



Smith, Max
interviewed by John Haller
transcribed by John Haller

TAPE #1 SIDE A - April 27, 1993

John Haller: Okay, why don't you start off by telling me a little bit about your family...uh...first of all where you were born...and um...if you had any siblings, brothers and sister and so forth...

Max Smith: Okay...I was born on a farm, in a farm house in Liberty Township, Marshall County, Iowa, which is about fifty miles northwest of here. Uh...same location, Marshall County as Grant Township is in Poweshiek County on...uh... April 17, 1918. Umm... I was born on my grandfather's farm...umm...we, my parents lived a mile north on a...in an adjoining farm...and my mother was helping my grandmother with the laundry, or as we called it then, the "wash." And uh...I apparently decided that I was, uh, going to come a little early...so uh...I was born not where I was expected to be ...uh...that was uh...in the days before...uh... babies were born in hospitals and the local doctor took care of the situation.

JH: Oh really?

MS: Yes...I was the first of two children...I had a brother that was born six years later.

JH: And what was his name?

MS: Eugene

JH: Eugene...

MS: Yes...

JH: And then you had another brother as well?

MS: No...no...just the two of us.

JH: Oh...Okay...and what were your parents' names?

MS: uh...Byron, who was known as Bob Smith and my mother was Matie Belle Van Metre.

JH: And your dad worked on the farm mostly?

MS: Dad ...Dad was a farmer all his life...yes...until he was forced to uh...to uh... leave the farm because of ill health.

JH: Hmm...and uh...did your... uh...did you mother help, help out mostly...uh... with the home? ...or what did she do?

MS: Just...Just with the home and being as we didn't have any sisters both my brother and I...uh...helped in the...in the home...uh...as well as...uh... with the chores around the farm and the field work...it was good training for later on (laughter).

JH: Right...Right! (laughter)...Did you get along okay with your parents now; did you have a pretty good relationship with them?

MS: Had an excellent...uh...we had a...we had a close...(pause)...a close family...um...I grew up then in the twenties and the thirties, during the depression. The 1920's, the...uh...economy...the agricultural economy was...uh...very depressed. That was prior to the Great Depression in the '30's...and because of that we didn't have much money...and we were a pretty close-knit family. I had...um....seven aunts and uncles and they all lived in the general area too ...and...uh...were all farmers and so we would have great family picnics and get together celebrating birthdays and all of the holidays.

JH: Right.

MS: So I had...uh...well I only had one brother...I had a lot of cousins who I was...uh...pretty close to.

JH: Right...What would you...uh...what was...like...a typical family meal?

MS: Well a typical family meal was one that I shudder at now but...uh...For breakfast we had fried potatoes and eggs and all the things that shouldn't...you shouldn't have (laughter). Probably either bacon or ham. Noon was...was a...as we called that...that was dinner. And that was a...a large heavy meal, too. Farm workers were hungry and...uh...that, too...we always had...uh...meat and potatoes...all ...uh... starchy things. Of course they were supplemented with...uh...garden produce. We didn't buy much at the store...staples...And then the evening meal was not dinner but supper...And it, too was a...was a heavy meal with...uh...meat and potatoes and gravy...That's probably one reason that my dad had a heart attack at 50.

JH: How old were you at the time...when he had a heart attack?

MS: Well let's see... He's twenty years...was...uh... he was twenty years older than I was...so I was...I was fairly old.

JH: Right...

MS: I was fairly...(indistinguishable)

JH: Uh...How did you get along with your brother? What...uh...did you do a lot of activities with him? Him being six years older than...

MS: Not...not...not really...uh...because we had a different set of friends...and... uh...I had graduated from high school and had gone...left home and had gone on to college and by the time he was old enough to get involved in things...(indistinguishable)...we really weren't close at all...not that changed later on but...uh...as when we were growing up we were both sort of a thorn in each other's side.

JH: Uh-huh...right. Did you...uh...within your neighborhood and you school, did you...uh...have a lot of friends then? Uh...tell me about your friends and their names and (indistinguishable)...

MS: Well, it was...it was a rural school...uh...a consolidated school... with twelve grades and I attended there at Clemons Consolidated School for the first nine years, and then because of the depressed agricultural situation my ...uh...father and an uncle who were buying a farm together lost that farm ...gave it up and (pause) my folks moved on the farm then...where I was born...my one grandfather's farm...he attempted to...uh... help them and he ended up losing his farm and so when I was in ninth grade in high school we moved to my other grandfather's farm and I finished my last three years at the Liberty Consolidated School...it was a rural...uh...really a rural school it was out on the prairie it wasn't (pause)... there were a couple of trees and that was about all that we had...the closest town was five miles... it was...uh...a very small school. We had a...we had a large class...we had seven in our graduating class (laughter).

JH: Oh really?

MS: Yes! (laughter)

JH: Wow! ...that's incredible (laughter).

MS: It was a little...it was a small brick school...and (pause) our gymnasium that we had ,had been a converted Catholic church that they no longer had any use for...so they sold it to the school district... and we uh...they moved it down and we played basketball in that church then it that church...the ceilings were quite high but they , they were tied together with rods across...so everyone once in a while we would shoot at a basket and hit a rod instead!!!

JH: Oh really! (laughter)...did you...uh... so you moved...you switched high schools then...or switched schools then....

MS: Yes...switched schools.

JH: In ninth grade?

MS: In ninth grade...yeah.

JH: OK...Did you still keep in contact then with your older ...your old friends then from the other school?

MS: Uh...pretty much....because...uh... we went to church in Clemons...and...uh... that was where most of the Clemons kids went to church...so...yes, I ended up with two sets of...uh...of friends. I was in...uh...well...(pause)...as a...as a youngster when I was about eight years old I started raising runt pigs. Dad would give me the pigs and um...normally they weren't going to make it otherwise...and would put 'em in a separate pen and I ...uh...had to take care of them. Half of them were my grandfather's so we had to keep them separate and I kept...started keeping books and at that time I opened a checking account so that I could keep record of feed and expenses and stuff...and so I ...I started out early! (laughter)

JH: Yeah...yeah right! (laughter)

MS: And um...then when I was twelve I ...uh ...that was the first year that I was eligible, I... uh... joined the 4H club. And from deciding to be 4H, they'd give wheat for about 5 cents. And from that wheat we started a small ...um ... pure bread hereford. I was with that throughout high school and up and on.

JH: Right. Um ...Did you go to any like county fairs with that then?

MS: Went to county fairs and state fair and I had . . .had one steer that I took to Chicago, the international livestock exposition in Chicago.

JH: Wow.

MS: So . . .uh....yeah, it was good experience. And then I won a trip to Chicago which doesn't sound like so much now but back in 1935 (laughter) it was an interesting experience to ... uh ...to the Four H, the national Four-H club congress in Chicago it was held at the same time as the international livestock exposition. Kids there from all over, all the states in the Union.

JH: That's impressive. That's really neat.

MS: Oh, it was interesting.

JH: Does it, do you... uh ... was it like a competition then to go from like the 23rd of the state fair and then to . . .

MS: Yup. Yeah.

JH: Wow. Um... how 'bout in high school or in school in general? Did you have any favorite subjects or subjects that you shied away from or....

MS: We didn't have much of a choice. In fact (pause) there were no electives. We just had a set core ...um ...I think I was a fairly good student and I... I enjoyed all of it.

JH: How much did you have to study a night? Was there much in the way of homework?

