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## Gerald Virgil Myers oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, August 5, 2008

Gerald Virgil Myers (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The Interviewee's personal information has been removed, at the request of the Interviewer. This omission is indicated with ellipses.]

**Michael Hirsh:** First of all, give me your full name and spell it for me?

**Gerald Myers:** Gerald, G-e-r-a-l-d, V-i-r-g-i-l, M-y-e-r-s.

MH: And what's your date of birth?

GM: July 6, 1918.

MH: Okay, which makes you—

GM: Ninety.

MH: Ninety years old. And you were with the 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division?

GM: I was with 317 Company G, 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

MH: Where were you before you went in the Army?

GM: I lived in St. Josephs, Missouri, and worked for Quaker Oats Company.

MH: Doing what?

GM: I was in the production of cereal.

MH: In Missouri?

GM: In St. Joseph, Missouri.

MH: How did you end up in the service?

GM: Well, at Quaker, I was supervisor of the cereals that was being sold to the government, and I got two deferments. So many of my friends and buddies had been drafted that the next time my name came up, which was the third time, I didn't take a deferment. I went in the service, which was a bad mistake.

MH: A bad mistake because?

GM: Well, because of the things that I encountered during my service in the Army.

MH: I have a sense, though, if you had not gone in the service, you wouldn't have felt right about it, either.

GM: That's exactly right, because so many of my buddies and friends that I worked with had been drafted that—well, I was downtown one day in St. Joe, and some lady said, as I was going down the street, and I met her. She said, "You look like that you're a healthy person. How come you're not in the Army like the rest of the young men?" And that really dwelt on my mind, and so when my name came up the next time, I didn't take a deferment.

MH: Did the company try to keep you?

GM: They talked to me, but I said, “No, I’m going in service.”

MH: Where’d they send you when you went in?

GM: When I went in, I was inducted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and they sent a trainload of us to Fort Hood, Texas, near Killeen, Texas.

MH: That was for basic training?

GM: That was for basic training of twelve weeks.

MH: Then what?

GM: Then I got a ten-day delay, a furlough, and from home, then I went to Fort Meade, Maryland. And at Fort Meade, I was there about three days, and they put a packet of us and sent us to Baltimore, and we got on a boat, and from there we shipped to England. And when I got off of the boat at England, I walked down the pier about a block and got another boat, and the next morning I had landed at Omaha Beach. Four months after D-Day.

MH: Four months after D-Day?

GM: Yeah.

MH: What was Omaha Beach like when you got there?

GM: A lot of—still had a lot of destroyed vehicles around, no dead people that I saw. There was a packet of officers and young Army men that were being loaded on the boat that I just got off that looked like that they were—well, we called it “battle fatigue” at that time, because they just never talked. They stared straight ahead, and you could tell that they had been in combat.

MH: What did that do to you, seeing them?

GM: It scared the hell out of us, to be real honest about it, because we were hoping that we wouldn't end up looking like they did.

MH: You actually went over as replacements and not as—

GM: As a replacement, that's right.

MH: Which is often a lonely way to go.

GM: Yeah, because every place you went, you were with strangers. And the only thing was that one fellow that was in my outfit in basic training was with me and got assigned to the same company that I did. And that was a rarity, I think.

MH: So you're at Omaha Beach and then what do they do with you?

GM: They put us in pup tents and told us that we were to watch the bulletin board, because our name would come up on the bulletin board to be moved. And if you don't meet that deadline, you'll be court-martialed. Well, back in those days, that just scared the hell out of you, you know. So, you went down to the bulletin board about every two hours to see if your name was on there, and we were in this pup tent city, right up on the bank—well, it was probably a mile back from Omaha Beach—and we were there for two and a half days—

MH: This is like late fall.

GM: No, this was in the latter part of September.

MH: The latter part of September of forty—

GM: And it rained every day: just an easy rain, but it could get you really wet. And we were in these pup tent cities, and they would blow—they had two meals a day, and you lined up and went down to chow, and when you went up, they gave you a piece of Army bread that weighed about a pound. It was a big piece of bread that was about, oh, a half an inch to three-quarters of an inch thick, and you held it in your hand. And they slapped peanut butter on top of that bread. Then you went on down the line, and they put a big

piece of Spam about a quarter-inch thick on top of that peanut butter. And you went to the next place, and they gave you coffee in your canteen cup. And right at the end of the serving line was a captain. He said, “Gentlemen, enjoy your T-bone steak.”

MH: (laughs) That was his regular routine?

GM: That was his—he said it a thousand times, morning, noon, and night. And for two days and a half, all we ate was peanut butter, Army bread and Spam.

MH: Did they even grill the Spam, or was it—

GM: Oh, yeah, it was warm.

MH: It was warm.

GM: It had been cooked in a—it had been sliced and put in an oven and warmed up.

MH: So how much Spam and peanut butter have you’ve eaten since you were a civilian?

GM: Believe it or not, I love peanut butter, and I’ve had Spam a few times, and I don’t dislike it that much.

MH: There’s something about the combination, though, that makes me a little queasy.

GM: Yeah, that’s right. That’s right.

MH: (laughs) This is literally on the beach?

GM: Well, it was back up on the hill, back from the beach.

MH: So, you’re there two and a half days—

GM: Two and a half days. My name came up, and they shipped us—the whole packet of us went to an old—it was a fort at Neufchâteau, France. As I remember, Neufchâteau, and they said that that fort—

MH: That's N-e-u-f— ?

GM: I don't know if it's N-e-u-f or N-i-u-f, Neufchâteau. And it's south of Nancy, quite a ways south of Nancy. I mean Paris; excuse me, Paris. And they said that that fort was built by Napoleon, and it's a big underground thing that is huge. It was huge. We were there for about a half a day, and my name was called on a packet, and believe it or not, Ken Mauer, who was in basic training with me, got on the same packet I did.

MH: What's his name?

GM: Ken Mauer, M-a-u-e-r. And we got on the truck, and there was twelve of us, and a sergeant was in charge of us. We said, "Where we going?" He said, "Don't worry about it. I know where you're going," and he said, "I'll tell you after we're on the road a ways." So, after we were on the road, it took us about four or five hours to go from that old fort to up near Pont-à-Mousson, France

MH: What's the name of the place?

