

# **VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

**Raymond F. Heger**

conducted by Deb Barrett

January 7, 2006

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library  
in partnership with the Library of Congress

## **Part 1: Introduction:**

**This interview is being conducted on January 7, 2006 at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, IL. My name is Deb Barrett. I am speaking with Raymond F. Heger. Mr. Heger was born on June 20, 1926 in Chicago, IL and now lives in Willowbrook, IL. We are also joined by his wife, Betty, who will be helping him with the interview.**

**Ray is a retired Director of Data Systems for the Belt Railway System of Chicago. He learned of the Veterans History Project through Judy O'Brien, another volunteer for this project. Mr. Heger has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project... Here is his story:**

## **Part 2: Entering the Military:**

**Where were you living when you first entered the service? What were you doing? What was your life like?**

I was-uh, I had graduated from high school in February, 1944 and became 18 years old in June of 1944 and in September I was drafted.

**You were drafted. O.K. So you were drafted, you went into the Army?**

Yes. At that time it seemed to me, while now if you recall, in of June 1944 was the beginning of ... the invasion of Europe, and it seemed that everybody that was drafted went into the Army. Very few, unless maybe you volunteered, you went into the Air Force or the Navy. I personally probably would like to have gone into the Navy, but it would have killed my father if I went into the Navy because he was an Army man, so I couldn't very well do that, so I was satisfied with that, and my Dad for some reason or another did not want me to enlist. He had enlisted back in 1914. He was a German immigrant, and he came over and actually joined the army right after he came here, and I guess for some reason he said I should never volunteer, so he said wait until you are drafted, so that's what I did.

**So you were 18 years old when you went in?**

I was 18 years old, yes.

**Were a lot of your friends being drafted?**

Some of my friends had already been in the service. ... Some of them had volunteered. One of my friends was a 4F, and he was very sad about that. And, but I was really by myself as far as going into the service. I was an only child, and I was very naive, and it was kind of scary because all of a sudden you're in with a huge bunch of people that you've never been with before, and you're away from home, which was a big, kind of a big deal.

**What did you know about why the draft was on, what was happening?**

... I had followed what the war was [about], and I was anxious to get into the service because I wanted to defend my country. I guess I followed it mostly, you know, through the radio, I don't think I read newspapers that much at that time, but I did follow it through the radio broadcasts and so forth, and of course my mother and father, they discussed it a lot and the effects of the

war, the rationing and that, you know, affected us all at that time.

**You said your father was a German immigrant?**

Yes.

**So he must have had some very difficult feelings about what was happening.**

Well, he uh, it was sort of a difficult thing for him, I think, because - this is not an interview about my Dad, but it's kind of interesting because he also worked for the railroad. And one day, and this was before I went into the service, one day two FBI agents came to our house, and my Dad was so proud of the fact that the FBI was interested -

*Well, he had gotten his citizenship papers by then.*

I never thought about the fact that they might have been interested because he was a German immigrant but what they really was looking for, is for him, because he had been in the service for over four years, I think like six years, and they were looking for somebody to let them know if anything went wrong in the railroad, so he was sort of, well I don't want to say a spy, but he was an observer for the FBI during the service, which I thought was kind of neat. So he was involved in that. He was a volunteer for Civil Service, he was involved in that, and so those kind of things.

**There was a lot of awareness in your house.**

A lot of things going on that I was involved with. He was a real patriot.

*Tell her about the language.*

Oh yeah. As a matter of fact, I think my Dad had an accent, but he would not let us speak German in our house. He said, we're in America, we speak American. And, I'll have something to say about that later on, because I thought it was interesting.

**So you were drafted, you went into the Army? Where were you inducted?**

I was inducted in downtown Chicago. They had a mass [gathering], and I can't remember exactly where it was, but I think it was near City Hall, and they had everybody gathered there, and after the induction we marched over to the North Shore Railroad and got on the train and went up to Fort Sheridan.

**O.K.**

I was in Fort Sheridan for maybe three days, four days at the most. Did not, um, trying to think now, yes, we did get a uniform, not a full uniform, but enough to wear to go to the next spot.