MS: We had a lot of homework . We really did. (pause) Especially in our - in our math.

JH: Right. And then... uh... you graduated from high school in what year?

MS: Graduated from high school in 1936. In the fall of '36. (pause) At that time our parents still didn't have... um ...any... um... real amount of money and the fact that... that was one of the things that, one of the reasons that we were so close knit. We didn't go anyplace. Our family's activities was... activities were centered around the 4H club. My brother also when he came along joined 4H. And we would take some vacations but uh... they were all close to home and usually ten thousand steps.

JH: Would you stay in Iowa on your vacations?

MS: Yeah, uh ... the only vacations we ever had were in Iowa except for . . .uh ...a couple in Minnesota to visit relatives.

JH: Whereabouts in Minnesota would you . . .would you go?

MS: Uh... is in... near Man... near Mankato. But things... things were really rough when... when I say that we didn't have any money we really didn't and then the bank in Clemons closed in nineteen (pause). Its either '30 or '35. That was before the big depression that they closed and... uh... I can remember my dad sold some hogs. There wasn't any... and received some cash for it... there wasn't any place to put the money you couldn't deposit in the bank and he took... uh... (pause) my mother and I (my brother was too young) uh...out on the farm and showed us where he was burying it in a quart jar ...quart jar. Cause it... if he put it out there... he wanted somebody to know where it was in case something happened to him and uh... we buried it under a rock and that was where we (laughter) kept the money.

JH: Wow. Um... did it ever happen... how often... how later then did you pick it up?

MS: Oh I suppose within a few months. He probably went back out and... uh... opened it up as he needed it... I would guess.

JH: Right. Yeah. Um... did you notice something like your daily routines or .. um how much you'd have to work or study. Like any major differences between before the depression ...before it came upon the country ...and then after it or during it? I mean, how did your lifestyle change because of the depression?

MS: (pause) Well my life's, lifestyle changed... or really didn't change all that much because we were... we were as farmers were depressed and I didn't know anything that wasn't a depressed economy in the '20's and the '30's. So it wasn't all that much difference. Grew up... uh... without any money and without much prospects for any money and didn't have real high expectation about what life was going to hold for me. Uh... when I graduated from high school, we were fortunate that year because my brother and I had three 4H steers that were... uh ...quite, quite good... they were one of the top steers of Iowa City that year. And we sold them for...um... 200 dollars a piece. While that doesn't sound like much money know it was quite a lot of money then. And that money didn't go to us, but it went into our family checking account and kept us going, and that was one of the things when I graduated... uh... I didn't have enough money to... uh... go to a four year school. And I went to... uh... I had a scholarship to a... uh ...business college in Chillicothe, Missouri. And uh... I attended... attended that... on practically no funds at all. They... they took a note that was signed by two of our friends for tuition, and uh... so I just had the living expenses. My room there was six dollars a month (laughter). And I was eating two meals a day at a... uh... restaurant, and that was costing 34 cents a day, 17 cents a meal.

JH: Wow.

MS: So uh... (laughter) I got along... (laughter) pretty well, pretty inexpensively.

JH: Were those prices typical of the time?

MS: Yes. They were typical at the time. But... and uh... We were... some of the college kids were waiting tables at the restaurant and if we happened to eat late in the evening and... uh... they had extra pie left over, they'd slip us an extra piece of pie for that 17 cents ,too (laughter).

JH: Oh. That's a bargain. (laughter).

MS: Yes it was (laughter). But it... it didn't take all that much money. For entertainment... we really didn't do anything for entertainment other than occasionally we'd go to a, a midnight show... a late movie an we'd go to a movie for 10 cents.

JH: Oh. Do you have any favorite movies of the time?

MS: No I guess not. I was just glad to (laughter) have a chance to go once in a while. That presented problems because I was living with two other fellas and one of them was... a... quite a religious fellow. And he... uh... wouldn't go to the midnight show because he wouldn't go to movies on Sunday. It was uh....(laughter)

JH: Wow. Did he refuse to go all together? Or... uh... did you ever coax him into doing that?

MS: No. No, no, he was very staunch in his beliefs (laughter). Occas ... occasionally we would go with him some early in the evening but that would cost a quarter.

JH: Um, so what activities of college, uh... when you went to this business college um were you going there with the intention of going into banking? Did you know that?

MS: No. I was just... um... with the intention of getting some kind of employment and... uh... (pause) hopefully just being able to go on with school later on. Uh... in fact... this one roommate, Milton, the one who wouldn't go to the midnight shows, uh... he and I had decided... we graduated from business college in the spring of 1938... and we had decided that we'd work for three years and get back together then at the end of it. A total of four years school. But unfortunately that didn't work out, uh... he developed leukemia and was shortly after... a year after that... he died. And by the end of the three years, in 1941, I had won the lucky number in the draft and was inducted in the army in April of '41. So that delayed any plans for... uh... further education. Now, later on I did take advantage of the GI Bill and went to Iowa State University. Got my degree.

JH: Ok. uh... in college would you go with like a typical day. Was it mostly classes and studying?

MS: Uh... In business college it was, it was all studying, all the... um... I didn't... uh... get involved in any extra-curricular activities. but this... this college was set up on a six... six months class schedule. Not six months, six weeks. And you... you take the class for six weeks and you either passed it or if you flunked it, you'd take it over until you didn't flunk.

JH: So it was just one course at a time?

MS: No... no.... We had all kinds of accounting courses and commercial law and... uh... other courses that... uh... we could....

JH: So how many courses would you be taking there at one time?

MS: Oh, I suppose we'd take as many as... uh... five or six...

JH: Wow.

MS: ...of various accounting types of classes... it was strictly accounting... and machines... (indistinguishable). That's what I was... that's what I was doing. Uh... When I graduated from there I... uh... that was in May of '38. I had... uh... jobs weren't very findable in '38. I had... uh... an offer of one in Des Moines, with Standard Oil at sixteen dollars a week. And after I had that offer I decided that... uh... sixteen dollars really wasn't enough for me. So I... uh... I worked on the farm for some people until... uh... until that fall

and I ended up taking a job with Rath Packing Company in Waterloo in their livestock um... (pause) ...livestock division for sixteen a week.

JH: Ah, really.

MS: And... (laughter) ...and that... that was... that was a um... (pause) ...now let's see, at that time I was a working a forty-eight hour week for uh... sixteen dollars.

JH: Wow. Was that uh... was that considered a good salary or not?

MS: It was considered a living salary, (pause) ...but uh... we didn't have much left over to do things, so... I... uh... ended up living at the YMCA. They...they had a resident um... YMCA in Waterloo. And there were probably about forty to forty-five single fellas living there. Forgotten what it costs (pause). We'd eat at various restaurants down there... (pause) um... but uh... I... I paid back the note to Chillicothe Business College at uh... ten dollars a month off... off of that uh... sixteen dollars a week. I-it... it, it was soon raised to eighteen dollars but that didn't give much lee-way.

JH: Right. Did you uh... enjoy working there? In... the, the town...

MS: In Waterloo.

JH: In Waterloo.

MS: Yes, I... I was, I was working there uh... and then uh... (pause) ...after about a year I, I started this apprentice as a... well... a hog-buyer, and, and bought hogs for them and uh... just doing that when I was... got into the service, and then went back a year after that - after, after I was in the army four years uh... plus (pause). Uh, (pause) and then... then I finished up my education as I indicated before uh... at Iowa State... with a degree in agricultural economics. Uh, and then returned with them for a year, uh... with Rath Packing uh... as a hog-buyer until I decided it was time to make a change. That's when I moved to uh... Grinnell. And it was so beautiful... (indistinguishable).