GM: Pont-à-Mousson, P-o-n-t-a-dash-a-M-o-u-s-e-e-n [*sic*], I believe it is, Pont-à-Mousson. You can see it on a map anyplace. And "This is where you're getting off." And so, he said, "You fellows go to that woods over there on the right," but he said, "You stay here on the truck," and he said, "Now, you're close to the front, and if you hear artillery come in, you better duck. You've never seen what shrapnel can do to you." So, we were sitting there, and all of a sudden, my God, the biggest explosion went off you ever heard. Well, if you'd have turned that truck upside down, you couldn't have evacuated it any faster than we did, and we hit the ditch, and it was muddy and water, and we didn't even think about it. The sergeant came back about that time, and he says, "What the hell is the matter with you guys?"

MH: It was outgoing, right?

GM: He said, "Don't you know that that's outgoing?" And it was a battery of 155s, just over the hedgerow.

MH: Can I tell you something?

GM: Uh-huh.

MH: Almost the same thing happened to me in Vietnam.

GM: Is that right?

MH: Yes, sir. If you've never heard the difference between outgoing and incoming, it scares the hell out of you.

GM: Well, yes, it did.

MH: But then the first time you hear incoming, you stop because you go, "Wait, there's something wrong, that doesn't sound right."

GM: You—that is exactly right.

MH: So, anyhow, go back to your story. I'm sorry.

GM: So, we got off the truck, went down to the woods, and here was a first sergeant that was about five-foot-five, and he had a cigar in his mouth that he just clamped it by his whole hand. And he says, "I'm 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Percy Smith. You fellows have just been assigned to the fightingest goddamned outfit in the east hill. We're glad to see you, because in the last week, we have lost half of our company. They're gonna be glad to see you." So, they assigned us to different platoons. And Ken and I, we were sitting there, and Percy said, "Is there anybody here that's ever fired a mortar?" And those were 60mm mortars that went right along with the rifleman, so Ken says, "Hey, you know, with a mortar, you can set up about 100 yards back of the rifleman," so he says, "Let's take that." I said, "Okay, it's all right with me," so we held up our hand, and Percy says, "You fellows go over there to Sergeant (inaudible) in the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon," and he said, "He'll tell you what to do. He's gonna be damned glad to see you, because he just lost five men out of his mortar section this week."

MH: So much for being 100 feet behind the line.

GM: (laughs) Yeah, that's right. So, Sergeant (inaudible), he spent the rest of the afternoon telling us about the mortars, what we should do, how to handle them, and what we were gonna do and how we were gonna carry them when we moved forward and all that. But he never did say anything about where we would set a mortar up. And so, the next day, we were to go through a woods and capture a Polish labor camp, and they said there was about 200 Poles in this camp, and we were supposed to go in and capture. Well

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MH: This is still in France?

GM: Oh, yeah, this is [Pont-à-Mousson](#), France. And the Nazis had set up labor camps of about 200 men each to help support the army that was in the area by doing the labor that soldiers normally did. And so, the next morning, we started out carrying our mortars. Went into the woods, and the Germans attacked us with artillery, tree bursts. Well, we were so damned dumb that Ken and I, we were together in the same squad, and we'd see these artillery shells hit a tree and knock the whole top out of it. And we'd say, "Hey, look at that, my God, can you believe that a shell could do that?" and all this. And we did that for about ten minutes. Finally, the lieutenant said, "Okay, on your feet, let's go." So, we walked about fifty feet, maybe seventy-five, and here's a guy laying on the ground with the medics with him. And I looked at him, and my God, it was one of the fellows that rode up in the truck with us. I didn't even know his name. He had never even fired his rifle, and a piece of shrapnel had hit him in the head and tore a big hole in his helmet and killed him, dead, right there.

Well, I'll tell you, about a half-hour later, we got another incoming round from the artillery, and Ken and I both stuck our head right in the roots of the tree. And I'll tell you, we didn't move until the shelling stopped. But it was a funny thing. The Germans would fire about twelve rounds in a certain spot, then they would traverse it about 200 yards and start firing in that area for that length of time. And so, we went on that first day, and we took the labor camp and freed them.

MH: Tell me about that. What did you see at the labor camp?

GM: The labor camp was one that—it really wasn't that bad. It was one that they were healthy enough to work, and they would be taken out on the morning at a certain number would be taken out in the morning—or at least, that's what they told us. And then they would bring them back at night.

MH: And they were feeding them.

GM: And they were feeding them, because they were wanting them to work. Yeah.

MH: How did you capture the camp?

GM: Actually, we had very little resistance. The only thing we did was, as we were going to this camp, we had artillery, and then when we got close to the camp, some of the guards fired at us. But the infantry was ahead of the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon, and they went in and, without a great deal of resistance, those German soldiers that were guarding the camp surrendered. And so, we took it.

MH: Were these SS or not?

GM: No, no, they were just regular German—I would say most of them were older fellows that were guarding these labor camps.

MH: And the camp was just surrounded by barbed wire?

GM: Just by barbed wire, about—oh, I'd say ten feet high.

MH: And it had wooden barracks inside?

GM: Had wooden barracks inside. There were two, as I remember; there was two or three buildings that were pretty good-sized buildings, and it wasn't anything like we saw, like what we saw at the end—

MH: One of the things I'm assuming that's going on in your mind as you tell me is that you're comparing it to what you later saw at Buchenwald.

GM: That's right.

MH: But without that comparison, the notion that the Germans were using these people as slaves must have struck you in—

GM: We had heard that the Germans had captured a lot of—well, I had read about it in the paper at home before I went into the Army, even, and was telling how they were using all of the civilians that were able bodied to do labor that the army and soldiers normally did. And so, it wasn't something that I didn't expect at that time, but it was a hell of a lot different than Buchenwald was, when we saw that.

MH: So, you've captured this camp, and how many inmates were in there, would you guess?

GM: Well, I would say that at that time, there were maybe 140 that was in the camp, and the rest of them were on labor duty at some of the plants in the vicinity where the Germans were providing labor for. Because they had taken over a lot of the French factories and were producing not only ammunition and such but also stuff that was beneficial to the German army.

MH: So, you've captured this camp. What comes next?

GM: Well, we went back to near [Pont-à-Mousson](#), and the next day, we didn't—we just listened to our sergeant tell us how to stay alive or how to try to stay alive. And then the next day—

MH: What sorts of things did he tell you?

GM: Well, he would say, "You know, a bullet travels in a straight line, so if you can find a rock or a desolate place or a creek or a little place that's been washed out and they start firing, that's where you wanna hit." And he said, "As you go along and that you go through the countryside, you look ahead and find a place that, if you get fired on, that you can hit right now." And, believe it or not, we used that advice one hell of a lot in France, because the northern part of France is pretty level. It's farmland. And you were looking for a place to get to.

