewer: How were you able to build it without people shooting at you?

Veteran: We were able to build it because the Germans were on the run. Once we got through the Rhineland, the Germans didn't have a way to stop anybody. That was their last line of defense at the Rhine. Once you got across, the Germans were on the run back to Berlin. They could fire at us, but they're not worried about you building a bridge, they're worried about this guy shooting at me.

Interviewer: What were some of the experiences you remember about the Korean War?

Veteran: In Korea, when I got there it seemed like we were always going the opposite way. I remember getting there and the captain came to meet us and said he asked us what we were there for? And we said, "Well, there's a war going on." And he said, "No, you're here to fight for your butts." The reason he said that was because we were going the opposite way. He told the truth. You'd run back and stop, hold for a little bit, and then run back some more. There was just too many of 'em, and you couldn't stop them really. But that wasn't the worst experience. The worst one was the last battle I was in. We had started an advance and we were going forward now. When we got to this town one night, Wonju, which was a pretty big town, we were holding the line there and said, "We're gonna go to a place called Hoinson(sic)," but the enemy was supposed to be there. We didn't know the enemy had already surrounded us, and we were already in a trap. They are up in the mountains, and we're up on the road. We left Wonju on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February at night, and got to where we were going, and spread out for an advance, and found out that we were surrounded. We stayed there all day, and we didn't have no fightin' goin' on yet. We had breakfast, but as soon as daylight broke out, boy we could see Chinese all over the mountains. They were all around us. They weren't fighting us, they were just up there. We knew they

were up there, so we starting shootin' at 'em. At night, they decided to pull back, and we started to pull back. We had a couple of fights with 'em during the day, but it wasn't too bad. At least I thought this was the last day, but I ended up surviving that. We got in a convoy and started back, probably didn't go maybe less than a mile when our first tank was crippled where it couldn't go any more and was on a one-way bridge. We couldn't move—couldn't go forward, couldn't go backwards. We had a convoy on the side of the road, and the mountain drops, and the fight broke out there. They had us where they wanted us to be. We can't move this thing. We can't go backwards because the road is narrow, and the snow is heavy. This was during the cold, and the snow was bad, so we ended up having to fight there. Then we got the order—"to each his own." In other words, get out the best way you can, but our convoy's not going nowhere. Some of the guys started leaving, others didn't—they just stayed there. I was one that stayed there. We started out with a company, which is usually about 150 men, plus support like tanks, artillery, and part of another infantry. Once they gave that order, where are you going? You go to that mountain you can't get through. They were all around us, and we knew it. All of a sudden, this guy that was with me—I don't know who he was, because you don't know nobody—he said, "What are we gonna do?" I said, "I don't know what you're gonna do, but I'm gonna stay here, because we can't go no place." About that time, I get hit. Our fire power is dead. We've got 25 men defending the convoy from 150 men. I know that, because that's how many were captured there. I had a good friend named Jesse Perkins, and he took off. Anyway, they got the 25 of us that were down there defending the convoy. There was 25 vehicles and 25 people, and all the Chinese around us. We surrendered. They got us and were real good with us. They said, "We're not going to hurt you." They spoke good English. He said they were going to take us to the back of the mountain where they came from. They did and we spent all night at the side of the mountain. When we got there, they had a bunch of our guys already there being held prisoner. I waited there, and we knew what was about to happen. We were waitin' for daybreak, because our planes could not fly unless you've got weather that would allow them to fly. We asked for permission to put out a flag, and they wouldn't let us, because there was guards up in the mountain, but down in front of us there was only three

