

**VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations**

**Interview with**

**Michael Yurchak**

**Conducted by Deb Barrett**

**November 27, 2015**

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**Corrections to transcript are noted by square bracket [ ] for additions and an  
ellipsis ... for text that has been removed either due to inaccuracy or at the  
request of the veteran.**

**This interview is being conducted on Friday November 27, 2015 with Mr. Mike Yurchak at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, Illinois. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Yurchak was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1925 in Gary, Indiana. He is a retired accountant for the Broderick Teaming Company, a trucking company in Chicago. He learned of the Veterans History Project through his son and daughter-in-law, John and Carol Yurchak who saw an article in the library newsletter. Mr. Yurchak has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is his story.**

**Mike, where were you living just before you entered the service? What was your life like at that time?**

I was going through high school in Gary, Indiana and got notice that I'm being drafted to go to service [WW II]

**So, you were drafted. And you said you were how old, eighteen?**

I was eighteen, a senior in high school when I got that notice however, I was fortunate to be deferred six months and I was not committed to go in immediately in December but with the deferment, I graduated from high school with my cap and gown in June. Then I had orders to go on August 16<sup>th</sup> to the bus terminal in Gary to go to service to be inducted [at camp Atterbury, Indianapolis, IN].

**Was anyone else in your family in the military at that time?**

No, I was the only one, the baby of the family with four sisters.

**How did your family react when you got your notice?**

They accepted it but like everybody else, others were also called in. During wartime, we didn't have a choice so we automatically, well, we said a prayer and said we're on our way. That's the way things were.

**Were any of your friends drafted when you were?**

Yes, the thing was during that six month period I was deferred, I had the opportunity to Officers Candidate School in the Air Corps which I was hoping I could accomplish because I love airplanes. I passed the exam with twenty-six individuals in high school and we went to Chicago for a physical. One eye was great on me, it was 20/20, the other was 20/40. They said, "Sorry, Mike, we can't accept you." It broke my heart but then I just waited patiently until I had orders to go to the bus station, I'm going into the Army.

**Instead of the Air Corps, you went into the Army. When you got on that bus, where did it take you?**

Camp Atterbury in Indianapolis, Indiana. That's where we started, changed, they gave us a uniform and everything else and semi-prepared us to become "Soldier of Tomorrow" which I

was. After we changed uniforms and everything, they shipped us from there to Fort Riley, Kansas.

**You were at Camp Atterbury for what, a couple of days?**

Just one day. Yes, we went through the whole screening of who we were, where we were from, where we were going to go. You're on a list somewhere there and you gotta be ready to accept Army uniforms and dispose of, I think they boxed your civilian clothes and they sent it back to your home address.

**Did they do a physical at that point?**

Oh, yes. They would give you a shot or two. Yes, I'd say two different shots they gave us before we were ready to go. To make sure we were genuine.

**You got your clothes; you got a pack.**

Right. They gave you a burlap; they gave you, I think, an extra shirt, pants, minimal things, extras to cover up whatever you'd need, replacements.

**You were sworn in?**

Yes, definitely as soldiers of The United States of America. The word was Ft. Riley, Kansas and everybody just kind of looked at each other immediately as if it were going to be a horse cavalry or something. But we found out once we got there that there's two, a horse cavalry and mechanized. I got lucky, I went to the mechanized with vehicles. The horse cavalry I assume probably went training to Japan. We didn't know exactly, we never got no basic information; we just went with the flow. We got instructions, "Do this, you're going here maybe here" and so forth, regular procedure.

**You got to Fort Riley by bus, by train?**

I want to say we went by train and they dropped us off ...

**Was it a troop train or was it like...?**

Yes, troop train. I don't know how many, fifty or a hundred were on a train and that was normal.

**Do you remember how long it took you to get there?**

Just a few hours.

**Just a couple of hours, not long.**

From Indianapolis to Fort Riley, Kansas. That's just past Kansas City, out in the open area.

**All the fields.**

Oh, cold in the winter. That's when I was training, seventeen weeks. They send you right to the barracks, which had double bunks, two story buildings, you know.

**Were you on the top or the bottom?**

I was on top. It was fine. They gave you a duffle ...

**Foot locker?**

Foot locker, yeah. It was nice. You got polished. You don't throw your stuff in there, you fold it neat and everybody got that way more so every day. It was nice, you take your socks, you roll it, it's nice, uniform. You put two, three socks amazing. That was the nice thing. It made you realize how important hygiene... take care of yourself and so forth.

**And if you forgot to do that?**

Well, not really, sometimes things happen. We got up early in the morning, five o'clock or something, had to go exercise.

**How did they wake you up?**

I think they had an alarm or a horn, I don't remember exactly, enough to just everybody jump out. You had to jump out. You had to get on your way.

**When you got up, how long did you have to get yourself together before you had to ...?**

Not much. You tried to make it as quick as possible, fifteen minutes or so. I carried the banner for seventeen weeks to lead the fellas. All the fellas had to take their M-1 rifle with them to march every morning to exercise. I had the banner which was a triangle red flag, I think it was. I'd get myself out there immediately because I had to stand there because they had to line up behind me.

**What was on the banner?**

Just plain. Like a red banner,

**It was for your...?**

No. It was just to signify that's where you had to get behind the banner and line up and get ready to march out.

**How was it decided that you would take the banner?**

I don't know. The Sergeant, he just ...

### **Here, take it.**

Take it, Mike, O.K. and I didn't refuse it. I thought maybe I didn't have to lug maybe a rifle on my shoulder. I enjoyed doing it. We walked along the edge of the sidewalk, street, sidewalk all the way down wherever there was a path. We always had to march out and do our exercise for an hour, forty-five minutes do all our things, get back to the barracks and from there we'd go for breakfast.

### **Did you go to breakfast as a unit?**

Well there was one breakfast right out near the street, a kitchen. Individual soldiers would get KP duty. I never had except one day the Sergeant approached me. It was about ten below zero. He said, "Wouldn't it be nice you want a little experience to stay in there?" And he says, "You know how cold it is, get a little break?" He was kind of kind to me. I says, "No, that's O.K., I can do it." Because he did that daily. He says, "Go ahead, go and take it." O.K. so, I broke down and I went in the kitchen and all the windows were frosted inside. It was cold. And I don't know, KP duties ... you do this. In the kitchen they want you to do some adjustment to put here. But you know everybody had their chow in their mess gear, their own. They always had two barrels of water ... one was some kind of solution to clean your food and the other to rinse it out. That was very important. I still have it today... mess gear they call ... with a knife and fork and you snap it apart. I lived that way with that for almost two years... We had a nice turn out for everybody but one evening, late, nine, ten, it was dark but the lights weren't off yet. One individual across the way from where I slept, his name was Campbell... Unfortunately, he began epileptic fits; I don't know if you know what that is.