MH: So, you get that lecture, and then what happens?

GM: So, he said, "Tomorrow, we have an objective with Company G, has an objective to take Sainte-Geneviève." We had to cross the canal first, and as we were crossing the canal, we got really heavy fire, and we had to pull back. And we waited about—I'm

going to say three hours, and then we—they started firing artillery into the area where they thought the other artillery was coming from, and we crossed at that time and went on into Sainte-Geneviève, and there it's just a small village on a little hill. And it's kind of a cliff going up to one side of the village. Not high, but that turned out to be a really heavy firefight on both sides for the rest of the afternoon, and that night, we got in—the infantry got into the village and chased the Germans out. But that next morning, they counterattacked with four tanks and infantrymen. But our artillery knocked out three of the tanks, and we were able to hold this village and the Germans pulled back, then.

MH: You were still on the 60mm mortar platoon?

GM: I was still—I was a 60mm mortar man all the way through the war.

MH: Did a time ever come where you had to start firing a rifle?

GM: Oh, yeah. About—after we captured—

MH: Sainte-Geneviève?

GM: Sainte-Geneviève. We went on to Morre, and we had a little firefight there, and we had set up our 60mm mortars back about—I'm gonna say 100 yards back of where the line of riflemen was. And we had an Italian first lieutenant that was the platoon sergeant, and he came back. He says, "What in the hell do you guys think you're doing?" And we said, "Well, we're setting up the mortar. We're supposed to set it up." He said, "Hell, you're 100 yards back here." I said, "I know it. That's what we did in basic training," and he said, "Well, by God, you just learn one thing: You're not in basic training anymore, young man, you're in combat. You get your ass up there on the line with me where I can tell you what I want you to fire at. I can't come clear back here and tell you what I want you to fire on. You get up there with me." And that's where we stayed the rest of the war was right on the line, not more than fifteen yards back of the riflemen.

MH: There went your buddy's theory.

GM: (laughs) That's right.

MH: So, now what happens? We're in October of 1944?

GM: That's in October, that's the very first of October. That would've been probably the first of October and in Sainte-Geneviève. On the third day of October, we were to take about—it was a little down of Sivry, which was probably five miles farther east in France and southeast of [Pont-à-Mousson](#). And the town is S-i-v-r-e-y [*sic*]. And we were supposed to go into this town and secure a road junction that the Germans were using between two mountains, Saint-Jean and another mountain there, Saint-Jean. They were using the road to come between the two mountains down past this little village and on down towards [Pont-à-Mousson](#) and hauling ammunition down there. So, we were supposed to take that road junction and this little village and hold it, just secure it.

Well, that afternoon, about four o'clock, why, we started into Sivry, which was down in a valley that the hill—from the top of the hill down to this little village was probably between a quarter of a mile and a half a mile, not more than that, but it was clear pastureland on both sides of the road. And as we went down into the village, there was one group of—well, it was a machine gun that was set at the corner of the village, and they fired, and the rifleman in front of us, they fired at them and they held up a white flag, just that fast. And that was all the resistance that we had to go into that village. And we went in there. I set up my mortars where they told me to, back of a church far enough that I would fire over the church into the—along the road that went up between these two mountains, a mile or mile and a half away. And it was real quiet until twelve o'clock that night. Well, about midnight, the Germans started firing down on that little village.

There were no civilians in that village when we went in; it was completely evacuated, and we thought that was strange but never thought too much about it, because other villages had been evacuated before that that we had taken. And they started firing mortars and artillery into that town, and when it got daylight in the morning, there was only one house left in that entire village that wasn't destroyed, and the church, they had knocked two sections of that church down that was in front of us that we were back probably a block from the church. So, we could feel the concussion, but we were not hurt. We had dug our foxhole deep enough that we could get down in it, because we could hear the damn shells coming, and it was just zoom! Boom! They fired those 88s on a direct line, where ours arched. And until they come to the 90s on the tanks, then that was direct fire.

But that night and that next morning, the Germans snuck into town and they captured about thirty of our group. And they took them out under smokescreen and got away with it. Well, they kept firing all day until finally, General (inaudible) who was head of our division at that time, he said, "We gotta pull back." Well, it begin to get dark about five o'clock in the afternoon, and so as soon as it started getting dark, they gave orders to pick up and go back up over the hill. And artillery laid down smokescreen between the mountains and us, because that's where the damn Germans had gotten, was on that mountain, and they had their artilleries and 120mm mortars up there, and it was just devastating when they fired down into that village.

The next evening, we went into that town with 168 men in Company G, and that evening, that next evening, we pulled out of there with forty: forty of us was all that came out. Now, everybody wasn't killed, but they were injured to where they couldn't move them. So, we pulled back up, and then we were relieved by another unit, and we pulled back and reconnoitered, and about two days—now, when I say “we pulled back,” we pulled back probably a mile back of the line. You don't leave—well, you know how it is. You don't leave the area; you're still in support, but the others are doing the firefighting. And then we moved from there and went north of Sivry about ten miles to another town, and then finally a couple of days after that, maybe more than that, because that flat country, you didn't move very fast. We left [Pont-à-Mousson](#) on the first of October, and we reached [Saint-Avoid](#), France, which is just thirty-five miles straight across the country. When do you think we hit [Saint-Avoid](#)?

MH: A week later.

GM: Tenth of December. Thirty-five miles, and we reached Saint-Avoid on the tenth day of December.

MH: Wow, and you were fighting all the way?

GM: And we were fighting all the way, that's right. It was tougher than hell. We got sidetracked and was sent to [Farébersviller](#), France, where the SS was holding that town. It was a strategic town because it was high, and you could see from there almost to the Rhine River.

MH: What had they told you about the SS?

GM: Well, they told us that they were mean son-of-a-bucks, and that if they caught you or took you prisoner that they didn't show any mercy whatsoever, that they were just absolutely vicious and that they would shoot you. And if you had any piece of German weaponry on you, that they would take that and use it; that you, by God, were an enemy of the Germans and that they would kill you. And that's what we were told a lot of times.

MH: Were you also told to return the favor?

GM: No, no, we really weren't. We really weren't. They just said that they weren't like the regular German soldiers, that these were just vicious son of a bitches. Yeah, and they were, too. And Farébersviller was a three-day battle, and we finally pushed the SSers back. My wife and I went back there three years ago, to see the village because I'd never been back there. And the mayor took us around, and he let me see where I had been and see some of the houses that I had been by, and they had a group that met at the city hall, and they made me an honorary citizen of France. And that was one of the outcomes of fighting the battle of Farébersviller. And then we were sent to Saint-Avold, and we stayed there in reserve and to recoup and get new men, and we were supposed to get winter clothes, but we didn't. They didn't—we pulled out and went to Luxembourg to the Battle of the Bulge on the eighteenth of December.