guards. You can't hold that many men with three guards, but we knew they were getting ready to do something. So at daybreak pretty soon we heard a roar. We knew the jets were coming. All of a sudden we just seen them jets coming towards where we were, and they let napalm drop, they strafed us with everything they could throw at us. My friend Jesse Perkins was all mad at me for being captured, and then he got captured. He came in and I said, "Where are the other two guys?", because there were three that left, and he came back with one. He said, "Well, the other one is coming right behind me." They had 'em back there. The third one we don't what happened to him—we lost him. We talked for a little while. He was an ex-Merchant Marine, and he said, "I'll tell you what, Nieto. You know what's going to happen. They're going to separate us pretty soon. If you get out, you get in touch with my folks. If I get out, I know Baytown, I'll see that your folks know what happened to you." We didn't have addresses for nobody. He was from Big Springs. That morning before the raid, they took off rings, wallets, money, anything you had they took it away. After the raid, I would gather—since I had talked with Jesse during the night—that Jesse didn't get killed at that raid, but they came up and said, "Everybody's going north except the wounded. Anybody that's wounded can stay." So, I stayed—there was 75 of us wounded. They came to pick us up after the raid and said they were going to put us in a building. They put us in a school building nearby. When the planes came they didn't do anything to the school building, so they figured they wouldn't hurt us in there. There was a village we had passed when we came in, and there was one in front of us that was where we were going, so they came and took us out of the school building early in the morning before daybreak. "We're gonna move you guys out to a village." And they took us down the road to this village, but everybody knew what was gonna happen. We were in there maybe about an hour, and here comes the jets. Everything was gone—all the buildings were burned up. I don't know what happened to the rest of them, but I know there was six of us left, and I was one of them. You take 75 people, your planes come and burn you, and when they gather you, there's six of us. At night they would put us at the side of the mountains where they were, and in the daytime they'd put us in this one little house that was left, and they thought that would make them come and finish the job. The planes never did hit that little

house. They figured if rescue comes, we'll get it first because we're in that little building. They had full guard over us. We would see tank patrols coming in for three days. The patrol would come in, but we were so far up the road that we couldn't make a run for it. We knew the Chinese were up there, and if we do they're gonna get us, so we stayed there. The first patrol that came in, we could hear where they turned back where we hit the ambush when our convoy was knocked out. On the road, we knew there was the dead body of an American, so they stopped and picked up that body, and we could hear the tanks, and said, "Man, they look good, but they're so far." They couldn't make a road for it. They went back, came back the next morning again, and we could hear them and see them, but we was in that little house waitin'. On the third day, we seen 'em coming, but when we seen that patrol comin', we could hear a lot of fightin' goin' on on the other side of the mountain. About daybreak, we saw somebody comin' up the mountain, and we could see the fightin' goin' on from mountain to mountain, so we said, "Somebody is close to us, but we are close to them." We could get hurt or killed. The ones that came down the mountain we could actually see military coming. We could see lines of tanks coming. We still didn't know who it is, we just hoped they didn't fire at us. A little while later we could hear the shooting coming. They'd shoot at anything that could be hiding someone, like a bush, a house. They would fill it full of holes before they'd get near it, so we knew what was going to happen. We said, "Let's just grab the floor." That's all we could do. Finally, we got to probably from here to the road, we could hear the Americans speaking. Nobody would get up because we were afraid they would shoot. We had a big window and could see out, so finally the three of us got up and went to the window and waved, and they asked us to come out. Only four of us came out, because the other two couldn't even get up. They asked how many were in there, and we said, "Well there's four right now, but two left inside that can't walk." Their legs were shot up bad. He told us to report to the lead tank that had the commander in the front. We went there, and they sent us to a field hospital, and I stayed there overnight. They sent me to a hospital that next day in Korea, and the following day they sent me to a hospital in Tokyo. {END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A; SIDE B BEGINS} They gave me a Purple Heart, which I don't believe in, but you know you've got a trip home. I asked them

where I was going, and he told me, "You've got a choice to stay here in Tokyo, you can go to Hawaii, or you can go home." I didn't think nothing of it and I said, "I'll go home to the states." So he sent me to the states, and I never realized anything was going wrong really until I got to San Antonio, but after about three days there in Tokyo, one night they came and got me and took me to a plane, put me on the plane, and said, "You're going home." Lifted me up in the air, and I think after about an hour the plane landed. The captain came out and said, "We're having plane communications, so we have to turn back before there's no returns." I didn't think nothing about it, and thought that may be it. After a couple of hours on the ground, we took off again, and we had been promised to come straight to San Antonio. About six o'clock in the morning, the plane hit the land again. There was bright, blue water, and here we are in Hawaii. They said, "No, we didn't stop to refuel. We're going to drop a patient." They opened that big door and some natives came in, and looked across the stretchers, and said, "This is the guy." So they took me out and put me there in Hawaii. They put me all by myself in a private room, and I was wondering why a private room. The nurse said the wards aren't quite full but they will be full. I said, "One more won't make that big a difference." He said, "The nurse in charge said to put you in here." I was kind of wondering why, but I still thought it was probably nothing. About two days later, here they came again. In the meantime, the nurses would take me to eat, but they didn't want me talking to nobody. They just wanted me to stay by myself. I thought maybe that's the way it was supposed to be. But, when I left Hawaii, they put me on a plane and we got to Lackland in San Antonio, and then when they started unloading, I noticed they were taking everybody out, but they didn't take my stretcher. Meanwhile, later they came and got me out. I saw a bunch of buses that the Army used, and they put on the stretchers, which are olive color. When they got me out, they put me in an ambulance. Then I started wondering why I was in an Air Force ambulance. The buses pulled out, and the ambulance stayed there. I asked the driver if we were going to Brooks, and he said, "No, you're going to Lackland," so I ended up in an Air Force hospital. I couldn't believe they put me in another private room. The same thing happened when the nurses would take me to eat that I couldn't talk to nobody. I thought something crazy was going on by then,