### **Epileptic.**

Yeah, and he was foaming and I felt so hurt for him. You know what I mean. He was a very kind of guy like a regular army man, you know, very distinct. I was hoping it wasn't so ... but they released him. I don't think he came back. Everybody else was almost perfect.

### **After breakfast, what did you do? What was a typical day? Classes?**

We had to go back out to different areas. Experience. A building, way off, where we dismantled our M-1 rifles, to know how to put them together, take them apart. Thirty [fifty five] caliber machine guns, that was the basic one. Then there was another day and in between with the exercise after that before we came back for meals. Then we got into armored cars which has the thirty-seven millimeter gun. That's very serious because your throw in a cylinder that's maybe eight to ten inches long, you gotta flip it in there where the chamber immediately slams up. One individual, I understand, got a couple of fingers caught and I don't know how bad it was but we heard he did. Anyhow, that's how you learn the training in service but you gotta get acquainted with the equipment.

### **Had you handled arms before? Had you handled a gun before you went into the Army or was this your first experience?**

No, I never had guns, slingshots. No, I was eighteen years old; I just came out of high school.

**So, you never went hunting or anything before?**

No, of course not. To this day, I'm not that excited about weapons either. You know, we don't know what tomorrow brings with all the problems we're having. Anyway, everything was scheduled and new experience but you learned pretty quick at that age level and that's good. It's so important like we teach youngster coming through school, all these different things. I see where today, I understand, I have grandchildren; they don't go into high school like we had what they call a drafting. We had wood shop, metal shop I had for six months. It was very interesting for me. My life, not only sitting at a desk as an accountant, at home I liked to do a little plastering work, a little handy kind of thing and maybe little plumbing thing. I enjoyed doing it but I could do it. Taught me that in high school – six months, I had one semester. Typing, sixty-five words a minute. Ain't that nice? Today, I'd probably do six words a minute. So clever these things we have today, all these apparatus. The keyboard, I understand it's the same as it was in 1812 but it's like two inches square. I like the regular, I think I had an Underwood and I could go blasting around with the keys with my regular fingers it was as if I was going to play piano.

**You were doing your basic training. Did you have classes? You were talking doing guns and things like that but did you have classes, like classroom work?**

No, we would just go to a separate building where they do that and at the tables take the equipment... and open them up, take them apart, dismantle them. We always had an instructor who was explaining, step by step what to do in case you had a problem. Then we had to clean the barrel thoroughly and maintain or keep your eye on your item as you had it in the barracks throughout the whole session, too, besides just this one event. This is the weapons situation. Then we would go to the shooting ... [range].

**Firing Range?**

Firing Range and these signs are big. Once I was able to go in the back there to move the signs around. It's very interesting. You get down in the pit. There were dozens of us because there are about fifteen or twenty signs.

**Targets?**

Targets. We had to shift them, bring them down, change them. I had one day I did that. Still you do your training; you fire your M-1. We didn't have only basic M-1 but the basic for our Mechanized Cavalry is a carbine. It's a smaller rifle than an M-1. That's the only thing we carried like overseas, a carbine not an M-1. Infantry classified M-1, that was it, but we learned the M-1 when we were in basic training. So again, the carbine is the one we had there and also when we were overseas so we had carbine with us. There's time when we would dismount when we were getting sniper fire. Take our carbine and jump out and go along side the wall.

**That's when you were in Europe?**

Yeah. I'll tell you incidents.

**We'll get there. How long was your basic training?**

Seventeen weeks.

**During that time were you able to call home, write home?**

There were no restrictions. Mine wasn't as much as maybe missed home but... you're duty was there and while you were there you followed all instructions. I had just a mother; I lost my dad when I was thirteen years old. I had a mother and two sisters there and one of the sisters stayed in Washington with her husband that was in the Navy. So, I just had the three, two sisters and a mother. I'm sure they were real dedicated and worried themselves to death almost. You know, "What's happening, Mike, at camp?" It was just the idea, it was available... Our day sessions went day in, day out, day in, day out. It went fast. And look, I'm sitting here almost ninety, I can't believe it; it just goes so quick.

**Did you have any time off while you were at basic training?**

Yes. Just after seventeen weeks they gave me, I think, it was a week they call furlough and that's the duration you have just like a week. They sent me back from training back to Gary and I was there a week and I had orders to go to D. C. on a train from Gary at the railroad station there. So I went to Washington, D. C. and that was like in January, cold.

**So you were like nineteen at that point?**

Yes, I just turned nineteen. Then in D.C., whatever was happening in Germany; the Battle of the Bulge was going on. Japan. So there was tension. So where did they send me next as replacement? So all we knew then and there was a delay. Instead of us going right to Japan or Europe they sent us to Fort Meade, Maryland. We were there for bivouac for three weeks. That's a blessing. I feel sorry for all the soldiers who were dying like flies all over in Europe and all over; it was sad. So, here we were; we had no choice. We stayed there for three weeks, basic training, a little exercise and it was just like we were standby, ready to send us where, Japan or Europe. Our living quarters for three weeks was in a pup tent.

**How many in a pup tent?**

Two. And the key thing, during thy day they offered us coveralls, you zip them up just to keep a little warmer because in January out there, it's cold. At night, you'd unzip, obviously, take it off and you'd put your sleeping bag on it. When you'd get up in the morning, you're pup tent [inside] is frost, ice. Both sides are all ice and cold; there's no heating in a pup tent. When you take your sleeping bag up, you pick up your coverall; it's like a sheet of plywood, flat; you gotta bust it open to get yourself in it. So finally, we did and at that point, after three weeks, from Maryland we went on a bus or a truck, either way. I don't know if we went on a train but we went to New York City harbor with our duffle bag aboard a ship. It's night time, nine o'clock,

dark; you go up a ramp. This ship is huge and we don't know we're going this way, we're going there. Being on the East Coast, you assume you're going to Europe but again, you don't know it. The ship might go through Panama Canal and we might end up in Japan. We didn't know nothing except get on the ship with seventeen thousand men we found out later was on the ship and it was the Queen Mary.

**The Queen Mary, a famous ship to go on.**

Yes. That was pretty exciting in one way but we weren't joy riding.

**Yeah, you knew where you were headed.**

Well, we were leaning toward, we were going there. So, finally, after a couple of days, it was not a bad sail. The key thing was the Queen Mary had a decent speed, like thirty-two knots. And they never had a convoy. We understood that other ships, troop ships would go over, destroyers and that, to try and maneuver to protect the ship from getting hit by torpedoes. They could outmaneuver torpedoes so a German sub would not necessarily make an attempt to waste a torpedo because they can't hit it because it would move too fast or too slow. Anyway that's why we never had it.

**Let me ask you this. Did your family know that you were going overseas?**

I would say no. I don't think so.