**O.K.**

And so from there we got on the train to go to, we went to Chicago, got on a train again, did not know where we were going, but finally ended up in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

**O.K.**

Somewhere, I think in Fort Sheridan, we took a number of tests, and I don't know if that had any bearing on it, but it ended up that some of us went into the Army Engineers, and those of us that were that went to Fort Leonard Wood. The others went to wherever, I don't know, but the ones that were engineers, or were going to be engineers, were sent to Fort Leonard Wood. And-uh, so then, of course, all through this there's many examinations. I don't think we got any shots until we got to Fort Leonard Wood, no, that's right. When we finally got to Fort Leonard Wood, we were assigned to a barracks and then got further clothing to make up, you know. I wore glasses at the time, we had to have prescriptions made, make the glasses, and fitted for glasses for a gas mask. I can remember that, that kind of scared me, - I'll have a story about that - but that was the beginning of it.

**And you said it was kind of scary to be dealing with all this.**

Well, yeah, you know, we had talked with my Dad about poison gas and stuff like that and the idea of having a gas mask, and that was one of things they issued to you was a gas mask, and of course everybody had to try that on, and when you try it on you can't breathe too well and that's, as I said, if I have to wear this thing, I'm going to be in trouble. But anyhow that was one of things that was kind of scary, at the very beginning, the idea of having to wear a gas mask.

**Right.**

**That you were good at marching. What types of tests did you have to take?**

Well, I took - they were almost like an SAT test, you know, the different intelligence tests, they developed your IQ and stuff like that.

**They looked for what you were good at?**

Yeah. Now I had been in the ROTC in high school.

**Army?**

And I thought, "Oh, that's going to be great for me," but really it didn't do me any good other than I knew how to march.

**Was it Army ROTC?**

Yeah, that's what it was at that time. And that's really what I guess I learned in ROTC.

**That you were good at marching.**

Left or right foot, which was my right foot and that sort of stuff. From that point of view it was kind of tough.

**So you got to Fort Leonard Wood on a train?**

Yes.

**Was it only troops, or was it a passenger train?**

No, as I recall it, it was like a troop train, I don't believe there were any civilians on the train at

that time. The train did not really go to Fort Leonard Wood. It went to a neighboring town, and I can't remember the name of the town. Then you took a bus. That's what you always had to do when you went on furlough or something like that. You had to go either by train or you went by bus from Fort Leonard Wood to St. Louis. St. Louis was the biggest city closest to it. There was a series of buses that brought us to some station in Fort Leonard Wood.

**How long did the trip take from Chicago to Missouri?**

Let's see, I think - it felt like forever...

**I bet**

...but I think it was, maybe, maybe eight hours.

**So what did you do while you were on the train for eight hours?**

Pardon?

**What did you do to pass the time?**

Nothing! Absolutely nothing.

**Talk with the other guys?**

It's funny, but it seems when you are in a situation like that you sort of buddy up with people. The bad part about that of course, is you don't know if you're going to be together again or not. And as I recall, anybody that was on the train was not in my unit. It was interesting, the makeup of the units. At that time because of the invasion they were taking draftees up to 40 years old, and some of them were married. I would say that at least 50 to 60% of the men that I was in a barracks with were over 30 years old. And I was an 18-year old kid.

**So these were old men to you?**

These were old men. Right. There was one other boy, I guess that's what you would call them at that time. His name was Clifton Hack and I was fat, a big guy, and so was he. And everybody else kind of looked after us because they knew we were going to have problems with the physical training, etc., and the sergeants that we had, that we ended up with, were people that had already been overseas and came back and were on the training group. And they were also kind of tough old cops, and they were tough on us, and I'm glad they were, because we weren't used to that. Cliff or I, neither one of us, you know, we were an only child, pampered, so these guys were tough on us.

**Part 3: Basic and Infantry Training:**

**Tell me what your training was like. What did you do?**

The training was a lot of calisthenics, the basic training, when we first started.