but I knew from the beginning what it could be. I just couldn't prove it. I thought I'd stay there about a week, not knowing that my brother Henry was there, too. They put me in there and about a week later the Army came and picked me up in an ambulance. I said, "Where in the world are we going?" He said, "You're going to Brooks Army Hospital." I ended up there, again in a private room. I felt that the reason they were keeping me there, after it finally came to me, was that they didn't want me talking to nobody because of what happened back in Korea. What happened was that of the 75 that were there, only six of us came out, and they don't want you saying this. There might have been a few more that I don't know about, but that's what was left in the group that I was in when they had us all together. And of course that we were put in harms way at that time. They didn't have it like it is today when they put them in harms way and you read about it. At that time you didn't read about it. They could put you in harms way, and the government would keep its mouth shut. Later on I ran into a book that was written by a Walter Winchell, I believe is his name, and he wrote in there that the reason that what had happened to us and that the Army would not let anybody know about it. I thought at that time, and I couldn't prove it, somebody else must have survived and told it. Walter Winchell got a-hold of it, and he wrote it. That was probably one of the reasons that they didn't want me to go into wards with the rest of the troops. They wanted me in a private room where I'd have to keep my mouth shut. When I came to San Antonio and stayed in a private room, I was there for months. After awhile they took me out and put me in a ward.

You know this Jesse Perkins that I had talked to him as a prisoner because he was with me? When I wrote to his mother, I didn't know what to write, but I wrote the Chamber of Commerce, and they gave her the letter. She wrote me back right away. In fact, she came to see me at the hospital there in San Antonio. She said that her son was reported killed the day that I was captured, which was a lie, because I had been talking with him on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and the telegram said he was killed on the 12<sup>th</sup>. She brought pictures of Jesse's brother and him. They were both in military clothes, and she told me to pick which one was Jesse. She brought a group picture, and I would pick Jesse every time. I told her he was not

killed that day. He might have been killed, but he wasn't killed on the 12<sup>th</sup>, because I talked to him on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. She started to wondering what's going on. Later on, we kept in touch with his family and his girlfriend. She wrote me a letter that they had found his body. His mother was a real nice lady. I went to see her and his girlfriend. I never met his brother, because he wasn't here. According to the government, he was actually killed in March, but they reported him on February 12<sup>th</sup>. I told them how the Air Force had come in and strafed and bombed us. Somebody got hurt. Jesse died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, so he might have been hit during our attack and not died until later, but they did bring his body home. Then there was the Olachia boy. I don't know if you know him, but he was with me and lived only a block from here, and he was in the same outfit and was reported the same day that I was, but he never came back. His body was never recovered. It was a tough fight all the way. I made up my mind at that time that I was "gone," but I was ready to go. I guess you kind of lose your fear—at least I did. If I had give up my life, then that's it. I mean, you don't want to, but you can't be afraid. I'll get that son-of-a-gun if he's trying to get me. The only thing I worried about was my mother. She had already lost one boy in World War II, and I thought "not another one." I remember when our priest came in during that battle, and he said he wasn't hearing confession, he was giving communion. But there were many guys that were killed that I saw there, and all of 'em were young. When you're in an area like that and you get called in like we did, you don't know each other. You come from California, you may come from Texas, you may come from anywhere in the states, so you don't know who's with you. You kind of make friends, but when you get overseas, this guy beside you is my buddy. I haven't known him but for maybe two or three days, but you watch for me and I watch for you. That's the way it's gotta be, because all you know is he's on your side. Like those that got out with me, I don't know any of them. There was four Americans and two South Koreans, and they couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak Korean, but we knew we were friends because we both wore the same uniform. That's kind of hard when the language is different, and you've got these guys fighting with you but don't know how to communicate with them. We had a guy we called "Sparks," because he could move troops like *that*. My sergeant used to say the only reason we called