**Were you able to tell them that you were leaving the country even?**

I probably could have but it didn't cross my mind because your mind is so tense of where you're going and sometimes you think, "Maybe I won't be back." So, when you communicate you feel maybe your hurting too much fear and saying this and that. You like to hear from them probably but not the last time. You know what I'm trying to say? I was pretty much reserved of any social activity for some reason. But I was there; I was prepared; I was trained. I know I had to do this and do this or whatever.

**You said there were seventeen thousand men on the ship?**

Yes, that's what they told us. There were sixteen [thousand service men] plus and there was a crew of about six or seven hundred people on crew.

**So on the ship, it was pretty packed. What were your sleeping conditions?**

We didn't have a suite up on top, down below.

**Right.**

Like sardines. You had one, two, three, four, five bunks.

**Were they bunks? Were they hammocks?**

Yeah, hammocks but you only had about two feet. You had your duffle bag, you had squeeze; I wanted to go on top which I normally did. Time to get up, I want to lay here and sleep but no. It took eight days and eight nights to get over there.

**What did you do during those eight days and nights?**

We'd get up, they gave us meals and the meals were all done in the banquet hall, big tables... For the first six, seven days, six days it was pretty steady, not bad. Very interesting, they had on a wall, the Atlantic Ocean with the United States going to Europe and they had white dot [line across] ... I don't know, maybe every eight to ten inches apart and as we were making it across the ocean, the lights lit up. When you see, oh, we're half way there, that was about four days at that point.

**Did you get sea sick at all?**

No, I didn't, a lot of fellows did when the ship would rock. The last two days we hit a storm and it would only rock to the flank. Left and it hesitated a few seconds and all you see is water, water and you fear, one more little push and you're down like the Titanic maybe. I know Titanic today you didn't hear about Titanic seventy years ago. It was a shock and your heart throbbed or whatever, and of course, you wouldn't eat any meals those last two days to speak of because of the storms. ... They had the food but I know one time when I started, the food would go sliding across the table or off the table. It was pretty exciting. It didn't get flooded ... but then you go erect and then you go to the right side. [Never forward and backward, but side to side only.]

**You said, you mentioned you ate something to help keep your stomach calm.**

Grapefruit. I'd have at least ... two grapefruits in the morning. That helped me out. I did not get sick. Other guys did but I don't like to discuss that because that's almost normal. The majority of guys were hanging in there. They were all from the South, I think, most of them. So here we go. We're getting to the points where the lights are all lit up. They don't tell you you're going to land if you're going to head south and go to Marseilles or Spain but again, we're going into an area and it was described to us: that's Ireland on your one side, England on your right side. Big thrill. The ship is still going straight north and we stop in Glasgow to unload. But you know, today I feel about mines around the UK and through the English Chanel. You know Nazis dropped mines all over the place. You know, I'm sitting here at ninety feeling I'm pretty lucky; ... [we] never got hit by a mine.

**Yes.**

And it has happened in the area.

**What did you do during those eight days you were on the ship? How did you pass the time?**

Well, we did exercise on the deck; we did exercise basically. We didn't maneuver too much. We were just dormant, you might say. [Last two days and we had to hang on.]

**I mean did you play cards, did you read?**

No, it was minimal of any... and discussion. You know, you go, your mind is thinking, "Where are you going to end up, for how long? Hopefully, maybe, come back." At least you feel strong. You had good experience; training and you know what to do when you had to. You challenged to beat the challenge whenever happens.

**Did you know any of the guys when the trip started?**

That's another thing, you would think you would but they were scattered from all over the state of Indiana. Finally, one fellow, named Joe Ranger was from Tell City, he was in my platoon on the same floor. To this day I've looked at the map occasionally where Tell City is to communicate. You can get online. I don't go to the computer that much. I'm the old traditional guy with history of five draw files and I could tell you a lot of stuff. I enjoy it. That's my thing. A computer I have. My wife's very active. That's good; that's tomorrow. And today the children have iPod. Oh, God. I invested ...Britannica, dictionary, three, four hundred bucks. That was big money fifty years ago, [my type of living].

**You didn't know anybody on your ship?**

No, really, I didn't. We didn't make that connection. Like I say, in basic, the air force, I know my buddy, Igor Macey, went to Florida and when I came back I tried to contact him and I was told he was grounded. He didn't make the pilot commission. I had that opportunity buy my one eye turned me down. But here I am made ... cavalry and our duty is to keep contact of the enemy.

**You landed in Glasgow, [Scotland] and then...?**

A train. A real fast train like two hundred miles an hour down to Southampton next London. We went through London area and Southampton. We didn't have no conductor telling us what we're seeing. We're on this wide open train and it bounced, hopped every twenty feet it hit the tracks. That's how scary it was. I'm not exaggerating, it must have been going well over a hundred miles an hour but straight, no curves, mountains, hills, straight.

**What year was this?**

Forty-five. We left February second on the Queen Mary and got here on the eighth of February.

**So, six days.**

We left on the sixteenth of February and got there on the twenty-fifth.

**O.K.**

That's pretty close.

**That's seven, nine days.**

I thought eight days, seventy years ago.

**I understand.**

One strange thing, I had a little booklet. I was posting a lot of our movements in Europe, town to town, this person, that person. Very strange in a lot of things. We stuck our neck out. We were out in front. See infantry went to fight it. We were just the contact. Where are they? Report. We'd call artillery; they'd throw artillery over our heads. And when we see Panzers going this way, we'd report all that stuff... This was part of our reconnaissance that we were responsible for. So, we didn't have to go hand to hand fight. We got sniped a lot. The turret would get hit on top, "bing." Not my helmet, but that's bad enough. In Southampton, we boarded a small ship with maybe one, two, three, four, bays like sardines, a small boat. We took that to Le Havre, France, across the English Chanel. All mines. I'm sitting here live, so far. It strikes me more now recently than it did then. Then you were just existing, you were going through the motions, you were a soldier, you gotta go fight for your country.

**And you were young.**

And there's a lot of things that could happen 'cause there's a lot of mines in ... [The English Channel].

Le Havre is the second largest port. I think Marseilles, Southern France is, which I learned all this later. I didn't know, I knew zero about Europe. So you go, get off the ship and you're going through a town up the road to go to wherever. Civilians, little kids come to you; they ask you for chocolates. "You got any?" Some fellas asked for cigarettes; I didn't have any; I didn't smoke at that time. We didn't have big Hershey bars but we had a couple of little things. They were begging and pleading for us. And here, Le Havre, France, maybe a fourth of the place was shattered and blown up. So from there they throw you on a truck and I go to Epinal, France, past Paris, Epinal, France. With thirty, forty, fifty, strange [soldiers] all different, wherever they put us together, I mean anybody from Smith to Jones or whatever. We go into a big warehouse, maybe three or four story empty warehouse. We are being oriented. You're in enemy country, almost. Find a bed. Then we hear, we think it is thunder. Well, the sun is shining. And we look at each other and the instructor (says) "No, that's just a few bombs going off." Uh, Oh! [You're in a war zone.]