JH: Right.

MS: Okay.

JH: Um, (pause) so... you got uh... drafted into the army then, uh... in 1941?

MS: Yes, April of '41.

JH: Okay. And, what was the... what was the draft like in ...were you ... was it expected that you would probably be selected to go in, or was it completely... um... did, did most men your age feel like they were going... they were going to have to serve in the army? Or....

MS: Well, at that, at that time we were all hopeful that uh... things would blow over in Europe. And uh... we'd have a low number and wouldn't uh... wouldn't be drafted.

JH: Right.

MS: But uh... those of us that uh... weren't so lucky were relying on the idea of going in for a year and then later on it was uh... extended for uh... a longer period of time and then of course uh... in, in December after Pearl Harbor it was extended until, I think it was the duration of six months or so it was uh....

JH: Um...

MS: ...it was worth it. Yeah.

JH: Didn't any of your, any of your, any of your friends get drafted along with you?

MS: Uh... (pause) one of, one of the a... fellows that I graduated from high school with um... was drafted at the same time. We went from different uh... he went from uh... Marshall county and I, I went from the Waterloo draft area, but we both ended up in the thirty-fourth division at camp Claiborne, so... we were not in the same regiment, but we were in the same division and the same camp and camp (indistinguishable), so we saw one another every once in a while, kept in contact... 'course, it didn't take long to get acquainted with the fellas that uh... from.. the other people from Waterloo, that uh... (pause) ...I'd never met before but uh... suddenly, we were all from that hometown and, and so we had a... a, a closeness there that uh... kept us together for quite a long time. One of the fellas, uh... I've lost contact with all of them except one, uh... he's a retired uh... Iowa City attorney right now, but uh... (pause) he...we've kept in contact for years.

JH: Right. Uh, towards the beginning of the war um... (pause) what were your impressions of it? Uh...

MS: I hated it! I hated the army, I was a... (laughter) my, my mother kept all of my letters and I would, I'd just uh... write them, uh, in the last uh... well, two months (pause), and I, I had forgotten how much I *really* despised the, the, the, the army. Uh, I didn't like the regimentation - I grew up on a farm where we were pretty free to do what ever we wanted to, uh... uh... the only... (pause) the only limits that I'd had which were family uh... disciplines, you know, limits in, in my living, and, and uh... of course in, in, uh... at college, but I, I, I really wasn't too fond of the college administrators, either. But uh... (laughter)...

JH: Sounds familiar.

MS: Yeah. Pro-pro-probably human nature hasn't changed all that much. But um... I, I really disliked the army. I had a rough time adjusting to it. (pause) In fact, I tried to uh... I was in the infantry. Maybe that was one of the reasons I couldn't see much of a future in it, but I tried to get transferred to the air force, uh... that was the Army air force, it wasn't a separate uh... (sniff) branch of the service then. Uh... didn't have any luck in that, uh... I tried to (pause) get out of the army, so as... and, and join the, the Navy. I didn't have any luck in that, and it was uh.. I was so disgusted with it that I uh... I seriously considered flying with the paratroopers, and that would have been a fatal mistake. But that gives you an idea of, of how I disliked it.

JH: Wow.

MS: Uh... (pause) that pretty well changed uh... in December with uh... the, the... Pearl Harbor. Uh... then, then there was a, a sense of, of purpose out there. At least we were there for a reason and uh... had a, had a goal. But uh... I didn't like the army's regimentation, I didn't like its disorganization, uh...(pause) I didn't like many of my officers, uh... there wasn't much of it I liked about it.

JH: Yeah.

MS: I was sort of a rebel. (laughter)

JH: Right.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE #1

JH: Uh, when you were first enter, entered the army, um... or were drafted, you said you didn't feel much of a purpose, uh... like why you were over there. Is that correct?

MS: Yes, now that wasn't uh... that was, that was before we went overseas, but uh...uh, and there was still a lot of feeling in the uh..., in the country that uh... uh...we should... a feeling of isolationism, a feeling that we really had no business of being involved, uh... in retrospect looking back, uh... we should, should have been involved much more and sooner than we were. But uh..., there wasn't that, there wasn't that feeling of uh... of uh... that, that we should, that we should really get involved in Europe's - we saw it as, as something uh... apart from us.

JH: Is you mu--

MS: We--

JH: Go ahead, sorry.

MS: No. And then uh... (pause) we were totally unprepared as far as uh... uh... weapons were concerned. Uh... we went through our maneuvers in uh...

in '41 in Louisiana. Uh... we didn't, we didn't have uh... tanks, we didn't have machine guns, we didn't have mortars, uh ... uh... our, our machine guns and our mortars that we had were wooden ones we just made out of sticks. And uh... and uh... that was, that was sort of interesting because uh... on, on maneuvers uh... a, a person would uh... instead of having tanks, somebody would have a sign on them that said "Tank", so... we said he was a tank (laughter) and uh... (more laughter).

JH: Hehe he...

MS: In fact uh... it was a, it was a great source of uh... of nicknames because there was this one fellow, um... his name was Aspen. He became Tank Aspen, because he was, he was the tank.

JH: Hehehe....

MS: Somebody tried to take him as a prisoner and he'd says, "You can't take me, I'm a tank!" And so...

JH: Hehehe....

MS: And another... and another fellow was uh... was nicknamed Boom Boom, and he was a little guy, but he, he was a... gun, and he'd go around shoutin' "Boom boom!, Boom boom!"

JH: Hehehe....

MS: So, (laughter) you know, silly but that's uh... (laughter)

JH: Right.

MS: Yeah.

JH: This is all, was this all in basic training now? Or was....

MS: Basic training and... and uh... later on in maneuvers, yeah.

JH: Right.

MS: Yeah and, in fact we did, we did not get a lot of our equipment uh... until uh... much later when we were uh... some of it as, as late as uh... when we were in uh... Tunisia, in combat.

JH: Wow. So, how long were you actually in Basic? Like from the time that you were drafted until the time that you actually uh... left for Europe? Um... how long of a time was that?

MS: Well, we were drafted in uh... in April, and the unit that I was with was the thirty-fourth division was a, a National Guard unit. And that was com--

filled up then with uh... draftees from Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri. Uh... and we were in camp Claiborne in some type of training up until uh... (pause) up until uh... the end of uh... December of '41. And then we went to Fort Dix uh... lived in tents in Fort Dix in January for a while and that was a c-cold experience. Uh... (pause) our particular unit was scheduled to go on the uh... French line or the Normandy, (pause) and it was uh... it was sabotage. And so we stayed in Fort Dix then until uh..., sometime later in February, we went to uh... north Ireland and spent then nine months in north, in northern Ireland, transferred over, spent uh... you know, roughly a month in England getting prepared to go into north Africa and then sailed from Liverpool... (pause) during the invasion of north Africa.

JH: Wow. So...

MS: That was in January of '43. Yeah.

JH: So you had quite a bit of this... I mean... how did that make you feel mentally, like if you were gonna... was it like, was there a feeling of a, you know, I mean, any day almost you would go into combat or was it pretty much that you knew you weren't going to be fighting until uh..., you know, early nineteen forty-three?