him Sparks is because he's good at moving his men. We had South Koreans with us, and he said, "I just tell them what I want done, and them guys better move or I'm gonna make sure they move." He was a little rascal, but he was mean. I know times when we'd lose a gun and would have to go back to retrieve it, and he said he'd go get Sparks because he needed some men to go get a gun that we had lost.

Interviewer: I have a question. When you said something about the planes coming in, you meant U.S. planes?

Veteran: Yes, our own jets were bombing the hell out of us, but they were new just like we were. The war had just broken out, because I went in three months after it started. I was there from December to February, and then I got hit. They were probably good pilots, but I don't think they were that good at their job at the beginning. Later on they got to be the best, but at the beginning they were. The Korean War is the first time you saw jets, it was a new thing in that war. The Russians had them and had given them to the Chinese and the Koreans to pilot. They were getting the best of the Americans, because the Americans were new at it. Later on they got to be better than the enemy with planes. The Russians had a better plane because they came out first with it, but later on the Americans took over. Better pilots, better planes, and all of that. When a jet lets go at you, I don't see how they can tell who done that because they're coming in so fast. They might pick you up on a camera, but after the damage is done. I think they knew after they got to us, but it was too late then. You don't hit your own troops, but that's what they were doing to us. The enemy was seeing to it that they would do it to us, because they didn't want to use a bullet on you. They wanted the Americans to do it. A lot of the time, we were just targets for airplanes and for our troops when they were advancing, because they'd put us in front of them. If a plane didn't get you, maybe the troops would get you. If you survived, God must have had other plans for you. Just like when we were laying down flat on the floor in that house and thinking should I get up and try to stop them. Finally we could hear them talking, and we decided to get up. I remember that guy that was a sergeant at the very front, and the first thing he stopped and told us to come out, and how they stopped a bunch of men at one time, it just looked like they

froze. And you're not talking about a hundred men, you're talking about thousands of men coming at you, and they all freeze at one time. They freeze the tanks when they put on the brakes, and everything was quiet. You didn't hear no more firing. I said, "How in the hell can you stop that many men, stop the cars, stop them tanks?" And that was the Marines, and they're tough. I have to give them credit. They don't hesitate like the Army does. When you're going forward, a G.I., to me, doesn't feel like a Marine. The Marines just look like they've got somebody in the back with a gun behind 'em. "You'd better move or I'll shoot you in the back," because they were just coming at you like there was nobody up in front. With the firing going on, it looks pretty good the way they move, but I'm in front of him. I could see him coming up that mountain, and when they came down into that valley and started walking toward us, now we've got to eat the ground because those guys are shooting. They tell you, whatever you see in front—if it's a bush, a tree, or anything that can be cover—spread. So you figure we're gonna get sprayed, that's for sure. You can hear the shots coming through, and you're down on the ground eatin' dirt, but that's all you can do.

Interviewer: What kept you alive?

Veteran: I was captured, like I said, on Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup>—I'd eaten breakfast that morning, but that's all I ate. I didn't eat nothing else during the day. I didn't eat nothing on Monday, I didn't eat nothing on Tuesday, and I'm going on three days already without eatin'.

Interviewer: Or drinking?