**Very Real**

That's when you know you're there. Do you want to know the next step, it was very interesting.

**Yes.**

From there we went to Givet, G-i-v-e-t, border of Belgium. Fort De Charlemagne. Probably was there 1812. So, we go in as a group with our M-1 and we cross the bridge to get to the castle. No water because it was empty. We go in there for one day, one day. Two bunks, bottom and top, not too bad. But there was one black electric wire going across the ceiling with a white light, like a Christmas light, maybe thirty feet [apart]. That's not too bad and I'm on top. You're just closing your eyes for the evening you just tried to break away. We didn't know if we were going to be there a day, three weeks, a month. We were there actually one day. During the night, swoosh; maybe fifty bats go flying right across your head. I don't know where they came in; they might be going out I don't know if I should get under a pillow. Then they came back the other way. It only happened twice, that way and back. We assume they're bats; they're black things flying around; they're not pigeons. Kind of shocking. But this is ...

### **It's an old castle.**

Yes. So we get out the next morning, exercise, oriented about prepare yourself and that's when we got our carbines, our weapons and our extra magazines to be ready to fight the war. Then the next day, one fellow in a jeep, he was referred to as "The Mail Man." He's taking mail to the front lines and he's taking me with my carbine. One, just me. I'm sitting in the jeep, I'm not asking where he's taking me, why or who or whatever and he don't say hardly "boo" either.

### **You're nineteen at this point?**

Yes. I'm sitting in the jeep and we're riding, I'd say, a good fifteen, twenty miles, a good stretch. We got to the border of Belgium and Germany. We crossed the line. Somewhere they got rid of or captured all the German towns, you know that? There were like five or six in a row. I'm not taking a pick but he knows where he has to take me. Most of these towns are knocked down. They're down, we get to one section, nobody's around and he points to down below where all the crushed buildings are. He says, "Just go there." So I had to go there. There was like a trap door to go down. I go down there and there's at least twenty, thirty of platoon sitting guys. Nobody's cheering me; I just get there and blank. I sit down, I don't know in there who's in command. This came to me later, he dumped me there. Didn't say boo, didn't give me a name, a number, no just dumped me and that's it. That's when I got locked with the platoon. Not a word.

### **Did you have a commanding officer to report to?**

No, I just had to join them and then the next morning he asked me to go into one jeep, I think, one day. Then I noticed that same day, the Captain of the platoon, his head was all white bandaged. He got shot in the head. He came back on the front lines. Captain Fry, I think his name was. I don't know where it happened, how long he was going to stay on. You have a Captain up front, you have a Staff Sergeant and Platoon Leader like what I was, the third vehicle. The first two would alternate to lead. What I'm getting to is I was told on this jeep. Then he come to me and he says, "Mike you go in that armored car, you be in that one." (I showed you the picture.) That's where I spent my last five or six months. Maybe twice I went up front to lead. When I say to lead, because in basic training you have a jeep to lead, over there armored cars usually go first, it's a little different system. However, the occasion, one fellow when I went,

he put the jeep in front of me, the leader, that's when they shot his box; ... caught on fire. We got strafed; we got sniped a lot of times like every other day we'd get sniper shots here or there. I'm just telling you one incident. I'll tell you another real crucial incident. We got to a little town and we suspected some firing from a ditch on the side maybe its three hundred feet away, like a ravine. So we dismounted and got along a wall, a little country town, alongside the wall. We jumped out with our carbines. All of a sudden, three, four young kids, maybe twelve or fourteen, come running at us without weapons, crying, you know, German kids. And we found out they were saying. Who was picking up Germans, I wasn't but we got the story that there were two or three hundred, at least two hundred kids in the ditch firing at us to kind of keep us back instructed by maybe two or three SSers. Those were the guys that pushed everything. That's worse than cancer. But the German people overall, nothing wrong, overall. We liberated so many American guys that were in camps there. And when the Germans started surrendering they were coming out with their hands on their heads by the group, maybe ten, twenty, thirty. We didn't check them in or anything, they just kept walking behind us. They went back to ordinance or something. We were just going forward. Once we little incidents.

**Where did you pick up the SS guys?**

One of the towns up ahead.

**How did you...**

You know the amulets?

**Right.**

You know like lightening amulets. Oh, yeah, they're cocky looking guys. They're like cobras, they don't take no for an answer or whatever you want to call it.

**Tell me that incident. How did you come across them and they not see you?**

As they see us approaching and they know that, I think up front, that finally it was made that when Germany surrendered, they had to give up or else. I think that's when they were releasing themselves. So half way down the line we were already just gathering them, you might say. A few snipers [here and there].

Another incident, snipers. Snipers before town, maybe two hundred yards, is a fox hole and a white flag. Like maybe most of the buildings had white flags raised; it was the last stretch. He was in the fox hole and I guess he just wanted to hold us back maybe so the other soldiers could get away or change their clothes. You don't know what they're thinking. But that was one. We got fired on. Turret would get hit, bing, you'd keep your head down. The gunner, with his thirty caliber, schweet, and the guy went down because it was the second time he did it. He came up with the flag, he was going to surrender. But first time he said no, but then he gets in the hole and he starts shooting at us, you know, you don't guess what to do. [Done!]

**How long were you in Germany?**

In the state? [Country?]

**Yes.**

I'd say four, six months and my last three were occupation. We ended up in Nuremberg and a woman handed me a triple shot gun, no soldier. From Nuremberg, you go in that town; you got dead horses lying around.

**When you came in, you came in at the end of the war?**

Yeah, about half way. It was still the Battle of the Bulge because when I went to check back, they said the Battle of the Bulge is up ahead ten miles. That's when we lost so many soldiers and that's when we were just unwinding ourselves. From that point we went right into Germany. We had to go aggressively after them. We went East and then when we were in Germany itself, we went southward toward Munich. There were other platoons and we overlapped. Then we found out that Patton was standing at the intersection. But these were events....

**Tell me about the Patton incident.**

The field was very, very muddy and the vehicles were just getting through, the jeeps, armored cars. Then another group of tanks would go up ahead of ours, Sherman Tanks. He was like at the intersection, plus the MP was directing. But he was there looking very proud standing there. "Hey, we're going aggressive, going to get the Krauts, going to get rid of them, blah, blah, blah." I thought it was him, basically, but we didn't know for sure. But then they said, "It was a general, yeah, it was Patton." The word was going around and around. But I was pretty sure it was him, eventually. But, again, like I say, you go through there like a dream; it's not easy.

**When the war in Europe was declared over, where were you?**

Southern Germany, I was already down in Albach, just East of Munich, we didn't go to Munich, just East of Munich and that's where we stayed for two, or almost three months. That's where we established Occupation because the war was over.

**How did you hear that the war was over?**

It came through the radio, through the communications of ... I think it was over in May and I was there until August.