MH: And you were still in summer uniforms?

GM: We were still in summer uniforms, yeah. Had jackets, now, we had a good jacket, but—

MH: The field jacket with liner?

GM: Yeah. That field jacket with liner, but we didn't have woolen pants and long johns yet.

MH: And no snow boots.

GM: And no snow boots. Our shoes had been covered with Cosmoline to keep the water out, because it rained every day that we were in France, I think. And when you would walk across country, you were walking in mud clear up to your ankles. So, you dabbed your boots with Cosmoline to keep the water out. Well, when we got into the Battle of the Bulge, it turned cold and begin to snow. And that Cosmoline, the cold penetrated right through that, and it was like an icicle rather than something warm. And we never did get our winter boots until the latter part of February.

MH: There were a lot of frostbite casualties.

GM: Oh, hell, yeah, my feet were frostbitten, too, twice: once on the twenty-third of December and another one on the middle of January.

MH: They send you to Luxembourg and they put you in the Bulge?

GM: They put us in the Bulge. We hit—we were on the south side of the Bulge near Ettelbruck, that's where we went in. And from there we went to Heiderscheid, which is west of there, and that was vicious fighting every day, twenty-four hours a day. There was no lull. I suppose through history that you have seen were 18,000 Americans were killed in that six-week period.

MH: I forget how many thousands were captured.

GM: Well, altogether, there was 83,000 wounded, captured, and killed. And 18,000 of those were killed, and the rest of them were injured or captured.

MH: Were you ever hit?

GM: Yeah, I got hit in my forearm just below my elbow: the last part of December, right just after Christmas.

MH: Bullet or shrapnel?

GM: Shrapnel, it was a piece of shrapnel that was about the size of your thumbnail or your thumb up to the first joint, and it stuck in my arm. And I went down to the medics and Captain Bob, he pulled that piece of shrapnel out and—well, I took my buddy Ken Mauer down. He'd been hit on the hand. We got caught out in an open field, and they were firing artillery shells at our 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon, and the guys had hit the ground, and Ken hit the ground and a piece of shrapnel took his ring finger off, except the tendon was holding it on, and went across and hit the ground and ricocheted through his overcoat, the front of it, and didn't even hit him. Hit him in the left arm, in the bicep. So, I took him down to the medic, and Captain Bob says, "What the hell's matter with you, Sarge?" and I said, "Nothing, why?" and he said, "Then why are you bleeding?" I said, "I didn't know I was." Well, I'd got hit by a piece of shrapnel, and I really didn't even know it, because it was so damned cold, and you were so nervous that you didn't even notice it.

MH: You were a buck sergeant?

GM: I was a buck sergeant at that time. And so, they cut my sleeve of my jacket, and here was that piece of shrapnel in my arm, and he said, "Just turn your head a little bit,"

so I turned it, and I could feel him pull it out, and he dropped it in that metal pan, and I can still hear that thing ring. So, I said, “Is that a wound good enough to send me back to the hospital?” He said, “I’m sorry to tell you, but I’ve had orders this morning that anybody that can carry a rifle with one arm and can walk has to stay on the line. You cannot be evacuated, because we’ve had so many casualties that we just can’t let you go.” And so, he ended up giving me a sulfa powder and four Band-Aids, and he said, “You use this, and when we get back to where that we can look at it again, if you have any trouble, why, come back to me. Otherwise, why, just handle it yourself.” So, that’s what I did. Yeah.

MH: Where are you on New Year’s Day, or New Year’s Eve?

GM: On New Year’s Eve, we were in Heiderscheid and just over the bank from Heiderscheid down toward the river, and we were near Ringel, and we were on the front side of that mountain for almost two weeks, because any time anybody moved in the daytime, they got an artillery shell fired at them, and the snow was about fifteen inches deep. And on the third or fourth day of January the temperature was fifteen below zero. And that’s where we were until then they took us from Heiderscheid, we went back northeast to a little village called Bourscheid. And we went in there through the woods.

There were a lot more trees in forty-four [1944] than there now. They’ve cleaned them, and they have turned it into farmland, but back then, there was a lot of trees on that mountain between Ringel and Bourscheid, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon, they sent us up what they called a “firepath,” and as we went up the hill, we got fired on by an artillery, an 88 that was up at the top of the hill. So, there was about fifteen inches of snow on the ground, and everybody ran towards the trees, which turned out to be a bad mistake, because they had set that they called “Bouncing Betty” anti-personnel mines in the snow with a tripwire just underneath the snow. And as we ran towards the woods and tripped the wires, those things came up and hit us. And we started out that morning with twenty-six, and at four o’clock that afternoon, there was four of us that was able to go back, because they pulled us back, finally. And that was one day that I’ll never forget.

MH: Is there any point at which you say, “We might not win this”?

GM: Well, we couldn’t: we were on the south side of where the Germans had broken through, and we were the eastern-most group of soldiers. And we were seeing all of these young fellows and middle-aged fellows coming through with new clothes and everything, new rifles, and we thought, “Where in the hell did they get all of these people? I just don’t understand where they’re—why that they still have so many young fellows that are just now coming into the Army.” And, yes, we thought right then that there was a possibility that, by God, we might lose the war.

MH: Just so I'm not confused, these are American young people?

GM: No.

MH: Oh, the Germans, okay.

GM: These were German young people that were coming in. Well, we finally realized that we were the easternmost group of American soldiers on the line that—on the south side of the salient that the Germans had broken through. And we were getting all the fresh troops that were coming in all the time. So, consequently, we didn't realize it until, oh, two or three weeks into the Bulge that we were meeting all of the new guys that were still coming in and that the Germans were feeding in. And we didn't realize that the Germans were losing so many men, too, because they had 26,000 killed.

MH: When did you get into Germany proper?

GM: Into Germany proper, the twelfth day of February we crossed the Saar River near Dillingen, and that was the first time that we were on German land.

MH: Does that give you an emotional lift?

GM: Well, when we got to German border, we thought, "Well, now, we've got them on the run," but you know, the western part of Germany is just as mountainous as the area of Luxembourg and southern Belgium is, and we thought we would never get through those damn hills.

MH: How does it compare to any part of the U.S. you've been to?