Veteran: Well, drinking snow on the ground. Around 10, after dark, the Chinese came in—the guy that spoke English—and told us that the company commander there wanted to see us. He thought we needed a cane, but he just cut some limbs and we used it to go up the mountain where his captain was. We went up there and the captain just wanted to know if we had eaten anything. We told him there wasn't anything to eat there, and he said, "Well, we told you before [he was the same guy that talked to us when we was captured] we wasn't goin' to hurt you." He already did, but he wasn't gonna admit it. He said, "What I'm gonna do is let

you go up to one of our gun positions. My men are gonna take you up there, and we're gonna feed you." That was Tuesday night. They had a machine gun set up there with about twelve Chinese guys running it, and they had a little what wasn't really a tent, but it was real small and you could put some men in it. The Chinese that took us up there—there was two of 'em—and they couldn't take the other two guys that were badly wounded, so they just took four. When we got up there, the Chinese told us, "I have orders to feed you and let you eat all you want to eat, but I also know that you don't like our food, but we captured a lot of yours. You know what Americans call C-rations and K-rations? We have them." He also said, "We have fish, we have rice, and we have tea, and you can have that, too. But if you'd rather have American food, we can give you C-rations or K-rations, because we've got a truck load of those." I said, "Well, give me the American rations." We sat there and ate all we wanted, and they gave us American cigarettes, too. He said, "Now that you've eaten, my men are curious about you guys. They want to know things about America." They were just regular soldiers. He said, "I have to be there, because I'm their interpreter." I said, "Well, that's good. C'mon in and shoot. What do they want to know?" He said, "Well, each one has a different question." One guy was asking questions about jobs—what kind of work that we did. He was talking about townspeople, not rich people. We told him what kind of jobs that had. Another guy asked, "Is it true that there's a lot of discrimination in America?" I said, "Yeah, it's true." I mean, why deny it. He said, "Black people are not liked?" I said, "No, black people are not liked, Mexicans are not liked." We talked of that awhile. {END OF TAPE 1—SIDE B}

{TAPE 2—SIDE B BEGINS}

He said, "And another thing, is it true that in America you have different races like Japanese, Chinese?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "I understand some of them are American citizens and are fighting me." We were up there a good four hours, and we liked it, because it was nice and warm in that tent, so the longer they kept us the better. He said, "I have to take you back, because it's almost two o'clock. It's gonna be morning soon, and we have to be ready in case your guys come up and we have to stop 'em. I'll tell you what I'm gonna do, because I probably will not give you nothing to eat after this. How much longer you're gonna be here, I

don't know, but for the ones that couldn't walk up here, I'm gonna give you food for them, and I'm gonna give you tea so you can make some tea, and I'm gonna give you some American rations like cigarettes and food, but I'm only gonna supply you because we don't want you guys tryin' to sneak out. When you leave here today, you'll have enough for tomorrow and the following day, if you go slow. After that, it'll play out." He didn't come down for three days, and we were kind of stingy eatin' the little bit we had, because we didn't know when they was gonna give us more. When he finally came down, he wanted to know if we were through eating, and we said, "Yeah, but we are still hungry." He said, "Well, I felt that ya'll were out of supplies. The captain said to come up there and get some more supplies." He gave us some more, but he only gave us for two days, and he never came back. We stayed up there and started seeing these patrols coming in, so we at least had the hope that somebody's out there looking for you. They can't find us, but we're here. After three days of patrols coming in, they finally rescued us. As far as the eatin, it was American rations they gave us, but we didn't eat from Sunday to Tuesday, and then again when they fed us they gave us just a little bit to hold us out. I think they wanted us alive, but not too alive. They didn't want us escaping to the mountains, but there wasn't any way we could escape because we were still surrounded.

Interviewer: How much snow was there?

Veteran: Oh, it snowed every day. In other words, you don't see the ground in the winter. The only way you'd see the ground was if you dug a foxhole.

Interviewer: Did they let you keep your uniform on?

Veteran: Oh, yeah. As long as you're alive you can keep your uniform. When you're dead, they steal your shoes and everything. They leave the body out there naked, but you're dead. We saw bodies out there that they had taken their clothes off, had taken their shoes off, because the Chinese wore a quilt uniform. They claimed it was warm and it probably was, but they wore tennis shoes. You didn't see Army boots, and you wondered how they kept warm. Americans all wore regular shoes and what they called 'snow packs.' Snow packs were only good if you were standing still, not moving, because your feet would sweat. If you