MS: We... we uh... it was easier for because uh... at least we were on the move, there, there was some real reason that we were there and, and uh... and uh... our, our training was normally (indistinguishable), and in north Ireland, northern Ireland we weren't in any danger at all. Uh... (pause) used to go under Belfast, there were some air-raids over, over Belfast at that time, but for the most part, north Ireland, northern Ireland was untouched. We got into some uh... bombing in uh... when we were in England for that month, but uh... at that time uh... the German air force uh... had more uh... urgent problems I think uh... than uh... it wasn't like the Blitz in thirty-nine and forty that uh... the English had endured. Uh...

JH: When did uh... I, I take it you were scared, I mean, I'm just assuming that, were you, were you pretty scared going into combat down there?

MS: (pause) Yes, I, I think most everybody is uh... 'course, by that time, you're so hardened to it, you're so conditioned to it uh... they try to bring you to a point to where they dehumanize you to a certain extent. Um... so... it's almost an attitude, "The hell with it. I may make it, and I may not. Uh..., you know and if, if I don't that's that's all right uh.... As, as we got into combat... uh... I um... I used to hope that if anything happened to me, that I wasn't blinded, or lose an arm. I had a (laughter) reason that I wouldn't mind losing a leg, but, you know, but if uh..., if it came to that I'd just as soon die.

JH: Right.

MS: Yeah, and, and and, and you sort of... you psyche yourself up to that, that, it, it doesn't just happen over night 'cause over a period of time you work into that. But every, everybody has their own reactions and there were all kinds of uh... some, some of the fellas that broke under the strain, were the most uh... (pause) they, they, they, they had a front of bravado but when it came right to it, they, it, it was all.... They were trying to psyche themselves up and couldn't get it done.

JH: Right.

MS: You know....

JH: Was this like uh... fear that ... was that like, with you from like day one when you got drafted like, "Do I wanna' be killed?" Or was it...

MS: No, I didn't even think, give it that much thought.

JH: Really.

MS: I was thinking more about how I could get out of the infantry unit (laughter) into something else that I uh... (laughter) I liked. Yeah.

JH: Huh.

MS: No I, I never, never worried about that too much.

JH: Was uh... was America's impression as a, as a whole, uh... like you said, like pretty much against like staying out of Europe, and... and...?

MS: Uh, there there was a strong feeling as um... Senator Wheeler, maybe you or another of the history student, students remember where he was from, but uh... he took a strong position against the war and, and against uh... Franklin Roosevelt, President Roosevelt, and he was criticized quite roundly, but he, he had an awful lot of supporters, too. And uh... the turning point really was, uh... December seventh, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Uh... we were there in camp Claiborne the night of December seventh. We were alerted and moved out, literally moved out of the camp, and moved to uh... New Orleans area to guard the uh... Huey Long bridges uh... the uh... water plants, and up to that time, we'd go into the, into to towns, and the civilians in Louisiana were so sick and tired of seeing GI soldiers that uh... we were sort of trash in the sight of a lot of them. Overnight, they really welcomed the soldiers because they could see that Yellow Pearl coming in from Japan and just taking over. That was exaggerated, too. But uh... it was, it was true, uh... my, my duty there during the three weeks that we were in New Orleans was uh... guarding the top span of the Huey Long Bridge across the Mississippi River.

JH: Mmmhmm.

MS: That uh... which is both all the mail, automobile , and, and rail uh... bridge. And people would uh... stop by and uh... give us sandwiches, cookies, just, you know, it, it was just a complete change overnight. And then that was pretty much, I think that was uh... true pretty much for all over the country.

JH: Right.

MS: Yeah, uh... suddenly we had a, we had a purpose. There was no longer a doubt as to whether we should be at war -- we were at war, and, and uh... there was a commitment to it.

JH: Did FDR's popularity increase pretty much overnight, then, would you say, or at least the support of, of his comments...

MS: I , I think it did, even some of my uh... most staunch Republican uh... relatives I think at that point (laughter) felt more kindly to him.

JH: Right.

MS: Mmmhmm.

JH: What did you think of him before, I mean what were your impressions of him over-all? Like, throughout the Depression, um... the New Deal, and the war. Do you think he was a good President, or....

MS: I -- I'm not sure I always felt that way, uh... I never voted for him, so uh... (laughter) but then I couldn't vote until uh... um... it was 1938, I, I voted for Wendel Wilkie. Uh... it was a good thing that he didn't win because he died within what, two or three years after this.

JH: Uh huh.

MS: But uh... general, generally speaking uh... it was a relatively (indistinguishable) especially, at least, in uh... in Ireland.

JH: Um... was there much of a, a... a feeling of... well, like right now, like with the '92 election there's a bunch of you know, like um... anti-incumbents versus anti-government, and uh... just pretty much of a distrust in government. Was there much of that feeling then, when the war started?

MS: There was some -- probably not as much as there is now. Because um... Roosevelt had been elected right in, in the very depths of the, the Great Depression. And there was a feeling that we really needed government programs to get things moving. Of course, that was one of the things that he did. He, he, he did the agricultural programs, the uh... the work programs uh... of various types. And uh... people were appreciative of that and, and felt that it was, it was the government's rule to get involved. So uh... I don't, I don't remember what percentage of the, of the -- we had too many polls then,

but uh... what percentage were in favor, supportive of it, but uh... it was a, it would be a, a large percentage that... that were supportive.

JH: Right. Well, I'm kind of interested in your war experiences, to be honest with you um... uh... after being in Ireland for a while then you said...

MS: Yeah.

JH: Uh, did you sail away from Ireland then to uh... where...?

MS: Oh we, we went first to uh... England in a, in a station area there for uh... about a month and then we went to uh, (pause) went to uh... north Africa. We landed in Oran, Algeria. That was a, a cultural shock because uh... you know, here, here it was a different society, uh... it was French government, but uh... the the Arabs and the Muslims uh... were predominant uh... with one of the extreme poverty uh... and uh... it was extremely interesting. And I think that's one of the reasons that my outlook changed, because, well it changed in, in uh... north Ireland because we were there for nine months and, and had a great experience. Of course, Ireland is a beautiful country, anyway and uh... the people treated us very well. It was all very nice, and, and you know, we had new experiences ahead of us every day, and so it was, it was something. It took away the drudgery of being in camp uh... in uh... the United States.

JH: Right.

MS: Um... our experiences in Tunisia... I, I was with a, in a uh... rifle company at the time. Uh... uh... I had been on special duty and I had quarters and I hiked it the door with my company, which uh... at the times wasn't uh... didn't seem like it was the smartest thing that I ever did was, like, if I could have been back (laughter) a few miles it would have been better. Turned out that it was uh... it worked out great, but um... The thirty-fourth division, we, we were green troops, we had a lot to learn, we were up against uh... German and Italian troops that were uh... much better, you know, trained uh... and they had more combat experience. We hadn't any. Uh... as I said, we didn't have the best of equipment for a while but that gradually turned around and we uh... we won that uh... particular... campaign. Uh... then that was in May, I, I was, I was... I guess it was about a week before that campaign, but not seriously, and then from May until September, we were in training again in Tunisia and uh... in Algeria. And we went into uh... Italy then in September at a Salerno, and uh..., at that time, I had transferred from the rifle company to a battalion -- to the battalion headquarters. Which isn't far back, but, you don't get much small arms fire on that...

JH: Right.

MS: It's, it's all mortars or, or uh... or artillery. And so after having the condition, in, in the rifle company, that seemed like heaven.