GM: More like up in Georgia, north of Atlanta, northeast of Atlanta. It's big hills. They're not really mountains like the Rocky Mountains; they're more like the Ozarks in south Missouri.

MH: You get into Germany. Is there any discussion, or do they tell you you're likely to find these concentration camps?

GM: Not yet, not yet. We went through Germany and on March 26, we crossed—I think it's March 26, yeah, that we crossed the Rhine River at Mainz. And as we—

MH: You went over on a pontoon bridge?

GM: No, we rode across in engineered—in combat engineer boats. We walked down to the—they brought a trailer load of boats in, and twelve of us would pick up the side of the boat, six on each side, put it in the water. We would get in the boat, and we had paddles for each one of us, and we had an engineer, and we had a little—I don't know whether it was a three-horse or a five-horse motor on the back to bring the boat back. And we started paddling across the river, and we got out into the middle, and the Germans started firing on us with 20mm quad air—what they used, what the Air Corps used to fire at airplanes in the air. And they used that as anti-personnel fire coming across the river.

MH: You're in an inflatable boat?

GM: No, it was a wooden boat.

MH: A wooden boat, okay.

GM: And they hit at boat right next to us as we were crossing, and that boat—it knocked the wood, because it was just plywood. Those boats were made out of plywood, and it tore a hole in the side of that boat, and it sunk in the middle of the river. Well, when they were firing, they were using tracers also in the ammunition, and when that would hit the water, it'd sound just like a board six inches wide and ten-foot long, if you held it up and slammed it down on the water. That's what those bullets sounded like. And that tracer bullet, it'd go down in the water and the light would—it was a shimmering light that was—it was, well, it was awful, because it was so scary, and you were expecting that the next minute that you were gonna get hit.

MH: What's the weather like at this point?

GM: It was cold: not really cold, but it was cool. Snow had begun to melt, and the river was at flood stage. It was up and racing like a mountain stream, and when we started out, we were paddling as hard as we could to cross the river, and we landed probably two

blocks down the river from where we took off at, and we landed in a bomb crater on the east side of the river. There was a big rock wall there, and a bomb had come down and made a half a hole in that rock wall. And we landed and got into that bomb crater.

MH: How wide is the river at this point?

GM: It's probably two blocks wide. It's a big river, yeah.

MH: And again which—

GM: By that time, they didn't have the pontoon bridge built yet; they had put one across, but it had been bombed out.

MH: And this is the Rhine?

GM: This is the Rhine at Mainz. And in order to get down to the river, they had to take bulldozers and push the debris, because it had been firebombed earlier by the British and completely destroyed that town. In fact, there is a monument—I was back there a few years ago, and there's a monument now in the courtyard just up from the river that says 91,000 people were killed on February something—19, I believe it was—from firebombing by the British. And so, we went across the river and got into that bomb crater, but every time we tried to get out of it, the Germans were in a warehouse that was just about a couple hundred feet, maybe 300 feet back from the river along a railroad track. And we tried to get out of that, and they would fire on us, and then they were throwing potato mashers, and they would just go over us and explode in the water, and we were getting really wet. Finally, one German, he came up to the bomb crater and was just ready to throw a potato masher down in the hole, and one of the fellows in the hole shot him. And he fell down into the hole, and we had a medic with us, and so he said, "If he thinks that I'm gonna repair him, he's crazier than hell," and he gave him a shot of morphine that knocked him out. Yeah.

So, we left that—finally, we got out of the bomb crater, because daylight, the Americans, the tanks came up and they were firing across the river into the warehouses where those fellows were that were firing on us. And we finally got out and they had told us to assemble near the end of the bridge that was up the river a ways from us and so, we got there, and they said, "Drop your mortars and your heavy weapons, because you're gonna go house to house and help them clean out this village of Castile." And so, hell, we'd never done anything like that. And so, we started to do what the riflemen were doing, and we got into the village about a couple blocks, and down the street was five big

barracks. So we went down to those barracks, and nobody around except one drunken German soldier.

And Sergeant Sedinis, he went over to this guy and says, “You’re an American prisoner,” and he reached down to get his rifle, and the German, he wasn’t gonna let him have that rifle, and he just started turning around backwards, and Sedinis was falling, trying to get that rifle from him, and it was a comical sight to see Sedinis trying to get the rifle, and this guy backing up and keeping it out of his way. Finally the German fell down, and he got the rifle from him. But as we got into this courtyard, it was on an inside of a courtyard that these five barracks were there. And we had been told that the Germans had retreated back towards Frankfurt and that there might be stragglers but not to worry.

Well, we went into this first barracks, and it was the—the bottom floor was about half underground and had just short windows above ground, so Sergeant Sedinis, he went upstairs and I went downstairs and walked back in the hallway, and these were long, pretty long barracks. And so, as I walked back, everything was quiet, and finally I got back, oh, probably fifty feet from the steps as we were going down, and I saw some guy stick his head around the corner. Well, I thought it was a civilian pilfering is what I really thought, and I hollered, “*Kommen sie out*,” and the guy, he stuck his head back, and then he stuck his head back again, and I fired down the hall, and I said, “*Kommen sie out*; the next time I’ll kill you, you son of a bitch!” And so, he stuck his hand out and had a white handkerchief in his hand or a rag, and he came out. And I walked on down there, and I said, “*Kommen sie out*.” I said, “*American Soldat* all around the building, and you’re an American prisoner,” and so he came out. Another guy came out, another guy came out, and they just kept coming out, and I started backing up. And I held my rifle on them.”

MH: Are they carrying rifles?

GM: No, they didn’t have anything. And when it ended up, why I had a hallway full of people.

MH: How many people did you capture?

GM: Well, believe it or not, fifty-six.

MH: Really?

GM: As we were walking down the hallway, I was walking backwards, and one of the German soldiers says, "Sergeant, where are you from?" I said, "Who said that?" and he held his hand up, and I said, "Come up here." I said, "Tell these people to line up and nobody'll get hurt, because there are American soldiers outside around this building, and I just came in to get you." Well, hell, that was not true. I didn't know whether there was anybody outside or not. So, he told them, "Line up," and that they were American prisoners. So, he said, "Where are you from?" and I said, "Missouri." He said, "I'm an American citizen also, from Germany. I worked in the Ford Motor Company in Detroit for twelve years. I came back to visit my parents, and the goddamn SS got me." And he said, "They told me if I tried to defect, they would not only kill my grandfather and his family but my parents and all my family." Whether that was true or not, I don't know, but that's what he told me. And so, we started to go up the steps, and he said, "Aren't you gonna get that damned officer, my officer in that office?" By that time, Sergeant Sedinis, he had heard the racket, so he came down the steps, and so he said, "My commanding officer is in the office in there."