walked and your feet would go to sweating, then your feet are gonna get cold, so most people wouldn't wear snow packs. The only reason you'd put 'em on is if you were in a foxhole and were gonna be there all night, you'd better have something to keep you warm, because you can't walk and your feet are gonna get cold. We wore lots of clothes. I had a windbreaker first, and on top of that I had a camouflage (which is a white sheet that they throw over you), fatigues, OD's (which are winter uniforms), a field jacket, and longjohns. You're so loaded with clothes, you don't even feel it, because it's so durned cold. The more clothes you have on, the better you're gonna feel. It's just not as easy to move with so much clothes, but at least you're warm. When I got hit, I remember I had what they called 'patch pockets,' and I had cigarettes in one pocket and cans of C-rations in the other pocket that I could eat. When I got hit, I remember it went through my C-rations. There was blood caught in the can's hatch, because that's where I got hit, and then it went to my leg. I thought maybe it had helped, because it had to go through food and metal cans. I don't know how those cans survived, because I know they got hit. I took them out of my patch pocket and threw them away, because I knew they were full of blood.

Interviewer: So how did you stop the bleeding?

Veteran: You know it was so cold that a serious would stop bleeding by itself. It's so durned cold, it would freeze. I just put a light tourniquet and didn't even tighten the knot, because they tell you if you tighten it, it has to be loose. I just turned it enough to where it would stay. I seen some guys with their bellies open, and they were still alive, and there was no way you could patch it. For one thing, there was nobody to patch it. I saw their guts just looking at you when you went by, but you couldn't see blood running, even though their gut was hanging, but it was so durned cold, but you're outside and the cold gets to you, and the snow is falling, and it's gonna freeze it. I saw a lot of guys that got hit, but they didn't pay much mind to it because they knew the cold would stop a lot of the bleeding. The two guys with their guts hanging, they were alive, but they weren't moving. The two guys that were with us when we got captured, their legs were so badly shot up that they couldn't move, but yet they weren't bleeding because they just laid there the whole time. They couldn't get up or walk—they had to be carried

out. Not even the Chinese would take ‘em to eat, because they knew that they couldn’t walk. The Chinese would ask if you are wounded, and you would say, “yes,” but the blood was already dried. It dried on the first and second layer of clothes that came in contact with your body, so he couldn’t see no blood. He pointed the rifle at you and told you take off your pants, I never seen that many pair of pants come off in seconds. I took ‘em off fast! After he seen it, he said to go ahead and sit down and stay there. That cold had a lot to do with our people getting either killed or hurt, because it’s so durned cold. It was so cold that sometimes you’d cry from the cold. We’d grab each other trying to stay warm. Even if you’re in a foxhole, you’re not going to be warm. You’ll be cold, because it was just that cold. It would snow every day. You’ve gotta be young to be able to take all of that. You don’t really want to take it, but you can. I know times it was too durned cold—it was just horrible. It was cold in Germany, but not as cold as Korea. I got to Germany in December, and it was cold as hell. When I got to England it was cold and snow. We used to take hikes there, and it was nothing but snow on the road. We didn’t stay in Scotland long—maybe a couple of days—and we stayed in some building, and then they shipped us to England, and then to France and Belgium, and that’s where I caught up with them.

Interviewer: When they gave you options about going home, did they give the other prisoners the option of going home, too?

Veteran: I don’t know what ever happened to the other ones, but I know they got out. As far as what happened to ‘em, I don’t know what happened to ones that couldn’t walk or to the ones that could walk.

Interviewer: So when did you finally make it back home to the United States?

Veteran: I made it back home sometime in March, because I got my discharge, I think, in May when I was in Brooks Army Hospital. That’s where I stayed most of the time.

Interviewer: Where were you when both of those wars ended? Were you still in Germany when World War II ended?



Veteran: When World War II ended, I was in Germany.

Interviewer: How did you find out? Did someone come and tell you?

Veteran: You practically know that it's about over. You're moving fast. You know the enemy's on the run, and you keep hearing that it's going to be over. We even heard when Roosevelt died. The day that he died we were in Germany, and we heard right away that he had died and that Truman had taken over. You got to hear right away.

Interviewer: When did you come back from Germany?

Veteran: What happened was there was still a war going on over in Japan. We had orders to go to the South Pacific, so when the war ended in Japan after they dropped that bomb, we was in the middle of the ocean heading that way. The reason we found out right away was that we was in a ship convoy, and they broke loose with their guns celebrating. We thought we was under attack when it was announced that the war in Japan was over. After we got our new orders, I landed in Boston instead of the South Pacific, so that was good.