JH: Right, right.

MS: (laughter) And, uh..., Thanksgiving time... so, I was in Italy for a very short time. Um... they started a, a rotation plan of rotating people back and they were taking one person from each company, being in the battalion headquarters uh... uh... I had had more combat, actual combat experience than anybody else there. And so I was fortunate, I was, I got to come back to the United States, was reassigned, went on to maneuvers again, in Louisiana with a, with a new division, the seventy-fifth division, infantry division which was made up of... of people like myself who served as a cadre to train other people. Uh... and it was made up of young, uh, draftees, people who had been in uh... army specialty schools and uh... air force programs that were, had been discontinued, and uh... and we, we went overseas then in uh... we left in October, spent uh... something like a month or a month and a half in Whales. Um.... great experience living in uh..., in an old castle.

JH: Oh, really? Wow!

MS: (laughter) Uh... then, went onto the continent and we got into combat again on uh... Christmas Eve, December 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge.

JH: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah, so....

JH: That's really-- that must have really, well, been a downer to like come back to the U.S. and then have to go back. How was that?

MS: I wasn't too excited about going back.

JH: Yeah (laughter). I mean, did you know that you were going to have to go back when you initially, uh... when you re- when you came back to the U.S.?

MS: Not for sure. No.

JH: Wow.

MS: But uh..., some people did and some people didn't, and I, I had the honor of uh... go ahead--going again.

JH: Wow.

MS: So, but it, it worked out all right. We had uh... at that, at that time I's, I was a battalion Sergeant Major, which was the top, NCO, in the uh... in the battalion, in charge of the battalion records and, and uh... (pause). Well, we, we, we had training supplies and, and uh... intelligence so it was... and we had, we had a good group of, of, of uh... people. Uh... there were four of us sergeants, one who spoke German and one spoke French, and uh... we would go ahead and make arrangements for uh... as an advance party, and uh... we

always saw to it that we had the best accommodations and then our officers had second best and... (laughter)

JH: (laughter) Right.

MS: It, it, it we-, it was a, it was a good experience. It, it was a, it was a rough experience, I don't, wouldn't want to minimize that. Uh... one of the, one of the fellas got all shot up, but uh... for the most part we, we weathered the storm pretty well. But in the, in the Battle of the Bulge, then, in-- this was in December and January, December of '44, January of '45, um... (pause) the weather was, was a real problem, and uh... we were bringing new recruits in and... by the truckload... and sending casualties back, and we had some battle, battle casualties, but for the most part they were, they were uh... casualties of, of the weather. Which was...

JH: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah.

JH: What was -- like how'd the...?

MS: Tren--trench foot uh... and uh... frozen uh... hands...

JH: Oh.

MS: We just, we just weren't uh... we didn't, we didn't have the proper uh... uh... clothing to weather that. You know, you, you'd think that we would because we're supposed to be the best equipped...

JH: Exactly. Right.

MS: But uh... but we weren't.

JH: It was just a... an oversight of the Army? Or... or....

MS: Just lack of supplies and probably a lack of uh... maybe it was one of, of not having the, the supplies at the right place, too.

JH: Right. What was actually-- I mean, this is kind of a... you're going to think it's a silly question coming from me, but uh... I mean, I just, I can't even really visualize war... like actually being in war, I mean, what was it like? I mean, was it... I don't know....

MS: Oh I, I think it was General Sherman in the Civil War who said that war was hell, but that, that's probably an oversimplification of it, because uh... you know there are good ru-, good parts of it. There was the uh... uh... had some of the best friends that I ever had uh... lot of it was just boredom and drudgery uh... waiting, and then the actual... the time that you were in

combat under, under shelling uh... or under rifle fire uh... attempting to advance against an enemy that didn't seem to want you to advance.

JH: (laughter)

MS: Uh... you know, so it, it's a mixture of things uh... uh... lot of it was uh... just personal discomfort uh... which was especially true in Africa (pause). You couldn't, you couldn't keep your body clean uh... we ended up with uh... with body lice. That was, that wasn't anybody's fault, it was just a condition that uh... we, we didn't have the facilities to, to keep clean for all of it, no matter how hard we tried.

JH: Right.

MS: Yeah, so it, it was just a combination of a lot of things.

JH: Was uh..., was the food okay?

MS: (pause) Well there were times when the food was good.

JH: (laughter)

MS: Of course we... (laughter). In camp Claiborne, we had a mess sergeant who could take uh... steak, and cut it up and make stew meat out of it (laughter), and I've always said that uh..., he ended up getting his just desserts because... Harry Olsworth was the type of fellow that he couldn't sit still back in the, in the rear echelon in the kitchen while people were fighting and the fir - the... our first day of casualties, the first contact with the Germans in, in uh... Tunisia, he was one of the three uh... people of our company that got killed.

JH: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah. See he, but... but the food was, was pretty good. Some-- It just depends-- sometimes uh... that one time in, in Africa we were uh... on British rations. And uh..., they were pretty skimpy. Uh... we, we had uh... we had nine men on our squad... and... for one uh... one uh... meal, we were giving, given uh... a few, hard tack crackers, and uh... and one can of sardines, and uh... this can about, you know, a small, flat can...

JH: Right.

MS: ...and fortunately, there were nine sardines in that can, but the fellas almost came to blows over the size of sardines that they got, because they thought that uh... somebody else got a larger...

JH: Oh...

MS: ...sardine than they got, so there, there, there were rough times as far as food was concerned. I think, one of the , one of the rough, roughest times was, was their there in Tunisia. Uh... we had not had food... we were lost, almost totally surrounded by the Germans except for one uh... one way out. And no one seemed to know where we were. We'd lost con- radio contact, with... uh... uh... the rest of our regiment. And we started, we started walking that night at six o'clock, walked all night, all the next day up until midnight the next night.

JH: Are you serious?

MS: Without ... without food or water. (laughter) So, so there were times . . . yes. On the other hand, on the other hand, sometimes the food was quite good. After it was all . . . after the Tunisian campaign, we were in a rest area along the Mediterranean and ...uh ... our food was pretty good. The water bags that are called lister bags, uh ... they're rather porous and so you'd fill them with water and then the the evaporation keeps the water fairly cool - not cold but cool. And uh... we were near wineries so instead of water, those lister bags were filled with wine (laughter).

JH: Right (laughter).

MS: We had pretty good duty then (laughter).

JH: Was there much in the way of drinking at all? Or you... it was probably pretty minimal I would guess....

MS: It was pretty much of a cross- section... uh... some, some people really abused themselves for the most part.

JH: When you were fighting and all that, did you... did the army do a pretty job, I mean I would, in the back of my mind I would think the army would do a good job of brainwashing you into thinking that the Germans are, all of them are enemies and none of them are worth anything at all, and you're supposed to hate these people. Did they try to do that?

MS: They, they attempted to do that, yes.

JH: And did most fall victim to that?

MS: Well, its a... (pause) it was a little difficult to believe until they start shooting at ya. And then, then when its a matter of survival and you see them um, its probably the worst people in the world.

JH: Right, did you....

MS: Nothing, nothing personal against them its just that you're, you're there and uh, and uh, you're the good guys and they're the bad guys.

JH: Did you ever come very close to contact? Did you ever speak to them at all?

MS: Um, only , only prisoners. This, this friend of mine that I've mentioned from high school, there was, their particular battalion was overrun just the first week and he was taken prisoner in February of '42, February of '43, excuse me. And he spent the entire war in German prisons.