So, we went in, and here was a colonel and a captain and then a first sergeant or sergeant major or whatever they call them, and the colonel said, "Well, we've been waiting on you. We expected you sooner than this," and I said, "Why are you in here?" and he said, "I'm the commanding officer of this artillery unit." And so, Sergeant Sedinis said, "Come on, you're our prisoner." He said, "No, you get an officer of my rank, and I will surrender all these men without any problem." And Sedinis said, "You Heinie son of a bitch, you're coming with us. We don't have an officer with us." And he said, "Well, you go get one," and Sedinis said, "I'm gonna give you three seconds to get your ass out this door, and if you don't come out, you're gonna be a dead Heinie."

So, the officer, he just started to say again, "Get me an officer of my rank," and Sedinis hit him upside the head with his rifle and knocked him over the chair, and he said, "Now, you get your ass out of there or you're a dead Heinie the next time." Well, he got up, and he said, "Can I keep my revolver?" (MH laughs) and Sedinis said, "What do you want a revolver for?" and he said, "Just for my own protection." Well, they were afraid of their own men, and so Sedinis said, "I'll take the ammunition out of it, but you can keep the revolver." So, he let him keep it, but he extracted the bullets out of it before he gave it back to him.

And so, we go outside, and just as we got outside, here came the military—we called the military police, or S-2. And he says, "What's in here?" and this German that had told me, he said, "This is the office of the artillery battalion here, and the maps for all of this area are on the wall, and it shows the placement of the guns." So, he goes in, and I went in with him, and here are nineteen artillery pieces in place, shown on the map. So, this guy, he calls in the Air Corps and calls to the Air Corps, said, "I've got some map coordinates here I want to give you. It's artillery pieces that can fire on our soldiers unless we get them." Well, he turned around to me, and he says, "Sergeant, you did one hell of a job."

What's your name and serial number?" So, I gave it to him. That's the last I heard of it. On May 7, my dad's birthday, when we were in Bavaria, I received the Silver Star for that action that day, because they knocked out all nineteen pieces of artillery without them ever firing a shot on our soldiers.

MH: Nice. So, take me up to Buchenwald.

GM: Okay, we went from there through Wiesbaden up through Kassel. From Kassel, we came back down and went through Erfurt and then into Weimar. And Weimar, we got into Weimar; the 319<sup>th</sup> regiment actually took Weimar itself, then they went on to Gotha and the 317 was then reserve, so they left us in Weimar to police the city and to keep order and do anything we could. Well, we kept seeing fellows in striped suits, walking around in different parts, skinny as hell. And Captain Namkowitz, who was the company commander of G Company, he said to Percy Smith, the first sergeant, he said, "Take a couple guys and see if you can find out what the hell this camp is out here."

So, well, we had talked to one of the prisoners, and he said, "Well, I'm from a camp." He was Polish, and Captain Namkowitz could speak Polish, and so he said, "This guy says there's a camp outside of town here. Go out and see what it is." So, Percy Smith and myself and a guy by the name of Don Smith, who lives at Lake Placid, Florida, we drove the Jeep, and we went out to this camp. And as we rounded the hill and came up behind these trees, here was a camp that—we estimated over thirty barracks up there. And the people were standing, holding onto the fence, and they could see you, but they were looking right straight through you. They just were so malnourished that they could hardly stand up, and they were just nothing but skin and bones.

And there was a couple of guys that was taking a bath in a wash pan, from a wash pan, just using a cloth. And they had their shirt on, but the rest of it was bare, and you couldn't believe that people that were so skinny could still stand up. But they did, so we went in, and there was a fellow there, Percy asked, "Can anyone speak English?" and this fellow said, "I'm from Lithuania, and I can speak a little English." So Percy asked him, "What is this camp anyway?" He said, "This is a labor camp. This camp furnishes labor for all of the industry that is within—" he said, "—thirty kilometers of here." He said, "Well, how come you're here?" and he said, "When the Germans came into Lithuania, they took everybody from sixteen years old on up that was healthy and could work and sent us all to different labor camps." And he said, "I came here with a lot of other people from Lithuania." Percy said, "Are there any Germans here now?" and he said, "Not now."

He said, "Yesterday, when they heard that the Americans had taken Erfurt, the SSers left here." And he said, "They were here, but they left, but we caught—we have"—it was

either seven or nine of them “locked up downstairs,” and he said, “There was a tank that pulled up here yesterday, but they just asked us what it was, and we told them it was a Nazi labor camp, and they just went on. Nobody even stopped.

MH: That must’ve been the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored or 6<sup>th</sup> Armored.

GM: I would say it was the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored. Now, I don’t know that it was.

MH: 4<sup>th</sup> Armored and 6<sup>th</sup> Armored went by Buchenwald on April 11.

GM: Okay, the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored were a little bit south of Weimar; they were on our right as we were going through there, so I’m pretty sure it was the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored. But Smitty said, “Well, didn’t they come in to see if they could help?” and he said, “No, they just came up. There was three guys in a small tank,” must’ve been a recon car, and he said, “They just said, ‘What the hell is this place?’ and we said, ‘It’s a labor camp,’ and so they were gone. And they weren’t here five minutes. They were gone.” So, we then were assigned the job of rounding up the prisoners that were in town and bringing them back to camp. After we got back and told Captain Namkowitz what the camp was, he called regiment and regiment called division, and they said, “Round up the prisoners that are pilfering in town and take them out to the camp, and we will have food there within a reasonable time” and said, “Keep them there, and we’ll send medics and food there.”

So, that evening, food arrived, and where they got it from, I don’t know. But there was two truckloads of food that came into that camp. And so, the next day, the company was moved to Jena.

MH: To Jena?

GM: Jena, that’s on east and a little south, or towards that direction. And they left the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon there to continue to round up, because by that time, they had medics and I don’t know, some other outfit that had come in there and was helping to feed and take care of the prisoners. And the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon was left there for another two days to round up these fellows and take them back out to camp.

And we had a 6-by-6 that we were traveling around Weimar, looking for these people, and one guy we saw come out of a house, and he had a great big potato, and this potato probably was—well, it was a huge potato. He was eating on that thing like he was eating an ice cream cone. And he walked out—we hollered at him to come towards the truck,

and he came towards the truck and got about halfway there, and he dropped the potato and keeled over. And we picked him up and took him out to the camp, and Dr. Bob said, “His system is just so weak that he couldn’t stand all of that starch and nutrition from that potato.” And he said, “The poor sucker is liable to die from it, because he ate too much of it.” Yeah. So, then we left there—

MH: How do you react to this sort of stuff you’re seeing?

