

Video Recording Log
Veteran Eugene Houser

Name of Interviewer: Nancy Rotzoll

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Eugene Houser

Birth Date: 11/14/1922

Recording format: Mini DVD

Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 47 minutes **Date of recording:** 03/07/2008

Location of recording: WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

Recording log:

00:00 [Introduction]

00:25 Beginning of war, Pearl Harbor—high school

01:15 University, drafted at end of college—father wanted him to apply for deferment for farm, said no—Farmer City, 1944—draft notice

02:05 October—Camp Adaberry Induction Center—railroad to Atlanta, GA

02:25 Camp Croft, SC—basic training—trained as infantry scout—intelligence, reporting

02:50 End of basic training—went to Camp Henry

02:55 New Port News, NJ—U.S.S. America—replacements—comedian Red Skelton on board as Army person, entertainer

03:50 Straights of Gibraltar

04:32 Disembarked at Naples—bay full of sunken ships—gang plank between vessels to get to shore

04:50 Count Shayona dairy farm—son in law of Mussolini—served as night guard for 10th Mountain Division

05:28 Went to Caserta near supreme high command of Mediterranean Theatre

05:43 Back to Naples, Headquarters—helped troop movement officer with his duties—vacancy in Headquarters for typist

06:17 Assigned to 4th Writing Unit—kept orders for incoming troops—became clerk typist, not scout M.O.S.—envious position

06:55 Naples received troops, sent them out—received troops coming back with enough points to be discharged or being sent to the South Pacific

- 07:20 All kinds of ships carrying people
- 07:40 As people came into the depot it would be decided if they had enough points—if they did, they were sent to him—if not enough points, sent to South Pacific, where replacements needed
- 08:33 Iwo Jima; New Guinea—fighting hand-to-hand in New Guinea 36-38 days without replacements because all the replacements were being sent to Europe—after Europe liberated, all replacements sent to South Pacific
- 09:08 Typist—8-hour shift—lenient schedule—spare time spent at Naples and Pompeii—leave time
- 09:58 Naples—Mussolini was going to have World's Fair—used those buildings
- 10:30 R & R every 3 months—Rome, Red Cross—St. Peter's Basilica—Swiss Guards—Ancestors were Swiss—Swiss Canteen—Swiss Guard took him on walking tour of Rome
- 12:00 Went to Florence for two months—processed troops—on weekends went into city
- 12:28 Marina de Pisa—stationed in barn, could see leaning tower—ringing bells in the tower
- 14:00 Keeping track of rest of war—*Stars and Stripes* publication
- 14:44 Leghorn, Italy—processed troops
- 14:50 R & R in Switzerland—one week tour—stayed with cousin—met some family, saw ancestral area
- 16:07 Swiss feeling towards Americans—neutral
- 16:55 1945-1946—FDR's death, en route to Italy—reaction to FDR's death—reaction to Truman, people thought he did not know much
- 18:08 Switzerland—neutral—could not fly over—one plane did on accident, Swiss fired at him and missed on purpose to maintain neutrality
- 19:00 Office had 4-5 typists—cut metal plates for info with name, religion, blood type
- 20:00 Leghorn—check incoming troops for people he knew from Illinois—met one man who had been Sherriff of DeWitt, while he was in service his wife took over as Sherriff—became acquainted with names of all forts in U.S.
- 21:35 Kept track of points by number of months and battles in service, number of children—headquarters of each battalion followed each soldier with records
- 22:30 Leghorn—had friend in 44th Infantry Regiment [unintelligible: "Ni-Si's"]—Japanese-Americans interred in Idaho—shipped to Italy—sent to worst battles—highest casualties, all successful

- 23:25 Friend worked at depot motor pool—found out U.S. government selling surplus vehicles—could buy jeep and send it home as baggage if sergeant or higher--\$150—had bar on it to keep jeep personnel from being beheaded—used it on family farm for 10 years
- 24:50 Ranked as Tech. Sergeant
- 25:04 Got Jim booked on same ship home—“Knee-high Victory”—12 days
- 25:22 Picked up jeep, went home—married in 1946 to former Purdue student
- 25:57 Not hard to adjust to farm life—came back at harvest—father was crippled—had to put up with whoever was there for farm help—felt guilty for leaving father but felt he had to serve in war
- 26:25 Others from Farmer City that served—about 20 years ago, all Farmer City veterans got together—decided to write down stories—took 8 years to finish book, 1995
- 27:45 Took until 1995 for people to talk about war experiences—thought it was too terrible and no one would be interested in hearing about it
- 28:10 Met man at Carle Clinic—had been cook on submarine—only submarine credited with sinking a train—navigation on submarine
- 30:23 *Their Roles Remembered*—650 names, about 400 stories, all the information they could collect about Farmer City area veterans
- 31:00 Bill Howard—pilot on B-17 that was shot down—became principal at home—watched as other men in parachutes were killed, then he was attacked by natives with pitchforks—later when covered WWII with students, couldn’t talk about it
- 32:00 Veterans not wanting to talk—loosened up eventually, easier to write
- 32:35 Air Force veteran shot down—parachute—fighter plane came back and waved to him so he waved back—shot in the leg, lost leg in P.O.W. camp
- 33:30 Helped veterans to talk about experiences
- 33:50 Veterans dying—had to get stories recorded before they were all lost
- 34:30 War was necessary—Victory Ships
- 35:45 Correspondence with family—microfilm letters, reconstructed later—called home from Switzerland, cost \$13 for 3 minutes—mail
- 37:05 Kept in touch with friends after war—visiting each other, talked about families
- 38:25 John Dawson—First Special Service Forces—1st one—trained to do anything from scuba diving to mountain skiing, infantry—Battle of Anzio in Italy—South of Rome, Mount Defensia—2

American Divisions, 1 British Division tried to conquer—1500 S.S.F. troops repelled 2 days on back side of mountain, surprised and captured Germans

40:00 Mount Defensia Campaign—S.F. accepted—1st to liberate Rome—night raids—Devil's Brigade

42:29 Interrogator for German Officers—taught German 2 years, sent to Europe

43:08 Not heroic service—tries to highlight other men's service—one typing course got him out of the infantry

43:48 U.S. had to enter War—involved before with supplying material—Pearl Harbor broke the bridge

44:30 [Wrap-up]

44:50 Was not choice to become clerk typist—do or die military saying