JH: Wow.

END OF SIDE B, TAPE #1

MS: And uh... in the cold areas someplace. And uh, it wasn't a very pleasant experience for him and he doesn't like to talk about it. As, as, I think that veterans come away one of, one of two types. Uh... (pause) and I guess I'm along with him. I never... I've talked more about it here than I did with... never never told my family about our experiences. So you either put it right past you and go on, or else... there's the type that wants to talk about it all the time and that's the greatest thing that ever happened and nothing ever, ever quite measured up to that particular wartime experience. I think there's a tendency for people to react one of those two ways.

JH: Right. When victory was achieved and uh, the troops surrendered, was there no feeling that... were you over there then?

MS: Yes. Yes, we, we uh... were in Belgium uh... and the Bulge there, and we went down into central France and crossed the Rhine and we were in western Germany in the rural valley when the war ended. Oh, everybody was quite elated. We celebrated (laughter). Yeah.

JH: Right, right. Then uh, you didn't take much time between, with the war ending and then getting back to the States?

MS: It didn't take much time for me because uh, they had a point system and it depended on the length of service, how uh, well if you'd been wounded, what campaigns you'd been in, and I've forgotten the details but I had about a 114 points... I think it was 102 or 103 that they started processing them and sending them home. But the fourth of July, 1945, I received my discharge that morning in Wichita Kansas and I was home that night. So it didn't take that long. It was sort of interesting, I came back with a group of fellows that I didn't know any of them at all and we spent just a little time in France so we were shipped back. And the French people really celebrated. (laughter). One night we went to a carnival. They'd had a black out for years and I think they had all the electricity going in the world. That place was really lit up and the carnival was going full blast and everyone was just really, really happy and celebrating. And we experienced a little bit of the way the French people felt.

JH: Uh uh, right. When you went back home then, were both parents still still alive then?

MS: Yes yes.

JH: And it was pretty, felt good to get back home I take it?

MS: It was good to get back. Spent about three months just recuperating and getting adjusted and got a job in Waterloo.

JH: How was that, how was that transition?

MS: It wasn't difficult.

JH: Really, okay.

MS: Well, the transition of going back to that job wasn't that bad. Um, I guess I had developed, come to think of it, a bit of a chip on my shoulder um, about the whole experience because about two years later my mother said to me, she said, "Ya know Max, um, you've had four years of experience, some of it was rather bad," but she said "Its time to put that behind you and got on with your life." (laughter) She was a pretty wise lady (laughter). And so I did.

JH: And then you went back to work in Waterloo?

MS: Oh, I worked in Waterloo a year after that and sort of got settled back into civilian life. And then I spent, um, three years in Iowa state getting my degree in agricultural economics.

JH: Oh that, great.

MS: Then went back to Waterloo again. Because at that time, in 1949, salaries weren't all that great and I had a chance to go with the Brenton Bank and Perry for 225 dollars a month. Uh, could go back to Waterloo and go back to my old job because the experience that I had you know, for 325, well that extra 100 dollars a month was considerable so we went back there.

JH: Now when you say "we went back there", who ...?

MS: Well, Deloris and I, that's my wife, were married in October of '49. And so then she moved to Waterloo with me.

JH: And where did you meet her?

MS: In, in Iowa State.

JH: Was she in the same program.?

MS: No, she was a... she was a... uh... math major at Iowa State.

JH: And then you both went back to Waterloo?

MS: We both went back to Waterloo. She, she had grown up in Moline and all of her family had worked for John Deere and she had worked for John Deere too when she was at college, off and on. So, she got a job with John Deere in Waterloo, they had a large plant there. And, so we both worked there until the following spring when we decided that we would come here. Which probably wasn't too smart because I had turned down a job with Brenton and Perry for 225 a month and we came here for 200 dollars a month (laughter).

JH: Oh, really?

MS: And that's quite a drop from 325 to 200. And 200 dollars a month at that time was not enough to live on so fortunately, I had saved money when I was in the service and she had worked so, we lived off saving and she supplemented our income too with her job.

JH: Right. And was it, was it Brenton Bank when you moved here?

MS: Yeah, it's been a Brenton bank since June 16th 1930, but uh... at that time um, it was a Citizens National Bank and Carl Childs, who was then a young bank officer, was suddenly the only bank officer left, the others, or still with the bank, the others had left because it was a sinking ship. And he spent about six months negotiating with the Brentons to come in and insert some capital. They didn't buy anything, ... well they did buy something, they bought the note portfolio and the (indistinguishable) but they had to insert capital to keep the bank going. And on June 16th, it was opened up as the Poweshiek National Bank and the Brenton family opened the controlling interest and .. which was sort of interesting because during that time, Carl Childs would meet with Harold Brenton and Harold Brenton's uncle who was then involved with the banking business and Bob Kinsey who was moving here from Perry to Jefferson, he was going to manage the new bank. And Carl Childs would take the note portfolio and all the related files at night and they would meet at the Maytag hotel in Newton. They'd work all night. Carl would bring the records back and no one in the community knew that this was going on at all.

JH: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah, it was (laughter) it was sort of a cloak and dagger story (laughter).

JH: Right.

MS: And over a period of time then by meeting in the Maytag they worked out the details they closed the bank, the bank closed on a Saturday as the Citizens National Bank and opened up Monday morning as the Poweshiek

National Bank to the surprise of everyone. Yeah (laughter). Well, they didn't dare let the public know that the bank was in as bad a shape as it was or they would have withdrawn all their money and had a run on the bank and probably put it out of business.

JH: Were people upset at all when they saw this?

MS: No, they were they were glad they they saw this as ... apparently, that's what I'm told anyway, they saw this as a positive move because here was someone who had enough confidence in the community and the bank to put additional tap in to keep it going.

JH: And what was your job in particular at that time when you moved to Grinnell. What was a...

MS: Now see this was in 1930 and we didn't move here until 20 years later in 1950. But when I came with the bank, I was an officer trainee. For six months assistant cashier and became officer. It was working with loans and also part of the bank administration.

JH: And you ...

MS: Later became cashier, vice president, cashier, executive, vice-president and then president.

JH: Oh, you worked your way up.

MS: Yeah.

JH: Did you really enjoy that then.

MS: I enjoy banking, yeah.

JH: Did you uh, was that um, like getting back to ISU when you were there when you were studying agricultural economics, were you thinkin' you might perhaps one day get into banking?

MS: Didn't, really didn't... uh... I thought probably I'd go back to Rath and continue to be a hog farmer. That's probably what I thought. Some area like that. The packing industry, the meat packing industry was always considered a good stable industry. In fact, my father, when he heard that I was leaving were asked to come to the bank. Dad because of all his financial problems through the '20's and '30's, really didn't hold, uh, bankers in very high esteem. And he just thought I was crazy (laughter) for leaving the stability of the packing industry to go into banking. And then, well, you were asking about my brother earlier, uh... When I went back to school afterwards to Iowa State, my brother was just starting his senior year there, and uh... I had entered as a freshman and we roomed together for a year.

JH: Oh really.

MS: So then we then we really got acquainted. And uh, you know, so we became very close and we have many common friends from college days. In fact, one group of friends still gets together at reunion every year. There were fourteen couples of us. Uh, and then four years later, he was having some health problems and was having to make a change, he was an agricultural engineer, uh, and he ended up uh, going with the Brenton organization as a banker too. He was the president of the bank in Indianola, so we had that common bond too. We were both on the Brenton board. We spent many meetings together, at least one a month and quite often more than that.