**What was the reaction of the men?**

We didn't get up and cheer because we feared, yet, there were some cocky SSers around and they'd shoot you down like anything, you know? You know, we're still enemies in a roundabout way. It's not like, "Hooray, it's over?" not by no means. And on top of that, Japan's still going. It didn't dawn on us that we would be shipping from there to Japan but there was a system of numbers.

## **Points?**

So many numbers for each month, for each one of us and I don't know if you had to have twenty-five or thirty, that means you might be selected as the first one to go back to the States, period. Now if you didn't you might have to pull out here embarkation through the States to Japan. So, I said, "Geez, I might have to go through this AGAIN?" So, yes, I was lower points and I was pushed out of there back to Le Havre, France on a ship to go through the States of embarkation for nowhere else but Japan. But just two weeks before that, I think it was, that the atom bomb was dropped. I didn't know that, I read it, but they did. Our mind wasn't set with that. And I mean the system. From Europe you're going there, they're preparing us, yes; we might end up going all the way. They don't know; I don't know; we're just embodied souls and we just go with the flow, if you want to call it. Coming back on a small boat of maybe three thousand soldiers, coming back. We stopped; we landed in Boston, Camp Miles Standish in Boston. Dumped our clothes, they were pretty bad. You know, overseas, for six months, you don't shower and shave every day, you're almost AS IS. The only serious thing I had, my right heel, my pores opened up, fairly painful, but I managed to make it through. But when I finally ended up in the Fourth Army Headquarters, they put me in the medic, one day. I had to sit there and they put stuff on it and it finally healed up. But that was my only drawback. Because you had socks on forever, could be on for five days. You didn't change socks daily, not in service, so that's the only little drawback. The guys, they took their helmet and put water in and took a quick shave or didn't shave for three weeks or a month. I don't know, we didn't keep track of that kind of stuff. We had guns; we had to be ready; we had to fire; this is war.

**Let's go back a little bit to when you were in Germany before the official end. You were doing reconnaissance. How many men were with you normally when you were doing that?**

I'd say twenty-five, thirty in a platoon. Troop C we were. [14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division (94<sup>th</sup> Calvary) Recon. Squadron Mech.]

**Right. And you were constantly moving?**

Most of the time, oh, yeah.

**Where did you sleep at night? Did you travel at night and sleep during the day?**

Basically daytime, at night time, no, we stayed put. We could doze off a couple of hours?

**Where did you sleep, in the fields?**

Both.

**Tents?**

No, no tents. In the open. A few times we walked into a home maybe, strange, to hit the bed. They had big comforters. A few times. You go into a house and a few folks are there with their

arms up staring at you. We're not going to shoot them down. And they knew we wanted to hit the bed maybe, so we'd hit the bed. A few nights, very few, [short periods].

**Was someone standing guard when you would sleep?**

Yes, someone would be outside the building. One night, I got instructions to a fox hole outside the town with a fella. He had his carbine on him and I had my carbine. We didn't associate; we just went out to this hole; got down there at night, maybe one o'clock in the morning for about two hours; we relieved two other fellas. They threw me in the fox hole and you could see the ravine up ahead there and for two hours you just watch there and so you could get a banner coming out of there. Shoot you down there or whatever it is coming out of there. We were protecting, like you said, someone dozing off in the building there for the evening. Short spell, six or seven hours. Isn't like ten or fifteen hours, we're lucky if we got three hours sleep. That was a shock. You try to get as much rest... and never during the day you doze off – you're awake, strong. It wasn't over tension but in your mind, to save your life, you know what I mean? You're ready; keep your finger on the trigger. The Quartermaster one time came up; tried to give us a decent meal in a town. It was late evening and we're sitting in our vehicles in the back of a building in Germany behind a house. We could see they're setting up the food service and all of a sudden, brrrrrit, machine gun fire and that was the Germans. See our thirty caliber was good but not as efficient as the German's. Because you could tell a thirty caliber would go put, put, put, put, put, brrrrrit. If a German fired it, he'd go brrrrrit real fast and we're here, the kitchen, the guys are breakin' up; they're running, dropping the cans. Then we hear behind the barn, we see the strafe, our barn, right behind us. You know, you just jump in, you get the hell out. In the meantime, we're right to hesitate because just a little ways down there's a little creek or something; the engineers are putting in a little pontoon bridge for us to get over, to keep on going. Pshfft! They're running back. So we just go back like to town to catch our breath. Next day, know what you do? The bridge, the engineers gotta fix it. These are just one or two incidents and that's how we got delayed or snagged. But every day was the tension of fear of getting shot. You had to be careful.

**You said they were setting up the kitchen. What was your food normally like when you were on the move like that?**

Well, mostly we had mounted on our (M-8) armored vehicle... C-rations, cans, you know, trash hash or whatever. That was Okay, but you know, you didn't eat three meals a day, I don't know if we had one meal a day. We didn't have soda or coffee and tea and all that. We would drink water. Eat and drink wasn't all that necessary for us. It was there. When the Quartermaster would come up maybe once a month to give us a decent meal that's about it otherwise, we just ate off the vehicle.

**You said during the Occupation you had an interesting tour.**

Well, it's a tour but, you know, the evil person there was Adolf Hitler and he had a nest they call it in Berchtesgaden, we were able to go to look it over. So we went from Albachten, we were there several months as occupation; then we went through Salzburg then up to Berchtesgaden. When you get there, obviously it's on top of the mountain, but before going up there they had a

path going up there for enlisted men. And half way up they had a big like a gold entrance for the elevator area for commissioned officers that could take an elevator the rest of the way. Us, [non-commission soldiers] ... basic, we had to march it up. Then we finally got up to his house [nest].

### **You were a PFC at this time?**

Yes, I was a PFC. We didn't think of rank or nothing, we were thinking individuals, our body and soul we have, that's all. Once we get in the building, remember the pictures of Hitler by his big, gorgeous picture window standing there? You go out the back and I walk the path between the little mountain areas there, big timbers; look down there's clouds. They claim from that area, you could see seven countries. It's in the Southeast corner of Germany, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, I don't know. It was just a tour in itself. Then from there you could see, across the way you could see buildings in the mountains like Goering's or Goebel's. Then the one other place we went to was a special barracks for SSers, all marble. The barracks had marble tops. Then, of course, the buildings were shattered with bullet holes that the Air Corps must have done, you know, before we got there and tore it up quite a bit. But they had superior quality quarters, the SSers. Anyway, that was just a tour there driving up there and back, period. Back to Albachten, and that was a strange little town; one church, two hundred little homes and maybe five paths, paths not streets, leading from town, country town. They had a religious ceremony one time. Maybe a hundred, two hundred folks would march out singing in German. They'd go out the one path then in about two hours you'd see them coming back from another path. I don't know, they walked around the country, you know. It was kind of historical, the faith they had, just normal citizens but still have to go through unfortunate situations. Sometimes you feel like it was a nightmare; can't even believe that you went through all this cycle. I only gave you half. The last several months I had schweeeo. I'll tell you about that.

### **Tell us about that.**

Well, we got back in the States and they took me down to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. You know, where the Alamo is. That's history there, but that's a different occasion. But me, I had to go to Fourth Army Headquarters and they assigned me to the Adjutant General's Division. In Headquarters you got Infantry, Quartermaster, Signal Corps and all the other ones but Adjutant General Division is more for the elite of the Air Force, I mean the officers where they go to various schools and so forth, educational thing, too. They assigned me with a group that sent officers and individuals to various schools throughout the country and even overseas. I had ten subordinates that typed up... From D.C. we would get a quota, a quota every month approximately, so many, we need ten here, we need fifty here and so forth. So we had to break it down, contact all the various camps around the country saying that this is available. They would let us know how many and what list they had and all that. Soon as I got that position, they announced to me that I'm a T-4 Sergeant. You know, I'm not even thinking about commission; I want to do my thing, gotta go eventually home.

### **So you were nineteen at the time?**

Yeah, high school kid, high school **kid!**

### **And you had people reporting to you?**

Oh, yeah. And I had to march one hundred nine men from the barracks up to the quadrangle which was called quadrangle which is where Army Headquarters is at. I was under Captain Smolenski, he was the officer in charge and a Warrant Officer, an RA man, Regular Army man, and he's like in his, maybe late thirties and he's probably in the army service maybe forty years. You can sense these here genuine army men. Very good, very good. He would caution me on certain things, prepare me to make sure this is right according to here, you got support, make sure this one does that right... It was good. It was orientation that made me plus to know I deserve what I'm doing. I'm responsible and I gotta do it. Yet before I left, a month or so, they promoted me up to Staff Sergeant Tech. That was nice too. We had Colonel Knox, "Hey, Mike, maybe you'd like to go to Basic Camp, be an instructor, get a commission?" "Sir, I'd like to go home." That was my answer. It was okay, you know, nineteen going on twenty. It was a very exciting experience from hard corps training to putting your life ahead, yes, no, maybe, all the experience going through Europe. My dream was to fly a plane over there and I couldn't do it. I took the exam; it was a pretty tough exam. It wasn't like A, B, C, D take a choice. You had to explain things when I took my Officer Candidate School Exam and twenty-six of us... That was interesting but here I am getting discharged from Fourth Army Headquarters, San Antonio, Texas. I was very independent. USO in town, I went once in the seven months I was there. It was accommodating, in town, lot of excitement, the drinking. See, I was not that much for that, the drinking, smoking. Just before I went in, I indulged with cigarettes, never inhaled, because it was the trend; guys are carrying cigarettes.

### **You wanted to kind of blend in.**

Blend in, exactly, good word. Here's the thing, you paid a carton of cigarettes maybe a lousy buck, what is it today? Twenty dollars a pack which is crazy. Health wise, pretty good. I can't complain. I usually go to Veterans; I went to Hines; got a blood test. Not this thing. I like to be a person and I got a primary doctor there, Pat Snow in Joliet, MacNeal Silver Cross Hospital. Everything good so far, so far. I've been blessed.

### **Let me ask you this. Let's go back just a little bit. When you were in Europe, you were doing the recon?**

Right. Then when they released me, they took me back to just west of Paris to campsite and there were several camps there for embarkation. And the camps were named after cigarettes: Lucky Strike, Camel, Cools. I think there were about five of them but I don't remember which one I was in maybe Lucky Strike, big deal. I was there overnight, one or two nights; you kind of unwound.

### **Decompress a little?**

Oh, gosh. That was good or bad? You're going back to the States BUT you might end up to the islands, to the Pacific. But that was immediately about the atom bomb dropping. We didn't know Hiroshima or what's his name, if he's going to give up or not. You know Japs, you know, they pull your nails out of your fingers and all that stuff. We're at the Camp Lucky Strike or

something and they had a latrine to go to the bathroom. They would dig, outside the camp, a trench, eighteen inches wide, maybe twenty, thirty feet long and you straddle that trench and do your thing. We didn't have fancy lavatories.

**While you were in Europe, were you able to communicate at all with your family?**

No. Maybe it was available, I didn't. I just felt more comfortable just to go through it independently. If I talked to my mother, she'd cry if I'd fallen; I didn't want that. I think that would hurt her. I think it was not as much hurt for her to carry the responsibility of knowing I'm here, I'm contented, I'm doing what I have to do, you know?

**Did you have any down time while you were there for six months?**

In Europe?

**Yes.**

The occupation was not boring but we just had to hang around; we had to be there.

**What did you do for any kind of recreation?**

I just remembered, I looked at one of my pictures; I had a glove in my hand. So, we must have played catch. But it was very sparingly maybe throw ten times and you were done. We were just not motivated; I don't know, just to be amongst each other, maybe have a little square meal or two and hang on while we're there. You know, time goes fast even though it seemed boring but you gotta prepare yourself because you never knew if some Nazi Krauts would be coming this way; five, ten, just want to shoot at you, you know, just mix it up and cause a problem. We were not in a free land. Even though the war is over, we're in tension, we're in Germany. And Nazi's were just as bad as ISIS we're having today. And Bush should have dropped two atom bombs there last year, right in that area. Sad, very sad, civilians get killed, very sad. It's not bad if your life goes but if you come out of there and you got two arms lost or two legs or you go blind, that's very hurtful. I got veterans, I contribute to USO and I just got a letter by the handicapped veterans. I try to commit not in the association but just these particular areas, you know what I mean? You wonder, this is not a scar, in service. You go there as a common person, you know, I was only a private from high school.

**Right. When you knew you were coming home, did you get any time off between?**

Yeah, I'd say when we hit the Camp Miles Standish ... [Massachusetts] we took the train. They sent me back home, Gary. I spent I think a week there like I did coming out. I spent a week and then my assignment was a certain date I had to be in Ft. Riley, I mean Fourth Army Headquarters, San Antonio, Texas. I reported there.

**Howe did you family react? Did they know you were coming? Did they know ahead of time or did you just show up?**

I think I just showed up. They were real, real, real excited. I was safe, so far, home... there was all hugs and kisses and it was so nice, you know what I mean? You feel totally relieved after being in war Germany, what was that? That's war, war, war. Back in the States. But then I had to spell out them I said now, "The Japs are getting bombed, I'm going through the States." But they sent me down to ... [4<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters] so far, but we'll see what tomorrow brings. At least I'm home, one piece, after what they heard how bad things were. And you know what? In the Normandy beachhead, as I went through, I just came by and the dust was settling in Bastogne, Belgium, in between the two as being part of Rhineland ... [and Central] Europe, I'm honored to put my name on a monument in France. Liberty Bell or something called Liberty... They sent me a nice certificate I got on my wall showing that my name's inscribed in this monument wall. But, you know what? I'm not the hero and really I could tear right now. All the heroes were left there. My son did take me to D.C. a couple of years ago and you go through Arlington Cemetery, all heroes there. Because I'm alive, I'm not the hero at all. I was blessed that I was able to manipulate through here and be ready for anything.