Interviewer: When you learned of the end of the Korean War, where were you? Still in the hospital?

Veteran: No, no. I went in in 1950 when the war broke out, and I got out in '51. The war ended in '53. I had already gone back to work at Exxon by that time.

Interviewer: In either war, did you ever have any contact with civilians, and how did they treat you?

Veteran: In the Korean War, no, because we were always on the run. In World War II, when we went in we kind of had to look after the civilians, especially old people and young kids. People like that, because they didn't have anything to eat, and we had plenty to eat. In fact, I remember when we went into Germany, we had what they called a 'chow line' outside, and the German civilians didn't have anything to eat. We'd get our plate full of food, and you'd see these people at the end of the line with slop cans. You'd take more so than you could eat and give it to them. Young women and children and old people. Sometimes during the day,

they might assign you to a patrol job. The city was leveled, and these people were living underground in basements. When we were on patrol, sometimes we would run into civilians asking you for something to eat, asking for medication. I remember once this girl came out and said her grandmother was real sick, and I said, "Could we come in and look at her?", and she said, "Yes." We always carried candy and cigarettes and stuff like that. So we went in, and the old lady was laying there. The girl spoke good English, so we sat down and talked to her. Said there wasn't anything we could do for her because we weren't medics, just patrolling the street, but we told her we could get her some help and that they would pick her up. So we radioed for an ambulance, and medics came by, put her in the ambulance, and took her to the dispensary. The girl was real happy, because Grandma was gone, and they told her where she was gonna be. They told her she could come visit her whenever she wanted to. The girl had a little boy, so we gave him some candy and her, too. She said, "We don't have much to eat." I said, "How long are you gonna be in here?" She said, "We don't have any place to go." I said, "We'll be back by, and we'll bring you something." I asked her if she drank coffee, so we brought her some coffee, sugar, some potatoes. I said, "You'll have to go kind of slow on it for you and your brother, because this is something we ourselves had to steal for you." We just went by and took what we could get, and we would give it to people that wanted it. We had contact with civilians that needed help. Over there, they just moved from basement to basement. We went to see how the houses were built, and Hitler made sure if he had to run back, he was gonna be underground.

Interviewer: Did the idea of living in America improve after seeing how people overseas lived?

Veteran: Not just during the war, but even today. To me, Americans have it made. You see all the things that Americans have. When people complain about our houses, I say that we should see what other people do, like living underneath a bridge, and you will understand that we have a home. You go to other countries where I've been, and those people didn't have nothing. They didn't have nothing to eat, and then you're griping about crap like that. There's no call for it. "Yeah, but that's in the past." I say, "Yeah, and you ought to think about that. You could be

in the past.” Just think that our shores have already been attacked by civilian airplanes. If they can do that, they can do anything they want to, and then you’ll be sorry. I always thought about how other people, like in those places I’ve been, have to live—even with Fidel Castro in Cuba. When I was in the Merchant Marines, I used to go down there and see poor people out in the ocean. We couldn’t go in with our ship, because it was too big. We had to load onto barges, and people would come out there in little old things that looked like they would turn over and were asking for something to eat or for clothes for their children. These are the kind of people that need a hand. You could have a dictator with a government that don’t care how they die. That’s when you realize that you have it made. I went to two wars, and I still think I had it made, even though some of the things I had to do I didn’t like to do, but it was a job.

Interviewer: What did you miss most when you were away from home in both of the wars?

Veteran: Always my mother was first, and then I’d say Stella, because she was my girl at the time. Those were the two that I missed the most at that particular time. Of course I missed all of my family and friends, but the ones I missed the most was my mother and her, because I was going with her at the time I left. But when I didn’t think I was going to make it, I thought about my mother. I don’t know why everybody thinks of Mom first, but I think everybody did. Daddy might be there, but Mom has an edge for some reason. I don’t care whether you were a girl or a boy. Mom would have to be awful bad to come in second, she would always come in first for me. She’s the one that carried me for nine months, so I guess that’s one of the reasons you always run to her. {END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A—SIDE B BEGINS}

Interviewer: I know you couldn’t write when you were a POW in Korea. Could you write home during World War II?

Veteran: Yeah. I wrote home, I wrote to my brother who was in the South Pacific. In fact, when he got killed, I got a letter in Germany that he died from disease, and I couldn’t believe it. Nobody told me he had been killed. The government didn’t tell me, and my folks didn’t think I would know, but a good friend of mine asked me what the word *disease* meant.