JH: He lives in Indianola now?

MS: He lives in Indianola now, yes.

JH: How far away is that?

MS: Seventy miles. Just south of Des Moines about fifty miles.

JH: Okay, uh, when did he actually become president then, was that like later on in the '50's?

MS: Oh that was in, that was in sixty-five. I'd been there fifteen years.

JH: Now, kind of off the subject, do you have any children?

MS: We have two children, yes. A son Bruce who lives in Kankakee Illinois. He and his wife have two children, Cassandra and Terrance. Uh, Bruce is the sales manager all around Jack of all trades with a small company that uh, its Shoup Manufacturing and they make replacement parts for agricultural equipment. He essentially runs the company. The owner isn't involved in the operation of it. They publish a catalog of parts twice a year and uh, their area is Midwest the deep south all kinds of parts for various agricultural equipment.

JH: Where does he work?

MS: Kankakee, Illinois. Uh then we have a daughter, Karna who lives in Urbandale. She works for an insurance company there. And her husband is a programmer. And uh, they have 1 daughter and are expecting another daughter in June.

JH: Oh.

MS: And she married a person with three sons so uh, they have a good sized family.

JH: That's great (laughter) Um, do you , uh, I guess I wanted to ask you, the family values that you were taught when you were a child, looking, looking back in retrospect and looking at your family now, is there similarities is there like you were taught as a child that you would teach your children?

MS: We tried to, but its difficult. As I said, our family was a very close unit. Uh, ,my one grandmother had died, my maternal grandmother, and my grandfather lived with us too. Uh, he was semi- in bed with Parkinson's disease. He was a great spirit even when he had health problems but he was a great spirit, a great inspiration for all of us. Um, and he helped develop a sense of moral and ethical sense of values that uh, ... I suppose I was about eight years old when he came to live with us and he was quite handicapped. He needed help with the bathing and all and it was that was one of my jobs as a youngster was helping him bathe and do things so we were pretty close., And uh, he was a great inspiration. And I think that a lot of things that I have done or haven't done, well was influenced by that family group. Another thing was that with all the aunts and uncles that I had in my community and they were a supportive group too. But they were also a deterrent to anyone who planned to raise a little hell (laughter). Because my folks would know it immediately, they had quite a network going (laughter). And it might not even, (laughter) it might not even get to my folks because they would take care of it right on the spot, you know they were close enough with their siblings that they didn't hesitate to correct their nieces and nephews.

JH: Yup, right.

MS: So, uh, um, the work ethics, you know having, having the runt pigs taking care of the livestock doing, doing all the chores and the work on the farm was an opportunity that we tried to instill in both of our children. Bruce had a Des Moines paper route when he was nine years old, which is a year younger than they would normally take them, but they were in desperate need. Um, for the most part he did it all on his own. He'd get up in the morning in the wintertime and get out. I felt kinda' (pause) kind of bad about that sometimes, but uh, just a little bit guilty, but uh, we were building character (laughter). And uh, unfortunately he has a work ethic, well both of the kids do, that uh, work comes number one and enjoyment and entertainment comes pretty far down the line. So I think maybe there was overkill there. I think I probably overdid it. That, that we tried to maintain reasonably good moral and ethic uh, level too. Uh, ... but the family closeness, of course, you can't do it today because their family is 300 miles from here, our daughter is seventy miles. We don't see the grandchildren very often, so we can't be the influence to my grandchildren that my grandparent were. Its just a changing of family structure and uh, so your values do change over a period of time.

JH: Out of necessity almost.

MS: Yeah. It's no one's fault its just the way it's, it's gone. And maybe that's not all bad either. Sometimes there can be too much family, uh, influence. I

had a cousin who had a father who ...uh... he was inclined to drink a little too much and uh... his leaving home and getting away and living in another section of the country was an opportunity for him to get away from that influence and the effect it had on his life. So sometimes you can have too much family influence.

JH: (mumble mumble).

MS: Pardon?

JH: Well when it inhibits what you want to do then um... when your family almost tells you how to run your life (mumble mumble)

MS: Yeah.

JH: Um, did you, but you felt you had a pretty good balance going? You yourself?

MS: Reasonably, reasonably, yes.

JH: How did religion... has religion played a big part in your life? With your childhood and then going through the war and uh up till now?

MS: Yes I uh ... I would consider myself a religious person. My uh... mother and grandfather were always in church. We were always in church. My father was not a uh... a church person - extremely ethical but not religious in that sense. Um... (pause) ...I didn't lose any of that during the war. Uh, they say there were no atheists in foxholes, I don't believe that. I knew a few, uh... so other than the concern for the moment, I don't uh... I don't think that had a lot of effect on a lot of people. Uh, certainly it made me think more of life and death and ... so my religious training and background I think... uh... did influence me and probably strengthened to some extent. Um... I had a strong church relationship in Waterloo. And then when I went to Iowa State I became involved in the campus YMCA there. It was... uh... on the interfaith council on the campus that... uh,...those two representatives from the various religious organizations... uh... and I represented the YMCA on that. At that time I was faith at a week celebration. There was religion and life week... a little more than that because we'd bring speakers in throughout the year. This one week we would bring a keynote speaker in and it was a bit a bit unusual for a state institution. I headed that religion my final year as chairman of that. I've always been involved in church here, sometimes more and sometimes less.

JH: Where do you go to church here?

MS: Methodist church in Grinnell. I spent about ten years as the lay speaker at one time. One time the Methodist church really had a shortage of ministers and uh, so there was a need for people to fill in when ministers would be gone. I spent about ten years doing that. Didn't, guess I didn't feel

any great call to do it, it was just to fill a need. Right now I'm not particularly active in church other than regular in attendance.

JH: When you mentioned the war and religion. Before you had mentioned how you were almost desensitized to it at the time, dehumanized. Um, did religion help you to keep perspective on this?

MS: I think it did. I think that the people that had some type of religious background for the most part maybe we... (laughter). But I think it helped those who had some kind of a religious background uh, it helps look better than those that... I can't... (laughter)... (pause). I think of uh... one of the days of combat in Tunisia, when our particular company was not advancing but we were in a holding position of a hill. It was alone, very rocky, we couldn't, really couldn't dig down and we would kind of have to make foxholes by taking rocks and lining them up around and then getting down to the crevice. A couple fellas in swab were sharing the same foxhole. One was from Ohio and one was from Chicago. Both were

END OF SIDE A, TAPE #2

MS: Our, our battalion chaplain was, was a catholic uh, chaplain who originated from the Dubuque, Iowa area. Uh, father Hoffman, Albert J. Hoffman. He's now dead. But uh, he ended up as the uh... most decorated chaplain in the World War II, and he was, he was really a great guy, I'll tell you. He... he was uh... a very unusual person. And we were on this hill, and we were just getting shelled unmercifully, and the shi-- the uh... artillery, the rounds of artillery that were coming in, they'd hit the, the sides of our foxholes or near them, and it, it would just shatter the rock and they'd... so, we not only had the artillery but we had the flying rock, too. And there was a lull in it, and coming up (cough) around the bend was chaplain Hoffman (cough). He was just out, scouting the area.