**You were home for a week and then you went to San Antonio?**

San Antonio, [4<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters] Fort Sam Houston. I spent my last seven months there. I got Staff Sergeant, I got commission, I got a hundred and nine men that I was in charge of, Adjutant Generals Division.

**You were there for the last seven months of your service.**

Right. Before they sent me back to Camp Atterbury to be discharged.

**When did you know you were not going to have to go to Japan?**

I never knew, it was just like up in the air, follow me? So I got myself immune to Fourth Army Headquarters and it was assigned. And, off the record, yeah, it seemed like the Japs surrendered but still you didn't know if the government was going to send you there anyway you could still go for occupation. So here I am, but then I felt pretty comfortable that I had a hundred and nine men but I had ten subordinates in my office that I had the responsibility there. That was adequate for my being in that position versus me going on reconnaissance. I had no choice, I was there. Like I said, the Colonel wanted me to go to some camp to be some instructor, he said you'd become a Lieutenant, get a commission. "Sir, I want to go home."

**So, they sent you to Camp Atterbury.**

Right. There they gave me discharge papers. They talk to you. Here's the release guy here. See where it says I was a non-commissioned officer? And this is the description that they fill in at Camp Atterbury. They wrap it up. I wasn't sure when this happened exactly but this is, it tells you right here. Then they made me a radio operator to give me this rating which is fine, either that or whatever, for the office job. I didn't do this; this is their doing and this is fine. I accept it; I thought I did the best I could. High school, high school kid.

**When you came back and you were finally discharged at Camp Atterbury, from there you went home to Gary, Indiana?**

Very excited, yes. I had a distant relative that had two theaters, store theaters in Chicago. His son, Mike, stood up for our wedding down the line but let's get back to the individual, John. He had the theaters; he was a distant relative of my father's... That's another history exciting today. Currently I got somebody in Pennsylvania; I won't go into it at all. Anyway, he talked to me and he said, "I'd be glad to show you theater functions, be a manager." So I got a Bill of Rights for two years. A GI Bill of Rights.

**Education?**

Yeah, education. That just gave me the incentive to go through training of a theater manager through him.

**Okay.**

And we used to go downtown and book pictures like RKO, Century 21, Paramount all these here, 13<sup>th</sup> & Wabash. You know at my age, I'm surprised, it seemed like current years I can remember more at ninety and I have folks, I hate to say, I have buried, friends at seventy or sixty or eighty and here I'm talking about this and I'm thrilled to do it. Going back to the theaters, which I did. Here we go. Yeah, I learned a lot about theaters and I was a manager. And I got blessed, my cashier was my wife today of sixty-five years.

**That's where you met her?**

Right. Today, sixty-five years in October. Key with that, I was with him about two years in his theater. Then I released my GI Bill of Rights, my training, you might say. Then instead of me staying with him, I went to a bigger theater function called Shoensadt's. They owned the Piccadilly in Hyde Park. Then they owned Regency, Regal, maybe fifteen theaters in the Chicago area. The time element being late evenings; you had to work on Sundays as manager, that was kind of inconvenient and my wife was just down the line but she didn't force me to change it. My mother always said to me, because my Dad had to work very hard in the steel mills and I was thirteen when I lost Dad, but my mother said to me always get an office job where it's easier. Well, in high school, I did typing. So, I thought, I'm going to leave the theater and I'm going into office work. Cost me forty-six dollars – employment agency – forty-six dollars. I says, "You know what, not because I'm a Veteran but I'd like to get some offers." I can type. Went to Broderick, a company in Chicago, dedicated folks, family. I was so proud they accepted me and within a year the accountant expired, Arthur Hamlik, and I was turned over to do the work. I had a marvelous boss, Bill Broderick, the father that started the business in 1890. I could go further with this but it's a plus.

**So, you learned on the job how to do the accounting?**

Oh, yes. Oh, Oh, I went to college, IIT, six months, night classes. With that, just before we got married, Schoensadt's I worked for... [Movie theater business]. We stayed one night [at the

Piccadilly hotel (Hyde Park)]. And then I drove to Denver, Colorado for our honeymoon. The company I was with, the theater, Schoenstadt's, nice folks, too, and they were Jewish folks. Harry Schoenstadt, very nice receptive people... They helped you, you got a responsibility to do this. More than that, after forty years with the company [Broderick Teaming Co.], and like I say, only two days I wasn't there. At noon, I wanted to come in. I called the dispatcher, Bob Vick, great guy, that at expired at the early age of fifty-two. Croatian guy, dedicated, dispatcher. I did that occasionally later when my dispatcher later was on vacation so I had experience with dispatching, too. I know I'm getting off the line here but it's quite a mixture, quite a mixture. But it goes so fast and I'm very fortunate I came through it at this point. [What a life.]

**Do you still keep in touch with anyone? Did you join any Veterans organizations?**

I didn't. Carrying the American Legion from Indiana, I never signed up. There's VFW's, my uncle was in it for many years, Maywood, but too much excitement there; they go to the bar and drink, drink and I'm not that way. I'm not different but that bothered me. But even the organization's fantastic and from time to time I'd get some literature. In dollars and cents, I normally contribute to USO, fifteen bucks or twenty-five bucks; I do that. I feel comfortable with that because I participated in that. The others are fabulous if not better but again at this level. I left the company-unions, I was a company man and blessed, even though, the fund's carried me twenty-five years but again, money isn't everything or anything rather. It's from your heart and soul which you pass on to your family and friends and make it work. We have too much problems around the world today; I wish I had an answer.

**How did your experience in the Army affect the way you think about the conflicts going on today?**

Pretty deep. In other words, I'm not blaming anybody and I hear it over and over and over, leadership, leadership, that's so strong today. And yes, is President Obama the leader? He's supposed to be and he's doing the best he can. Has he got weak help around him for advice? I don't know; I can't say. Again, I think what's on my mind, Harry S. Truman, forever. I enjoyed that man's orientation, he talked on the TV and explained this happening and we have to do this, this and that. Beside that the prior one, Roosevelt, said this is infinity, World War, we have to do our thing. It was a plus and then here comes Harry, chooba! I seen the ship, what's that?

**Enola Gay?**

Enola Gay. I seen that in D.C. two years ago. I looked at that plane, this is my life, this is my life.

**That plane saved your life.**

Right. And I was only thinking, "Could I have been proud enough to be behind that plane and fly it over Japan?"

You know, I'm not able to kill the Japs but look what they came in and killed our three thousand men on the Arizona in Hawaii. You know, what are these people thinking? Just like today we have the ISIS.

**Right.**

They want to kill you and me. I won't hesitate!

**Right**

I'd go over there and bomb them out.

**Right**

...

**Right**

Right now! We're wasting time. Everybody's saying, Obama said help that country, help that country. We need more help right here. It's nice to be kind but they're saying, the stupid people affecting it. They want to come kill us. I only have one answer: I'd go over there and I'd just have to take them off the map. I pray the Lord, these are all your people, everybody, religiously speaking ... You're in command Lord, Jesus, we're... And I chuckle at my age, born date 12/25. To some people I say, "You can call me Jesus."

**Laughter.**

And I love all kind of people. When I go to restaurants, most of them are run by Greeks. I don't know too much language but I say to them, "Takanas." And they say, "Calah." These are like, "How are you?" "Fine." And they shine and I love doing that; there's nothing wrong with that. I like to make everybody happy. I had a dear friend before we moved here, Larry Cross, elderly gentleman, Jewish. He could tell you about all the Holocaust and all that, you know what I mean? I get up to him and I says, "Shalom," that means peace.

**Right.**

Shalom. I could be part Jewish. I'm the Lord's son. I was Christened, Baptized. But that doesn't make me perfect; I'm only a human being. Some of these other humans that are out there – very uncomfortable. I got grandsons, count them, three, four, five; they're coming out of my ears; I love it! That's the Lord's... He has the hand with him in the future. How well can they make comfortable for them? What's the best, in a way, not perfect, nothing is perfect.

**How did your time in the service affect your life?**

I think it did a great thing. It helped to be responsible, dedicated and in the back of my mind... I have my mother and sisters here and our freedom we have in this country. You know, one time

when this all started there were like five hundred languages around the world. It was hard to get together. Cultures are different. Leave them alone, they're peace. What are these with weapons? That's what bothers me. Why do they have to have weapons? That's one thing we should ban. Now my favorite Western was Hop-Along Cassidy. What a ... [guy], with two forty-fives. I got his tape; I've even gone to his museum. Now that's the kind of guy... The theaters I ran, the one, the Apollo Theater on the South Side of Chicago, forty-Seventh Street, we booked Westerns in a black neighborhood. And there's nothing wrong with black folks. When I left my company, forty years, we had a mechanic. I have to tell you this named I. C. Moral, dedicated mechanic, super, lovely family. He lost his wife, Irene, at Resurrection Hospital. Now some problem. I went to the funeral. This fellow, I. C. Moral had a special kid; we sat right behind him, special child at the funeral. He had two youngsters. I'm going back in the eighties. Two youngsters, Oklahoma University. Black folks, you know what I mean? Very dedicated, plus, plus, plus. So, I want to praise the black people; they're not all bad. We got plenty white folks that are bad or worse. And we see the mixture in the way and that's fine. But they never talk about the good things; there are a lot of good things in the Black folks and we thank the good Lord for all the good things in us White folks. But we're not superior. The Nazi's thought they were superior; look where they ended up and that's where they belong. The people, the folks are great, German folks. There's nothing wrong with them. They had an instrument; they used to play a tune for me once. [While in Germany.]

### **A zither?**

Yeah. Today. Now when we were in service they gave us three books: German book, language, French and Russia. Ain't that nice. My father came from the Ukraine. You call him Ukaninski. His name was Platen but his name in foreign, you call him "Plataun." Ain't that nice? It's a chuckle. My mother, I think she came from Albania. She talked foreign when we were growing up as a kid. I was a kid; I still feel like a kid. And she came to the States. Oh, I gotta give you this real quick. She paid three hundred bucks to go through Poland, near Poland, Austria, Hungary; those countries were all mixed up then. She wanted to get out of there and come to this great country of ours, freedom! And she did! Three hundred bucks across Poland, the Baltics on a ship that got bombed before the United States. And she came on a little safe boat with about thirty people. She had her clothes on her, New York City, World War I, 1914, 15, somewhere in that area. But she made it and she produced me and here I am and I'm blessed. The Lord gave me four sons. Grandkids. Nice, they're all dedicated and I just try to harmonize with them. Get along with everybody; I don't care who they are. What kind of skin they have or not. We're humans; we have a heart and soul. And I got one favorite, I gotta tell you, I watch on TV. I'm not a holy roller, I try, but I watch Kenneth Cox. He's on Friday night on WJYS. He's born and raised in South East corner of Oklahoma. Kenneth Cox, what a sermon! The best of any of them, for me. He describes point one step at a time for forty-five minutes, no commercial. He gives the word of the Bible. And I say, I'm not a holy roller but I like to believe in Christ, 'cause I know what happened, period. Everybody, if you're a Muslim or you're not a Muslim, we're fighting that right now, too. Blaming this group or that group, Sunni's, Kishi's or... Why can't they just do their culture, lay low and enjoy their life? Short duration, you're not here forever.

**Right.**

Maybe, if you make eternal life, you might make it. Gee, I sound like a minister. I'd better conclude this but I feel relieved. I'm loose; I like to chuckle with any relation, like I say. We have greetings at Church and most people, I say, "Shalom" to them. And that's Jewish because that's peace.

**Right.**

I don't care what you are Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran or whatever, enjoy it! Life is time consuming short. Enjoy your life. Make it exciting for somebody else. Amen.

**Is there anything you haven't discussed that you'd like to add before we go off record?**

Maybe I did too much abundance. A copy might go to our president, Mr. Obama. Because, I know its pressure, its pressure and he's putting lives at risk, you know what I mean. Our Presidents get shot at and everything else. You know, it's got to be hatred people amongst us. The only thing I got against them, one more final comment. He's saying about bringing immigration, ten thousand, a hundred thousand and you fear you might have a couple ISIS in the group. That's very possible. Could you spread it out? Bring women and kids only and exclude the men. Is that a possibility? Would that help avoiding bringing any ... You know, I don't know, I haven't got the answer. I'm not scientifically engineered to do this or decide. But there's gotta be more strong decisions. We can't wait. We're gonna get knocked out on the fear. They can knock out Chicago, St. Louis, New York, four or five spots and you're done. ISIS, they're not going to walk in, you'll have the Chinese or the Russians. If the Russians come, I can talk to them.

**Laughter.**

I'm not wishing for that at all. But in the back of my mind is my family the Lord gave me. I've got the three sons, lovely grand-daughters in law, family, thirteen grandchildren, three great ones maybe two great-great ones. The names are so mixed, added to this one, that one. Sheila. My wife's real name is Annabella and Bella is the one name for the grandchild. I love it. It's a just a mixture. I just hope they have a fair and reasonable life for them. It's all short duration if you make sixty, seventy or eighty. You're not here five hundred years. But the sooner we go, my friend, Jesus, peace, Shalom. Amen.

**Thank you for sharing your story and we're going off record.**

Well, I hope somebody else might enjoy it. And again, the final thing is, I'm not here to be perfect for anybody but I hope they can all understand so they're comfortable, get together and live their life in their way and means that they want.