**A lot of physical training.**

We did a lot of calisthenics, a lot of marching, and I can see what the reason for it was, for

discipline, to learn to act together as a group and-uh, so we did an awful lot of marching. They had different locations that we went to do that. I would say that was the biggest part of our training was that. Later on, of course, we got into more things, such as we procured a rifle, the rifles that we got were brand new. They came in a barrel, filled with grease. You pulled the uh,

### **The barrel?**

barrel out of the barrel and it was just loaded, and what they did, and I could never understand it, why they did that, they had two huge 55 gallon drums of water with soap in it, boiling, and you dipped the rifle in that thing to get rid of what they called [COSMOLING?] and it was a grease and of course, it preserved the rifles. Well, it took us hours and hours and hours to get that stuff out of that rifle, and you would bring it to the sergeant and show him, and he would say, "Go back and work on it again!" You did this I don't know how many times, and of course they emphasized that it was so important for you to have a clean rifle, and we did a lot of that sort of thing.

### **Which is why they package it dirty!**

And I said, why don't we just take turpentine to do that? But no, they wouldn't do that. So anyhow, that was a big thing, just to get our rifles prepared, and of course we spent a lot of time disassembling them, assembling them, loading them, unloading them, always do routines for safety, so you don't shoot each other. Even before we ever shot the rifle we went through a lot of education, which I think was very good, because most of us, like myself, never shot a gun in my life, and I'm sure that most of the guys that were there did not either, so that was sort of an important part.

### **So you did physical training, the calisthenics, and things, you did the rifles, what else did you do the training on?**

We did a lot of marching.

### **Well, you were good at that, you said.**

We started off with maybe a one mile hike, got up to five miles, we got up to where we would go out and what they would call bivouac which is sort of the setup of camp. Luckily they would bring you your meals. We didn't have to...there were a couple of times we did though. They had what was called at that time was called C-rations. What they were, were cans of SPAM, which was great, cheese which was great, stew - so-so.

### **Did they have a cookie or something?**

Hard crackers, instant coffee, cigarettes. What you would do is go out in the field, make a meal, then march back. We did a lot of that. We did work with a compass. They did it in the daytime. Well, this was in the Mark Twain National Forest where the Fort was located, so there was lot of forest, and we would go out and march someplace, and they had it pegged out so that you would take a certain azimuth (which was a degree), and you would go to a certain post or you were supposed to find a post and there was usually an officer or a non-com there that would sign that you made that, you know, and then you would go to the next one. Well, I can remember that we did that at night. No lights. And I don't think anybody found any of the places where they were supposed to go. That was kind of hilarious. I think we were all just kind of wandering around in

the woods, and it's surprising that we found each other at the end of that. That was kind of fun. We really got a big kick out of that, you know. And the non-coms that were in charge of this were frustrated, because, you know, all the training that they give us about how we were supposed to do this, and I don't think any of us got it right. Well, I guess it was important for us to know that, you know, but I don't think we did too well on that.

### **How long did your basic training last?**

I think it was six weeks. And, in that, of course, we also got to qualify with a rifle.

We did not use any other weapons other than the M-1 rifle, and there was three categories, I think: marksman, sharpshooter, and expert, and I was a sharpshooter, so I did fairly well with the rifle, and there was a lot involved in doing that, a lot of training in that part of it. And we also, one of the things after all of those calisthenics and that to toughen us up, and incidentally I weighed, I think I weighed 220 pounds when I went in. At the end of the six weeks I weighed 218 pounds, I lost two pounds, but I lost six inches off my waist.

### **So it turned into muscle.**

Yeah, it turned into muscle. And Clifton Hack, the other guy I talked about, I don't think he lost any weight, and I don't think he lost anything around his waist either. One of the things the two of us, after the calisthenics lot of times we would go to an obstacle course, and the obstacle course was jumping over a fence, crawling under a fence, the biggest thing was going up a wall with a rope. Now, I would always get at least halfway, and they give you three tries, and I think finally at the end, I finally was able to make it over that wall.

### **How did that feel when you finally made it over?**

Oh, yeah, that really made me feel so good to be able to do that, and I got a story about that too. Anyhow I don't think Cliff ever made it over the wall, but at the end of the training, our sergeants got the two of us into their room and told us, "You know, we were pretty tough on you guys, but you did all right," and they were satisfied that we had went through our training O.K.