JH: (laughter)

MS: (laughter) He was that kind of a guy, and he stopped and visited with us for a while and then went on. And these two fellas, one of 'em said, "You know, I'm a Catholic, and I been attending Mass." But he said, "If I ever get out of here..." (laughter) He said, he said, "I'm going to be at Mass every Sunday!" (laughter). I don't know whether he was or wasn't, but uh... (laughter) but that, that was a case where uh... where the chaplain set a good example. But uh... Father Hoffman, he, he, he couldn't tell a Catholic from a Protestant. A number of times, uh... it was during Easter time, and we would have joint uh... services because there wasn't time, but before we'd start off in a, in a battle, why he would uh... hold a, hold a joint service for Catholics and Protestants. He was a great guy. Um, he ended up losing a leg. He was uh... trying to recover uh... wounded people from a mine field, and he was blown up himself, then.

JH: Wow.

MS: I kept in contact with him and he never lost his spirit, he was...(laughter).

JH: Right. That's pretty neat. Um, what, what do you, what do you uh... and your wife do now? I mean, first of all let me ask, when did you retire from the bank?

MS: I retired ten years ago this spring.

JH: Okay. And uh, your wife, during the time that you were at this bank, she... she was a teacher? Is that correct?

MS: Uh... she uh... she worked at several different places (pause). She started out working at the uh... Grinnell Shoe Company, which was in an operation that's now defunct, it was a, it was a Lannom company, and they, they made uh... made various type of shoes. She worked in the office there, and then moved over to Poweshiek County Mutual Insurance, worked there for several years. Um... dropped out uh... all the kids were (cough) growing up. Uh... then went back to uh... she worked at, as, as a travel agent for um... well, let's see... I can't remember if she was there whether she was at the um... (pause) at the bleacher factory out south of town which is now defunct. She worked there for a while and then as a travel agent for about six years. And uh..., so she's got a number of things. Um... she did not get a uh... teacher's certificate with her math degree.

JH: Oh.

MS: And... if you don't have a... a teacher's certificate, and a um... you know, for a community the size of Grinnell, a math degree isn't all that marketable. So she decided that she would uh... go back to school and uh... get her certificate, and uh... which she did over here (cough). She had a, a minor in English, and uh... she found out that she, she'd probably have to take some math classes uh... again, over, in order to refresh herself. So she decided that, better um... (pause) her um... major here in English, and she did. Uh then, then she started uh... to practice teaching, she got everything all ready ... I don't why they don't uh... give you the practice teaching first. Uh... she was teaching junior high kids, and uh..... after about a month of that she suddenly decided that she really didn't want to teach (laughter). Anyway, she did, she did get her certificate and it was, it was sort of an insurance uh... uh... as far as, in case something happened to me, why she could have taught, but uh..., she had these other jobs along the line.

JH: Right. She seems kind of a, person who (indistinguishable).

MS: Yeah, she really enjoyed uh... uh... being a travel agent. Because of that, I guess, we took our first trip up to England in '72, so... but that was just a short trip. (cough) And... we decided then that uh... there were people on that trip that should have gone considerably earlier -- because they were

so old they-- they had a good time but they, they weren't able to take advantage of everything. And uh... we decided that uh... we were, even though we couldn't afford it uh... we were going to uh... do some traveling while we were younger, and uh... so we did, and started. She, she was interested in travel and this and that and she enjoyed the travel, travel agency.

JH: Uh... at you, at your point now in your life, do you travel a lot or is there....?

MS: We have not done much in the last five years, but um... up until that time, we made quite-- I guess, three trips to Great Britain, (pause) and Ireland. Uh... Deloris's family was-- she's a third-generation Swede, so... we visited uh... them in Sweden and then Norway and then Denmark (cough). And uh... one thing that we enjoyed doing was running an, an apartment uh... and just stayed in one place for three weeks and we, we did that and uh... Austria, yeah, then again later, and uh... Switzerland, we spent time in, in Italy, Germany uh... Morocco, New Zealand, Hawaii.

JH: Wow.

MS: So we, we, we've done some traveling uh... but we have to get back into the (laughter) into it again. Uh... we have a, have a friend uh... she was a special student uh... from Finland. Was here just on a Rotary scholarship for one year. And uh, we've maintained uh... close contact with her. And we want to visit her. And then the uh... the lady who... the Russian lady from St. Petersburg who was here uh... the fall semester, Olga... I have a rough time with the names... Uh... Deloris got uh... very well-acquainted with her, and uh.. we'd like to visit her in St. Petersburg, too, so... I, I'm pushing for a trip like that this fall.

JH: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah.

JH: That would be a lot of fun, I think.

MS: Yeah.

JH: Especially in light of everything you're doing now.

MS: Uh-huh.

JH: Um.. I guess to... I guess to wrap it all up I'd, I'd like to hear, I mean, you've had a very interesting life and um... really I could, I could speak for hours, I don't know if you'd like to speak for hours or not, but I think...

MS: No, I would have made a good New Englander because (pause) I usually say just, "Yup" , "Nope."

JH: (laughter) I, I'm curious what, what like, in light of everything, like all your experiences, now looking back at your life, first of all, what you regret doing or what you were glad you did, second of all, if you have like any, um... advice or your philosophy of life, pretty much (pause) Easy question. (laughter).

MS: Such an easy question. Do we have an hour left? (laughter) I really don't have any regrets about anything that I did, um... there were some things that I could have taken advantage of, possibly, that I didn't. There were some things that I could have uh... done a better job of, than I did. But uh... I don't sit around uh... feeling bad about anything. And, and I, I think part of that is because of the relationship with my family and all. I don't have any regrets that uh... things were left undone and they died and there were things that I should have done or said uh... there probably were but uh... maybe I'm just so insensitive that I'm not...(laughter). But uh... you know, I, I, I just feel pretty good about uh... about life in general. And I, I, I think it's important that uh... that we enjoy every day, and, and make the most of it. Uh... try to leave the, the world a, a better place, uh... than we found it. Uh... sometimes that's not easy, but uh... at least strive to do that. We haven't talked about community service uh..., that I've been, been involved in--well, both of us have been involved in, since we moved here in nineteen fifty. And we've just run the, the gamut on that, working, working for new schools, in, in the nineteen fifties and uh... working for this last school bond issue. I guess I'm old enough where I should think about uh... being conservative and voting against community progress, but uh... I, I, I just think it's important that everybody finds something that they're, that they enjoy doing, and then do it to the best of their uh... ability. A (indistinguishable) what it is, that's what I used to talk to both of our children about. I... didn't make any difference to me what they did, but... I just wanted then to take advantage of, of all the opportunities that were available, and find something, uh... that they liked to do and then, and then do it. And um... I guess that's, that's, that's the reason I made the, the uh... change from being a hog-buyer to a banker. Uh... I didn't feel that that life was uh... I, I couldn't see my future in it. I enjoyed it at the time, I had a lot of great friends there, but uh... it wasn't as fulfilling as I had, gone the road as I had hoped that it would be, or that, that I wanted it to be, and uh... the one thing about banking is that uh... a lot of people don't see it that way but it's a... it was a way of helping people. And uh...

JH: That's important.

MS: It *is* important. And I, I think it's important for each generation to uh... to, to remember that, and respond that way, 'cause we... we, we all have different talents and we have to do (pause) do things in our, in our own way.

JH: Great. Anything else you want to add at all?

MS: No, I guess. Not really.

JH: Okay, well, thanks a lot.

MS: It's been, (laughter) it's been pleasant.

JH: Very interesting. (laughter) Thanks.

END OF SESSION