GM: At that time, you just couldn’t—you were in disbelief that people could be treated that way, and when you saw them, you just felt so damned sorry for them that you wanted to help them, but you didn’t know how. And all you were trying to do was to get them out to the camp so somebody else would take care of them, because you really didn’t want to know what happened to them.

MH: Why do you say that?

GM: Well, because you didn’t want to see them die. That was—we’d take them out to the camp, and then we’d leave, because we just didn’t want to see what happened to them, because you just felt so bad to think that a human being could be treated that way, that it was just almost beyond belief.

MH: What’s the conversation like with your buddies?

GM: You mean when we’re talking?

MH: Yeah.

GM: Well, we would say, “Can you believe that the Germans could be so damn cruel as to treat people—?” That was the conversation pretty much, that you just couldn’t believe that the Germans could treat people this way and still think that they were human beings.

***Mp3 file 1 ends; mp3 file 2 begins.***

MH: Did anybody try and say, “Well, maybe it’s not all the Germans. Maybe it’s just the SS”? Or was it really all the Germans?

GM: Well, at that time, the SS were Germans. So, we just said—we referred to them as “Germans.” Yeah, because, now, the people in Weimar swore up and down that they didn’t know what was happening out at that camp or what the camp was about. And that’s hard to believe, because they unloaded those people in the railroad station at Weimar and marched them out there to begin with. And then finally, they put a railroad siding in that they would take them out there, then.

MH: So, they’d see the trains, the cattle cars filled with people.

GM: Why, sure. They had to. Somebody did.

MH: And they claimed they didn’t know what was going on.

GM: And they claimed they didn’t know. Well, I’ll tell you. When General [George S.] Patton got there, he saw to it that every civilian that they could round up in Weimar was taken out there, marched out there, to go through the camp so they could see what the hell it was.

MH: I’ve seen the film of that, where they made them go into this one building where the bodies were just stacked up.

GM: That’s right. When we were out there, we saw six guys that were pulling a cart, and it was two-wheel cart, and the inside of that cart had a zinc lining or some kind of metal, and we always thought it was zinc. But anyway, they were going around to the different barracks, picking up dead bodies that they would lay outside. And these fellows was the detail. They would pick them up and put them on this cart, and the cart that we saw had at least six or eight bodies laying in it. And they were taking them to the crematory. And at that time, they had four crematories there. And they claimed that that had been running seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day up until the SS left, and then they shut it down.

MH: Did you see any evidence of torture there?

GM: Well, the only torture that I could honestly say that I saw was just them not being fed. They told us that all that they’d had for the past week was potato peelings, that the SS had eaten the inside and that they had taken the potato peelings from that, and then went out and pulled green grass and mixed into a soup. And that soup was all they had.

MH: You didn't see a room that had hooks on the walls.

GM: I didn't then, but I did after—when I went back there, yeah.

MH: Yeah, I'm just talking about what you saw that time. How much time did you spend at Buchenwald?

GM: We were probably there for thirty to forty minutes. And we saw inside of one barrack.

MH: What was that like?

GM: It was just inhumane. The guys were laying in the bunks, almost like cordwood, and they were five or six high; five high, I believe it was. And the guys were so weak that they could hardly move. They said they had been worked and that they hadn't been fed to keep their health up.

MH: Could you establish any other nationalities that were there?

GM: Now, this fellow from Lithuania, he told us that there were people from Belgium, from France, from Russia, from Poland, from Slovakian countries and all around.

MH: Did you see any kids?

GM: Honestly, I didn't. Yeah, I did not.

MH: You spend less than an hour in the camp. You were in the area for, what, a day or two?

GM: I was in the area for four days.

MH: Four days.

GM: Four days.

MH: But of that time, only about an hour or less in the camp.

GM: In the camp, until we would bring the fellows back that we would pick up in town and bring them back, but we didn't go into—at that time, the MPs had got there, and they directed to the first aid station, that's where we put them all; then we would leave and go back out. But you would see these poor son of a guns walking around that, they didn't know what to do or where to go, and they just—even though they were free to go outside, few of them did, because they didn't know where to go or what to do.

MH: When you were picking them up in Weimar, did you have a Jeep?

GM: No, we had a 6-by-6. It's a small truck.

MH: Right, I'm familiar with it. So, how do you deal with having seen something like this?

GM: Well, that's really a difficult question, because you had been hardened to the effects of war, seeing people killed and seeing injured laying along the road: that this was actually just something else that happened in a war.

MH: So, you're able to go into a mode where you try and not let it affect you emotionally.

GM: That's exactly right.

MH: What about years later?

GM: You would think about it, and I thought about that a lot for a long, long time. I would be going to sleep, and I would think about it. And it affected me probably more after the war than it did at that particular time, because I had been used to seeing people killed and wounded. And that I would think about a lot when—basically when I was getting ready to go to sleep.

MH: Did you have nightmares?

GM: No, I can't say that I did.

MH: When did you get married?

GM: I got married in 1939.

MH: So, you were married before you went over.

GM: I had a three-year-old daughter.

MH: When did you first tell your wife about the things you had seen?

GM: When I got back, I talked to her about it and told her about what we'd seen and what some of the things that happened. But then I didn't talk about it for years and years and years, because people just didn't seem to think that—or they thought you were exaggerating, really, so I just quit talking about it until about—I started talking to schools here about ten years ago.

MH: So, about 1998?

GM: Yeah.

MH: What got you started doing that?

GM: A friend of mine, who's a schoolteacher. At that time, he said, "You know, we're having a school program in honor of the veterans. Why don't you come over and just say something about your experience in World War II?" And I did, and I told a little bit about everything along the way, spent about fifteen minutes talking. Finally, one of the teachers, she said, "Mr. Myers, could I get you to come and talk to my history class?" and I said, "Sure, what do you want me to talk about?" and she said, "Why don't I have the kids ask you questions and then you answer them?"

So, that's what I did, and that's what I got started with, and then I took from that the questions they'd ask and more or less made a presentation and would talk to them. In a class of forty minutes, I'd talk twenty, twenty-five minutes and then I'd let them ask questions for the balance of the class. If it was a double class, then I would tell them about my experience of going into the Army, basic training, going overseas, and then some of my experiences in France, in the Bulge across from the river, and Buchenwald and like that. This year, I only talked to ten classes because my wife got sick, and she finally passed away two weeks ago. But last year, I talked to forty-two classes, and the year before that, thirty-eight classes. Before that, why, I really don't know how many I'd talked to.

MH: What does it do for you to talk to these kids?

GM: It's kind of a relief to tell them about things that they don't get in the history book; that's the way I'm looking at it is that what I tell them is something they can't find in a history book, because the new history historians are trying to downplay all the history about World War II and Vietnam and all of them. The Battle of the Bulge in the high school curriculum right now consists of about five lines. And it says that the Battle of the Bulge was fought between the Axis and the Allies in southern Belgium and in Luxembourg and lasted for six weeks with heavy casualties on both sides, and the Allies finally won. And that's almost word for word what it says about the Battle of the Bulge.

MH: What's it saying about the Holocaust?

GM: To be—I didn't look about the Holocaust. I don't know for sure.

MH: Do you remember the first time you told kids about Buchenwald?

GM: Well, that would've been probably ten years ago, and I tell them, "I have pictures of prisoners that Percy Smith took," and the kids just can't believe it. In fact, I had one young man that was from a very influential family here in Lakeland, and he told me that he didn't believe that there was a Holocaust ever happened. And I said, "Would you believe it if you saw pictures that was taken?" and he said, "Well, I don't know." He looked at the pictures, turned around and set down in his seat and never said a word, never said another word.

MH: You have those pictures?

GM: I have some of them, yeah.

MH: I wonder if it would be possible for me to borrow them and scan them on the computer and then possibly use a couple of them in the book?

GM: Now, these are bigger pictures that I have, and I might be able to take pictures of it.

MH: How big are they?

GM: Well, they're about—I'm going to say ten by fifteen.

MH: Oh, so these are big enlargements.

GM: Yeah, yeah.

MH: What do the pictures show?

GM: Well, it just shows the people walking around. Also, it shows people that were in one of the barracks that showed how they looked in the barracks, sleeping. And another one is—I believe that it's one of the crematories in there.

MH: Are there any pictures of you over there?

GM: No.

MH: Do you have any pictures of you in the war?

GM: I got a couple of when I was on duty. Hell, we didn't carry cameras back in those days; that was just something else to—well, you couldn't get film. Now, people in headquarters and such as that, a lot of pictures they took—how they got the film, I don't know. But I honestly never even thought about it. Since that time, I've taken thousands of pictures, but during the war, that was the last thing I even thought of.

MH: Do you have any picture of you in the Army?

GM: Oh, yeah.

MH: Because I'd like to get one of those and one of you today. Lakeland is where?

GM: Lakeland is halfway between Tampa and Orlando.

MH: I'm about to leave to go to Chicago to interview some vets from Word War II, then I'm going to the 80<sup>th</sup> Division reunion, and one day at the 69<sup>th</sup>, but when I get back, I'm only in Punta Gorda.

GM: Oh, well, that's only—

MH: That's about two hours.

GM: Three hours.

MH: Two, three hours, but I might like to drive up and see if there's a place I could take the pictures like a FedEx/Kinko's and scan them. I mean, I'm assuming there's a FedEx/Kinko's or something like that.

GM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. Well, we got an Office Depot just a couple of blocks from here.

MH: I mean, what I'd like to do is go in and scan them at a high enough quality so we could use them. But I may have to come up that way anyhow: I go to the VA in St. Pete, I go to Bay Pines.

GM: Oh, I go over to Tampa.

MH: Oh, that's the one not far from Bush Gardens right?

GM: Right.

MH: Yeah, yeah. Let me ask a couple more questions. When did you finally get back home from Europe?

GM: I got back home I believe it was the fifteenth of January of forty-six [1946].

MH: Forty-six [1946]. So, you come home to your wife and your daughter.

GM: Yup, home at that time, and that—I made one telephone call when the war was over. I got a pass to Switzerland, and in Switzerland, it took me almost five hours to get through to St. Joe, Missouri, and got a hold of my wife. And that short telephone call, because you were only allowed to be on the phone for just—I don't know, three minutes.

MH: Yeah, it used to be a three-minute phone call.

GM: And when I reversed the charges and when my wife got the bill, she just about died, because it cost her twenty-seven dollars for that phone call, and that was back when twenty-seven dollars was a week's wages.

MH: What did you do when you came home?

GM: I went back to work for Quaker Oats Company.

MH: And stayed with them until you retired?

GM: Well, they sold the division that I was in, the feed division, to Continental Grain, and I stayed with Continental Grain until I retired and a total of forty-five years.

MH: Really? How many children?

GM: Two.

MH: Grandchildren?

GM: I got six grandchildren, seventeen great-grandchildren, and eighteen great-great-grandchildren. (laughs)

MH: No! Really?

GM: Yup.

MH: When did you move to Florida?

GM: In eighty-eight [1988].

MH: You like it in Florida compared to Missouri?

GM: It's okay. I still miss the seasons of the year, but all my family's down here. My son and daughter were both here before I came here, so it's okay.

MH: What was your wife's name?

GM: Emma.

MH: You said you were married sixty-nine years?

GM: Sixty-nine years.

MH: That's marvelous. I imagine it's extremely difficult to cope with that kind of loss.

GM: Well, no one will ever know until they go through it. They say, "Well, I'm sorry, is there anything I can do to help you" and all that. Well, you wish that you could say, "Yeah, you could do this or that," but there isn't, because there are things that happen that you just can't help but remember. And particularly of an evening like when we were eating or afterwards, why, we would talk about what happened during the day and what

we were gonna do tomorrow, and I really miss that. And I miss her good cooking.  
(laughs)

MH: She still cooked?

GM: Oh, yes, she cooked, clear up until she went into the hospital.

MH: How often do you go to the VA?

GM: I go over once every four months.

MH: Thank you for all the time you've taken. I really would like to—when I get back from these two trips, I'd like to call you and then drive up and look at the pictures and take them over to a Kinko's or something and scan them.

GM: Okay, that'd be fine.

MH: Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

GM: Okay.

MH: You said your son lives near you?

GM: Yes, and my daughter both.

MH: In Lakeland?

GM: In Lakeland.

MH: What are their names?

GM: Gary, Gary Lee. He works for the post office.

MH: Gary Lee Myers?

GM: Yes, and Rhonda Jean Hayward, H-a-y-w-a-r-d is my daughter. She lives ten miles north of town.

MH: All right. Thank you very much.

GM: All right.

MH: I sure appreciate it. Bye-bye, sir.

***End of interview***