### **That must have sounded pretty good.**

Yeah, that was very good. One of the pictures that I've got there is right after I was in training and much thinner than I was when - I should have given you a picture before and after, so I did lose a lot of, I didn't lose weight but I lost inches.

### **So what's your story about making it over the wall?**

You said you had a story about making it over the wall.

Later in training I ended up with combat engineers. What happened is, after -- I better lead up to that. After basic training then we were sent in about - I would say 50% of the people who had trained for six weeks, all of a sudden about half of them were gone. And what they had done is - you remember this is sort of near December of '44 in the Big Bulge, and there was big German uprising. Well they sent all these guys, half of these guys, into the Infantry. They sent them overseas. I missed that.

**And do you know how they decided?**

I don't know how they decided. If it had something to do with tests or something, I don't know. But anyhow I was assigned to go a clerk's school and that was another six weeks' training.

**And where was that?**

That was at Fort Leonard Wood also. I was through five weeks of that, and I got infectious mononucleosis, and I had to go to the hospital and-uh they gave me sulfa and the next day I felt like a million bucks. It really worked. But the following day I broke out into a rash...

**A rash. An allergic reaction. Yeah.**

and they didn't know what that was, because this was new.

**Right.**

So they don't know if I got chicken pox, small pox, a social disease. So what they did is, they put me in isolation. They put me in a room, it was not in a hospital, but it was like an orderly room with a bed, all by myself, and I was there for over a month. And I never wanted to get out of some place as bad as what that was, and fortunately I had a very nice nurse that took care of me. And I had to laugh, I corresponded with my parents, and they corresponded back, but every time I got correspondence, it was always burnt around the edges because what they did is, they put that correspondence in the oven.

**To kill any germs?**

Yeah, so that you didn't carry disease. I thought that was weird. But anyhow that was one of the things. So what happened then is I finally got out of the, I faked a sore throat. I thought, I just can't sit, you can get in there so easy, but they never let you out, so I faked a sore throat. I went to the doctor, he said there's nothing wrong with you: Duty, so I got out. Well they didn't really know what to do with me, I guess because I was trained as a clerk. Well, there was a group that were training in combat engineers, so they put me with this group. So now here I laid around for six weeks, and these guys are hardened people, and they put me in with the combat engineers. Well, actually it was interesting because there was some things that they did that were really scary and-uh but I was with them. We learned about explosives, set off dynamite, we learned about mines, and how to disarm mines. We built bridges, chopped down trees, blew up trees, and this is one of the things that they did, they also taught you to fight in a village. They had a mockup village, and you went in there and it was supposed to be booby-trapped, and this was to teach you how, what to do when you get into a situation like that.

**Right.**

Now this is where this rope thing comes in. The very first building that we go to, you have to go into the second floor. Alright? There's a rope hanging down from the second floor and of course we were in full field dress-

**Right.**

- field pack, steel helmets, rifle, the whole thing - the very first thing I did when got onto the rope - my hat slipped off and fell into the building on the first floor. This is a true story. When I finally got up to - and I was the last guy - when I finally got up to the top floor, and instead of stairs what they had, they had planks, like a ramp, over the stairs so you went down. Well, not knowing, dummy me, not knowing, they had the very last step, there's a step at the end and that's booby trapped. Well, the guy in front of me, there was one other guy that was as slow as I was, and he went down first. He somehow got his ankle twisted and twisted his ankle, and now I don't know if he broke it or not, but anyhow he sort of went down in a heap, and he hit that bottom thing and this booby trap, well there was just this loud sound. Well I went down to help the guy. Wouldn't you know there was a nail sticking up. I didn't hurt myself, but I ripped my pants all the way from my shoe all the way up to my belt, and I still haven't got my helmet. So I yelled out the door, "Sergeant, Sergeant, somebody's hurt." While he's coming over, I got to go get my helmet. I set off three booby traps, so I should have been dead three times. But I finally got my helmet back. Now when the sergeant came over [?????] we have to take him to the hospital, and he sent for an ambulance and he said, "You stay with him," and so I did, and I went in the ambulance with the guy to the hospital, so when we get to the hospital they said, "Well, go back to your barracks." Now the barracks was two miles away. I've got my pack, his pack, my rifle, his rifle, and I'm split down the back, right? Well, it just so happened this was on a Saturday that we did this, and there was a general inspection in our compound, and as I walked into the compound who should be coming down this way but the staff of officers that were inspecting that day, right? Now I got - how do I salute with these rifles, these packs, so finally what I did is I sort of, you know, I bet everyone of them was laughing. I was trying to keep away from them so they wouldn't see my rear end was hanging out. I tell you that was quite an experience. And-uh, well I finally made it back to my barracks and changed my clothes, and I never did see that man again. Now he must have broke his ankle or something because he never came back to the barracks, you know. And in the meantime right after that then, there was another opening for a clerk's school, so I started all over again. I took the six weeks all over again. Now one of the things, and I always kid about that, one of the things I really did learn in the Army was how to type because that was one of the things they taught you. Well, I went through it twice, so I was twice as good as anybody else.

#### **Part 4: Duty Assignment**

##### **So you how long were you at Fort Leonard Wood?**

Well actually I ended up, I was almost there two years. But what happened is, after the training, after the clerk's training, I became a company clerk in a training company.

**O.K.**

Now the people I was training with, and this is ironic to me, the people that I had been training with initially for the five weeks, they all ended up in the invasion of the Phillipines.

**Oh, wow!**

And I was back at Fort Leonard Wood. So I guess, again, I don't know if they knew what to do with me or not, but anyhow I ended up as a company clerk in a training company, a basic

training company. And I was there for - until 1946, I think it was in May or something like that in May of 1946, so it was almost like one and a half years that I was there. And, I mean it was great that I was there, you know, but I missed going overseas.

**How did you feel when you found that everyone else had gone overseas? Were you relieved that you were back home? Were you thinking you should have been with them?**

Well, I would like to have been with them. As a matter of fact, while I was company clerk there was an opportunity to volunteer to go overseas and take back prisoners. This was after V-E Day, and I volunteered for that. I thought I got to get overseas, and-uh but somebody else took my place, so I didn't get to go. In fact it was my first sergeant who was my - he's the one that went and left me, and I was like acting first sergeant, so I never got the opportunity to go.

**So you were drafted - what happened after the company clerk?**

O.K., after the company clerk and VE Day had been gone, and also finally VJ Day and for some reason they shipped - or gave us orders to go to Fort Lewis, Washington.

**Washington State?**

Yes, I was still a corporal at that time. Just before we left Fort Leonard Wood I was promoted to a sergeant, but it wasn't really a sergeant, it was a T-4 which is a sergeant's stripes with a T underneath.

**And what's the T for?**

Well, it's like a technical sergeant.

**O.K.**

We ended up, I ended up in Fort Lewis, Washington, and I think I've got that on my resume there. But I was only there from, I think, I think it was like three months and then I was, we had the, we could elect to be either discharged there or discharged back in Chicago. Well, I decided to be discharged in Washington because then I'd get a free train ride back to Chicago.

**What did you do while you were in Fort Lewis?**

Ended up in a headquarters unit as a teletype operator.

**O.K.**

They taught me how to do that while I was there, and they had two people for every job. They really didn't know what to do with all the people they had left at that time.

**Right.**

So they assigned me to someone who had already done that, and he taught me how to run a teletype machine, and we ran all kinds of messages, coded messages etc., and it ended up that we worked every other day. One day we'd work, one day we'd play golf, one we'd work, one day we'd play golf, so it was really rough duty, you know. But it was beautiful country out there. We had the opportunity to go to Vancouver, B.C. with some buddies, and that was a beautiful city,

and we met some sailors there that were on a destroyer that was in port, and they invited us on the ship for coffee which was kind of neat, and so that was kind of a nice experience too. All in all, my experiences were all kind of positive. I really didn't have a hard time in the Army at all.

**Right.**

I met some wonderful people.

**Did you make any friends that you still have?**

No, all the ones that I was in the service with I no longer have contact with. After the war there was, this Clifton Hack that I mentioned before, he was from (I'm trying to think of the name of the town, the capital of Michigan, where Michigan State is).

**Ann Arbor?**

*Ann Arbor, isn't that the capital?*

**No. The University of Michigan is in Ann Arbor, not Michigan State.**

Well, anyhow I went to visit him, and I took my first plane ride to visit him. Later on then I went to another very dear friend, fact is I brought him to my house, our home, at Christmas time for a Christmas because he couldn't get away, and we had Christmas at home, and then I went - and he lived in Providence, Rhode Island, and I got to see all the historic things around Boston and Providence and Concord and all of that, he took me around, that was pretty nice.

**Part 5: Discharge**

**Let's go back to the day you were discharged.**

Yeah.

**You were discharged in Fort Lewis.**

Yes.

**And you said they were going to give you a train ride back to Chicago.**

Yes.

**When you were discharged, were you happy about it, were you sad?**

Oh, yes, by that time I was ready to --

**You'd had enough.**

They sort of promoted the idea of going into the Reserves, and if I went into the Reserves, they'd make me a full sergeant without the T, and I guess from my Dad's influence again I decided not to do that, and I think if I would have, I would have been in the Korean War. I missed that. By that time I was married, so I didn't, wasn't in the Korean War, but they did give us that

opportunity to be in the Reserves, and I decided not to.

**There was a lot of encouragement to do that?**

Yes, a lot of them did that.

**O.K. so you decided not to go into the Reserves. You went home. Did you tell your parents you were coming home? Did you wait till you got there?**

Yes, they were aware I was coming home. Of course, my mother was elated and so was my Dad. Incidentally while I was in Fort Leonard Wood my Dad, I had the opportunity to let my Dad come down to stay with me, and I had my own private room because I was on the cadre as they call it, I had my own room, and my Dad actually stayed with me for about, I think, three or four days, and of course he just loved that. And it was a great experience for me, and for him too, you know, to back to do that. That was real fun.

**Well, good. So you went back home. Was it a regular train this time, a regular passenger train?**

No, this was, uh, yeah, actually what I did, because my Dad was a railroad man...

**Right.**

What I did when I went to Fort Lewis, I went, there was two routes to get to the west coast, and I took the northern route, and I forget which one that was, I think it was the Northern Pacific that went out.

**Um-huh.**

And on the way back I took the other route, so I took both routes. I took advantage of...

**Nice sightseeing tour.**

Yeah, what is it a three and a half days trip, you know. It was beautiful.

## **Part 6: After Service**

**So what happened when you got home? What did you do?**

Really nothing! I didn't get a job, and I had decided, and I really had no intention of ever going to school or to college, but I thought well, you know, I'd like to get in, I think I'd like to get in because they had the GI Bill, and I said you know, I really ought to try to take advantage of that. Well, the schools were so crowded with people, and I finally decided you know I think what I'll do, I'll just take a course at night school, and I wanted to stay home because my mother took care of my grandmother for many, many years, and I just felt that I should be at home with her, because she had kind of a hard life, and it just so happened that IIT had an opening at night for a Math class. I was pretty good at Math, so I thought well I'll take that, so I did. I took a Math class. The next semester I took another Math class and I said, well, I think I can take another class so I took another night course. And before you know it I got a letter that said well, you're

admitted to IIT during the day, and so that's what I did. I went to school. I didn't have a job. We got some - and my parents were great to me, you know. Now I'm what, 20, almost 21 years old, right?

**Right.**

Never had a job. And, so I went to school, and later on found a job with, didn't finish school, didn't...

**How many other - what kind of courses did you take in addition to Math?**

Engineering, Chemical Engineering courses. Went through...the first two years are really all the same as far as Engineering is concerned, Science, Chemistry, Math, English, Philosophy, those sort of things, and so I went through all that, decided I wanted to be a chemical engineer and probably the biggest mistake I made because that was probably the toughest of all the courses. I did get through most of the chemical, chemistry courses. Very, very difficult and so I finally got, it was getting too much for me, got a job with the railroad. It just so happened that the railroad was going from seven days a week or six days a week to five days a week, so they needed more people, and so I did that.

**Right.**

And this was the same railroad that my Dad worked for, and so it ended up I was there for a couple of years, and the company got into data processing, and I found my niche. I was pretty good at it, at least I thought I was, and I guess they did too because I ended up as their Director of Data Systems and Computers.

**O.K. And along the way you met Betty?**

Somewhere, somehow, yes.

*At a church social.*

Went to, went to that Lutheran church all my life, on 63rd and Washtenaw in Chicago, and sort of went to church before the war. After the war, I really felt there was something about the fact that I came back safe, and I thought that I owed something to my God to at least attend church. Well, it ended up I was a Sunday School teacher, I was in choir, I was in a Youth Group, and there was a beautiful girl with auburn hair that also was in those things, so that's where we met, in church.

**Very nice. So you stayed in the Chicago area, now, really your entire life.**

Yeah. All my life we stayed in Chicago. Later on what we did is, in fact our first home was in Chicago, but we had always wanted to live in the western suburbs, and we ended up finding a place in LaGrange that was owned by a wonderful man -

*one of those old big residences.*

and we acquired a 8-room residence in almost downtown LaGrange, and that's where we raised our children.

**How many kids?**

I've got three girls

*and then our mothers eventually came to live with us, too.*

**Both at the same time?**

*First, my mother, then his.*

So we always had, there was only, there were five girls, and me and the cat.

*Even the dog was a female.*

We were the only males in the whole place.

*They were spoiled to death.*

*But we needed a big enough house .....???? My mother was alone for a while, then she came to live with us, and then she passed away, and it was a couple of years, and then Ray's Dad died, and his mother worked, then she finally retired, and then as she got older we felt that she could come so it was kind of nice, you know, we enjoyed it there, and now we couldn't afford the house, in the historic district you know? We enjoyed it, we had -. We did go to Wisconsin for a while. We had a little cottage up there, and then we made it into a house, and then we stayed there for a while, and then we came back. We like it here though.*

**So, so, uh, you've been settled down, you've been with - . Sounds like you've had a pretty steady career, and then you retired.**

Yes.

**And you said you did keep in touch a little bit with some of the people, but not any more?**

No. I drifted away from that. I corresponded for a while but with this fellow from Providence, Rhode Island, but then we cut that off, so I really don't, haven't had for years now.

**Do you belong to any veteran's organization?**

I did belong to the American Legion, and, mostly because of my Dad. My Dad was a commander, he went through all the offices, you know, and so I joined because, well, I think he wanted me to, but I really wasn't into that so much and-uh, so I finally drifted off, and when my Dad died, that was the end of it of course so-uh I've never been into any organizations, you know.

**What type of impact did your military service have on your life?**

I think I became a man from that, because of the discipline, the camaraderie that I had with people, I think I, I learned about people, and I think that helped me with my job later on in life, and the discipline I think helped going to school, and also in my job because my job required a lot of book learning.

**Uh-huh.**

And-a, I really concentrated on that, and I think it was because of my service, that helped me with that. I never, I never really - how do I want to say it - I - because of the fact that I was not in combat, that always kind of bothered me because you know there are so many people that have been touched by, affected by combat, and what they've seen and that, and-uh, I was lucky not to be into that, and so I really have a lot of empathy for veterans, even today, you know, what they're going through today, and I get very angry at people when they don't understand that you have to, you have to be there for your country when it's in need. It's not right all the time, like in Vietnam. I think it was wrong for us to be there, but, our country said we have to be there, so we should have been there, and we were, and-uh so those kind of things I think from a political side I guess you would say, I'm more of a hawk than I am a dove for that reason, because of my service, but I felt - I didn't go to combat, but I was there if they needed me. You know, I don't know how I would react if I was really there, but I was available.

**Right. O.K. Before we go off record, is there anything else you would like to share with us?**

[Mr. Heger has requested that a portion of the tape be deleted.]

**Anything else?**

No, I think I'm done.

**O.K., well thank you very much and we're signing off.**