Interviewer: When you returned from war, how did the people treat you? They knew you were a POW, but could you tell if they supported the war?

Veteran: No, not really. You might hear a little talk about it.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the armed forces impacted your life? I know being a POW was a tough experience to go through, but did it change your life for the better?

Veteran: It changed me, but not for the better. It has changed me a lot. When you think about it, you don't never want to talk about it, but when you do...I guess it depended on where you was at. You could see what happened there. You talk about it, and you see it, and then you remember friends that you didn't even know until you was with them, and then you saw 'em get killed. I met many guys after I got back from Korea that I knew in Fort Hood when we were there, but then we was separated. I met them at the hospital when they came back at the same time I did, and some of 'em came back without legs. It was sad when you saw some young guy that had had legs, and then you saw 'em with no legs. In fact I knew two of them. One was named Lucerno, and the other was named Molina, and they were both young and lost their legs. I was lucky, and you see a lot of others that were lucky like myself. I considered myself lucky. Maybe I survived because I was a POW. I don't know why I survived. The Chinese tried to get me killed, but maybe God had other plans.

Interviewer: So your time of service was...

Veteran: 1944 to you could say '51. According to my records, I had seven years, because they combined your reserve with your regular service.

Interviewer: Your locations of service would be where you told me you were stationed at, plus you were moving.

Veteran: All these places that I mentioned are listed on my discharge.

Interviewer: What did you achieve the most?

Veteran: In Germany, we won the war, and I was there when it ended. In Korea, we didn't lose the war, but we didn't win the war.

Interviewer: How did you feel about nothing being accomplished in Korea?

Veteran: I think we never should have gotten into it, because we weren't going to go through it. Truman fired MacArthur. MacArthur wanted to go across the border to Manchuria, and Truman wouldn't let him. We ended up not losing or not winning, but we're still fighting to see who's going to have the atomic bomb and who's not. Now you're giving them a chance to have that.

Interviewer: Do you have any additional comments that you'd like to make about being a war veteran?

Veteran: No, not really, other than after I got out I got a pension, and then they took it away from me. I didn't kick about it, because now I'm on Medicare. I thought maybe they needed it more than I do, but it never should have happened but it did. I know another guy that was overseas with me, and he got his taken away, too, and he didn't complain. He looked at it like 'I'm young; I can still work.' We was both working, but about a year ago he went back, and they gave him his pension back. In fact, they gave him a better pension than he had before, but look what he lost all through the years, so actually what he's getting is what he lost. From '57 to today is about fifty years, so what they gave me today would be better, but the time you have left, you won't recover what you lost over fifty years. I said that might make the government feel better, but you look at it as better than nothing. He asked me why I didn't apply for my pension to be reinstated, and I said for one thing I don't need it, or I would be there. But two or three other guys kept bugging me, and I still wouldn't do it. David, my boy, kept after me, and I told them no. He kind of got his feelings hurt about it, and Teresa kind of got after me about it, and said, "It's not because you need the money...it's because you have it coming." So before you know it, you know what happened? David makes an appointment for me. Now, I'm going through this to get reinstated, but I have to go through a lot of crap, including a psychiatrist. I said, "Now you're making me go through all this." He said, "Well, Dad, you've got it coming. Are you afraid of psychiatrists?" I said, "No, I just don't think I need one." I guess the government does that in all cases. I started going through that on the 19<sup>th</sup>—I had three appointments on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and then I have to go back for

three more on the 21<sup>st</sup> to see doctors and all that. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, they said to be prepared to stay all day. See, this is what I didn't want to go through. I went through this before when I first had a pension, and I said I didn't want to go through it again, but I guess in a way they're right. Why should you let 'em keep it? If I needed it, I'd have been out there, but veterans of other wars have told me I ought to do it, because they're gettin' a pension. By the time asked David what he thought, he'd already made an appointment for me. I guess I'll go through all this again, but I'm just not one that likes to go through all this crap. It might be worth it. It might not be, and I'm almost sure I'll get something, I just didn't want to do it. If I don't do it, all those people that came to me will call me a dummy, and if I do it, they'll probably be happy because I done it.

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW }