

Dale Hull

Palmer: This is a portion of the *Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri in the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Council of the Humanities, and with support from the National Endowment of the Humanities. Today's date is August 25, 2009, and we're here today to interview Dale Hull. He was Quartermaster attached with the Air Forces, and then later Infantry, and his highest rank achieved was Sergeant and this interview is taking place at the Nodaway County Historical Society Museum. The interviewer is Cathy Palmer.

Palmer: Mr. Hull, first we'd like a little bit of your background history before 1940. Where and when were you born?

Hull: I was born in Villisca Iowa, out in the country.

Palmer: And what was your birth date?

Hull: Birthday? September 6, 1918.

Palmer: What was your parents' occupation?

Hull: Farmer.

Palmer: Okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Hull: One of each; they're twins.

Palmer: Older or younger?

Hull: Younger: eleven years

Palmer: Quite a space there! Okay. Tell us a little bit about your life before 1940. When did you graduate from school?

Hull: I graduated from high school in 1936. I didn't get drafted; I went two and a half years of college, and then I had to go to service; and that's it.

Palmer: Where did you go to college then?

Hull: Tarkio College.

Palmer: Did you have any other family members that participated in the war?

Hull: Not WWII; I did Korea.

Palmer: Okay, your

Hull: My brother was in Korea.

Palmer: What were the important things going through your mind from '36 until you got into service? What types of - you were going to school – what were you headed for degree wise?

Hull: Business.

Palmer: What types of entertainment were there at that point?

Hull: [Laugh] There wasn't much!

Palmer: Did you ever go to movies?

Hull: Yes, some; not much – didn't have enough money.

Palmer: I hear you; everybody was in that boat at that point, weren't they?

Hull: Oh, yes!

Palmer: Did your dad have problems with the farm at that point, because of economy or anything?

Hull: We moved to South Dakota in 1922; the depression and the drought came all at once; he didn't have anything.

Palmer: So, you were in South Dakota from 1922 you say?

Hull: Till '34

Palmer: You came back here in '34.

Hull: Yes.

Palmer: Okay. What type of information did you get about the war in Europe or the war in China before the United States got involved in it?

Hull: Well, not very much. Just what you could hear on the news and that wasn't very much until our Pearl Harbor.

Palmer: Okay. Did you get this through radio?

Hull: Yes.

Palmer: Do you remember what you were doing when you got the news of Pearl Harbor?

Hull: Yes! It was on a Sunday, and I was studying for school the next day. I knew that it wouldn't be long before I wasn't going to be there.

Palmer: Did you enlist, or did you get drafted?

Hull: Well, [Laugh], I enlisted a day or two before getting drafted.

Palmer: That's why you were attached to the Air Force! You were trying to get out of the infantry like everybody else. Where did you go for basic training?

Hull: Never had basic training.

Palmer: Seriously?

Hull: No, I never had any.

Palmer: Okay. Where did they – when you enlisted, where did they send you?

Hull: Leavenworth. I enlisted in Omaha, and went to Leavenworth; got our shots and stuff; went from there to California.

Palmer: What did they have you do there in California?

Hull: I was at Moffitt Field, California.

Palmer: Moffitt Field?

Hull: That's where the dirigible, the Akron, used to be; they had a building there for it; 400 feet high. They tore it down now, I think; I think they tore it down.

Palmer: So, you didn't have basic training – you went right into specialized training for the quarter master or what did they have you do?

Hull: I was just alone – there was a bunch of us – just nothing. We were in the West Coast Training Command, is what it amounts to. When they opened a new air base, they take us – that's how come we ended up in Pecos, Texas. When I got there, there wasn't even barracks when I got there. We lived in tents along with the rattlesnakes.

Palmer: Uh-oh! You had companions in your bed, didn't you!

Hull: There wasn't anyone that got bit, but they were there.

Palmer: So, you basically had to set that one up from zero then.

Hull: Oh, yes! I ended up in cold storage; I was in charge of cold storage. We'd get a thousand cases of milk – fresh milk from Kansas City every other day.

Palmer: Whew! That's a lot!

Hull: That meant every other Sunday you had to work. Every other Sunday, because milk would come in. And all the meat and anything perishable, I was . . . we had an inventory every thirty days.

Palmer: Inventories were probably a whole lot of fun?

Hull: They were hard to keep track of, I can tell you that.

Palmer: And you didn't want to come up short, right?

Hull: Yep. I had an awful bad thing happen. One day they came and got me and it was two o'clock in the morning; some meat had come in, whole hams were what it was. We unloaded it, and sent it to the mess hall that same day, and the general mess sergeant and he was the only one there that caught this. He called down and said "What did you do? Every one of these boxes of ham is short a ham." I said, "Surely not! I'll call you back." I went and checked what we had left, and sure enough, and come to find out, the truck driver had stolen them, but we were the ones that were holding the bag. So, I got the commissary officer, and he called El Paso, where they originated from, and they said, "We've had trouble with that fellow before and they were supposed to have caught him the next time out. So, you see if he'd have done it according to the books, it would have been a veterinary there, and you're supposed to open every one of those boxes, and we never opened any of them – the veterinary wasn't there, so it got awful sticky.

Palmer: More headaches than you wanted, right? Okay, so every time they opened a new base, so you hopped around a lot of different places?

Hull: No, I didn't hop around. I went there. . .

Palmer: From California to Texas?

Hull: I went to Moffitt Field, Chico, California, then Pecos, and then I was there 29 months. Then I got drafted into the Infantry, and went to Camp Livingston in Louisiana.

Palmer: Now, about what time was this that put you in the infantry, then? Twenty-nine months, so it would have been late in the war?

Hull: Let's see, it'd be about late February, early March, I don't remember for sure. Anyhow, we landed overseas about the fifteenth of April. That time I spent in - was physically was the hardest thing I ever done in all my life.

Palmer: Now what did they put you through there?

Hull: You just – *everything!* Do you know what transition and fire is? That's when they shoot above your head, and you crawl?

Palmer: I've seen it on TV, yes.

Hull: We were doing that and it was raining. I was ahead of this guy and I wasn't close to him, but somebody that was close to him said they heard him say "To hell with this," and he stood up. That was the end of that one.

Palmer: Oh, man! That's one way.

Hull: It wasn't anything to put in 12, 15 hours a day. You did your walking all the time maybe.

Palmer: Those legendary hikes, huh? And Louisiana in that February and March would not be nice weather.

Hull: It wasn't too bad.

Palmer: Except for the rain?

Hull: There was something wrong, it wasn't - [laugh]

Palmer: Now how did you get overseas? How did they transport you?

Hull: We went over in a convoy of ships.

Palmer: Did you have to do the zigzagging?

Hull: Well, they were, but you didn't know it.

Palmer: Okay. Where did you land?

Hull: Le Havre, France. We had an incident about two o'clock in the morning or so, and a bell or buzzer, or whatever it was to alert you; get up on top and we saw – I actually saw them throwing those tin cans out for submarines; I actually saw that; now that's scary. [Laugh]

Palmer: There were throwing depth charges to find it?

Hull: Yes.

Palmer: It was better to be on top while they were doing it, right?

Hull: You wouldn't live long if you fell in the water, because it was too cold.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: We had life jackets and all that; just psychological, really.

Palmer: Not exactly like they have life jackets today – well, the cold is the thing, right?

Hull: Well, you just wouldn't live more than half an hour, because it was just too cold.

Palmer: You made it through without any firing or anything?

Hull: Oh, yes.

Palmer: Now once you got to Le Havre, France, what did they do with you there? What did they have you do?

Hull: They didn't have you do nothing. You'd just sit ten on one of those trains. Have you ever heard the organization "forty and eight?"

Palmer: No.

Hull: American Army has that. Some of those guys don't even know what forty and eight means! It means forty men or eight mules could be in that car.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: So, we went from Le Havre to Rumen, Holland. I'm not trying to – there's where we crossed the Rhine River.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: Then – I don't know – I joined the Second Armored – 15th of April in there somewhere, I don't know where it was, I just know we were getting – I pulled guard one night, and the whole northeast was lit up, and it wasn't firecrackers, neither.

Palmer: Now what was your job in the Second Armored?

Hull: I added numbers – taking care of the officer's records.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: Oh, I'll tell you something. They came to me one day wanting me to type this list up of the guys that got killed during the war. This was after the war was over. The reason that there were some over 3,000 guys – 3100, or something like that. There were nine – almost ten thousand guys got killed in that regiment in World War II. Of course, they fought in Africa, they fought in Sicily, and -

Palmer: All the bad places.

Hull: Yes. July 4, 1945 we went into Berlin. Occupation. We were there when the Potsdam Conference was.

Palmer: That was an experience, wasn't it?

Hull: Now this sounds like a lie. We was over a hundred miles from Berlin, where we bivouacked. The first vehicle was in Berlin before the last vehicle left.

Palmer: Whew! That's a *long* line.

Hull: At lot of that – I expect half of them were tanks. But we were in the truck.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: Cold! Real cold.

Palmer: In July?

Hull: Yep. It was awful cold.

Palmer: What were your impressions as you came into Berlin?

Hull: Pardon?

Palmer: What was your impression of the city when you . . .

Hull: Oh, my!

Palmer: What did it . . . ?

Hull: It was just a mess, that's all you can say. My neighbors went over there in the 60's or sometime, and his wife asked me "where were you at in Berlin?" I said, "There ain't no way of knowing where you was at; the street signs were gone and all that; and if I'm mixed up in my directions, I was southwest under the Linden, it would take you about half an hour to walk up there. There was this canal, and right along the canal there was this subway, and the Germans were using the subway for air raid [shelter?]. Somebody – some fanatic blew a hole between the two and drowned – they figured there were at least ten thousand people. I'll tell you what, if you want a horrible smell, now that's it.

Palmer: Yes.

Hull: Well, when we first got to Berlin, the Russians hadn't cleaned their troops up yet. Me and another guy were walking down this street, and "My lands, what's that awful smell?" Got around the corner and there was a bunch of Russians about a half a block up and that was coming from them. That's how dirty they were. They had – all you ever saw was a Ford truck, or a Studebaker truck; I didn't see a Russian truck. I saw then selling USDA boxes of hams they come about 4 inches square and 2 foot long; they sold a truck load of them that had USDA all over them. We'd given them the truck, we'd given them the ham, and they were selling the ham.

Palmer: Whoa.

Hull: I don't know where the Germans got the money to pay for the darn stuff.

Palmer: Well, did you run into German civilians while you were there?

Hull: Oh, yes! But we never – couldn't talk to them; couldn't communicate with them. Of course they didn't want to, I don't think.

Palmer: What was your impression? Were they angry at you, or . . . ?

Hull: No, they didn't seem like it. They were just lucky we were there instead of the Russians.

Palmer: That has come up in some different interviews.

Hull: I got another incident that's hard to believe. This little boy was standing at the garbage pan. He had about a three-gallon bucket and he'd fill it up just whatever comes. One night me and another guy followed him and he went ahead a tunnel that he went into. We didn't follow him. Well, there had to be a lot of people in there to eat all that.

Palmer: They were starving.

Hull: I don't know how the people lived. Well, there were any communications. How would you get some simple thing like potatoes? We went – we left Berlin and we ended up in a little old town by the name of Bernstein, which is north of Frankfurt about 40 miles and when we left there, those kids and the women – there wasn't hardly any men there – lined that street waving at us – they hated to see us go. There went their chocolate and soap – can you imagine living without soap?

Palmer: No, thank you!

Hull: Boy, the poor people did.

Palmer: Sounds like the Russians did too.

Hull: Oh, yes.

Palmer: So, you guys really helped out in many ways by being there.

Hull: Oh, yes. See, they postponed our KP for us. Of course they hired them, you know.

Palmer: Sure.

Hull: So, nobody had to have KP

Palmer: That was a relief

Hull: Yes. That little kid, though, I never - that always got me.

Palmer: Eating out of the trash can.

Hull: But you take them Russians; if they knew you was watching them, they wouldn't do it, but we snuck around and watched them when they had their dance thing, whatever it was – that was interesting to watch, but boy, they'd quit just right now if they saw you.

Palmer: So, they did some celebrating there too?

Hull: Yes.

Palmer: Did you guys do some celebrating in Berlin?

Hull: No! We were just so glad to have it over; no. We had a guy – this was right after the war was over; this is probably on the 10th or so of May; he pulled this tank off line, and he had logs, and pieces of cement, and everything else – he had a band going this way and one going that way, and one around his gut – hand grenades, a beard about that long. A staff sergeant. And these two colored- boys came up to get the extra gasoline, and they got ten cans and the old sergeant said "That's it!" "No sir, boss, we're supposed to get all the gas and you just give us ten." "And the other cans have cognac in them, and I'll be damned if you're going to get it."

Palmer: Now that's great!

Hull: It ended up we had a can of that stuff. It was terrible; it had gasoline, you know, it had that taste. I didn't have to worry about drinking it.

Palmer: Stay away from smoking, right?

Hull: Right. Here's another one that I thought about. This is the first I've heard told about. There was a cement mixer down in France, and they took it with them; what do you suppose they took it for? To wash their clothes in!

Palmer: That's good!

Hull: That's when I was in Rumen, Holland. We hadn't had a bath in a long time and they had – what the same thing as they used to wash a car motor and they had two spigots, and you have so many seconds to put the soap on and so many seconds to wash it off and they ran ten thousand guys through there in one day; they said, I don't know if they did or not. That's the same time they took the clothes and fumigated and all that stuff. Oh, yeah, I got those darned scabies when I was in Germany. We slept in a dirty place. Now they're rough to get rid of. Me and another guy cut each others hair off – I cut his and he cut mine off and we got rid of ours in a hurry and them other guys, it took a long time. You take DDT [rubs his hands together, and rubs head]

Palmer: Got rid of them.

Hull: That might be what's the matter with us now.

Palmer: Now the person who recommended I call you, made a point of saying "ask him about his crew."

Hull: About the what?

Palmer: Crew.

Hull: What about them?

Palmer: "Ask him about his tank and crew."

Hull: Tank? I wasn't in a tank.

Palmer: You got to keep all the records for all the guys, right?

Hull: Officer's records. I was in a tank, yeah.

Palmer: Not under fire?

Hull: No. No.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: That wasn't a very good occupation.

Palmer: Life expectancy wasn't as long as you'd like?

Hull: We had a captain that had the Silver Star and two clusters in 24 hours. That meant he got knocked out of three tanks in one day, I don't know.

Palmer: So, how long were you in the Occupation Army, then? You went different places in Germany. You said you left Berlin and went to Bernstein?

Hull: That's it. We were several places when we signed up, but _____ and Munster, and that's the only ones I remember, but there's more than that. Woofen where Goering had – I don't know what it was; some kind of a factory or something. I had some of his – I did get some of his paper with his letterhead; I give it to someone, but I forget who. They had an elevator in there, and you had to jump on and jump off; it never stopped. If you made a mistake, you just lost your toes, that's all. [laugh] That's where I saw my first electric typewriter was right there.

Palmer: They say they had some pretty good equipment.

Hull: Oh, yeah! I had a German typewriter. I kept it and wanted to send it home. I didn't want to get in trouble, so I didn't do it. It was just like ours; the only difference is they got that extra 'o' and 'a' that's off to the side.

Palmer: So, you were right there at the end of the war if you marched into Berlin.

Hull: Oh, yeah. Yep.

Palmer: Did you form friendships and camaraderie amongst your co-workers?

Hull: Oh, yeah, you did, but I can't remember their names no more.

Palmer: Sure. How did you stay in touch with family back here? Did you write letters?

Hull: Oh, yeah.

Palmer: Did you ever get to call home?

Hull: Oh, no! Oh, no!

Palmer: That wasn't thought of then?

Hull: I got a seven-day pass to go to Switzerland.

Palmer: Ohhh!

Hull: And I was going to call home there. Did you know how come I didn't? It cost \$45.

Palmer: Oh, man! Let's see, how much were you making in a month at that point in the service? Half that?

Hull: Eighty.

Palmer: Okay. Yeah. I can see why you wouldn't.

Hull: We were up there where they had those gondola things and you could rent for nothing. That was part of the deal; I asked that guy "When you get out there in the middle how far up in the air are you?" He said, "Somewhere around twelve thousand feet." The heck, I just said "thank you" and walked away. I wasn't going to go up there.

Palmer: That's a long way down without a parachute!

Hull: They had electric trains. They were as clean as that floor right there. I never – it was just unbelievable how clean they were. You felt self-consciousness if you threw a chewing gum wrapper away; I didn't smoke cigarettes. Oh, yeah, we got ten dollars a pack for cigarettes in Berlin.

Palmer: What did you trade your cigarettes for then? Did you go ahead – you were allotted cigarettes, weren't you?

Hull: Oh, yeah.

Palmer: Did you –

Hull: Oh, heck, I gave them away.

Palmer: Okay.

Hull: I gave six cartons away – oh, on the way to Berlin to a guy – if I'd have kept the darned things, I could have gotten \$10 a pack for them things.

Palmer: Whoa. Did you have trouble with your letters from home catching up with you?

Hull: Well, you didn't know it if you did. Well, they were pretty good. You brought that up; you know how they handled packages?

Palmer: No.

Hull: I saw them do that in Le Havre.

Palmer: Uh-oh.

Hull: They had a sling – well, it was like you put up hay, and they had those packages in there, and they had a four by six duck that could go on land or water, you see. They'd go up there and if one of those packages would miss that duck, it was all over; they weren't going to go fish it out, of course. But they had to do it that way. They didn't have any choice.

Palmer: So much volume.

Hull: Yeah. That's what that V-male letters. It didn't take as much room.

Palmer: That's where you wrote your letter and then they microfilmed it and sent it.

Hull: Yep.

Palmer: Okay. Did your mom save any of your letters or anything?

Hull: Oh, yeah. Yes. They're all gone. I threw them away.

Palmer: Did you ever have entertainment; outside entertainment, like the Red Cross or USO?

Hull: Oh, yeah. Did in Berlin, especially.

Palmer: Really?

Hull: Oh, yeah. Mickey Rooney, and oh, who's the comedian that had the cigar?

Hull: Jimmy Durante. He was there. Oh, there's more than that, but I can't think of them.

Palmer: Sure. Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Hull: Hear what?

Palmer: Axis Sally, like Tokyo Rose?

Hull: No, oh no! No, no –

Palmer: You didn't have access to a radio?

Hull: Yes, we had a radio. You see, the war was over just about.

Palmer: Did you have any recreation or leisure time?

Hull: Oh, no! Oh no!

Palmer: They kept you tired enough.

Hull: Yeah.

Palmer: Now you were in the occupation army over there. Was there any word of your being sent – transferred then onto Japan?

Hull: Oh, yes.

Palmer: How did you feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb? Did you agree with President Truman?

Hull: [Laugh] Yeah, I sure did. I don't know if it was right or not, but at the time it was. It's hard to tell how many would have died; there'd been a lot of them. I just got reading a book about the *Enola Gay*, the one that dropped that.

Palmer: Yes.

Hull: If we hadn't dropped that bomb, they didn't think the Japanese because Tokyo at that time was leveled. Burned out. So, they never thought – Hiroshima I think changed their minds.

Palmer: How long was it before you got to come home?

Hull: Oh, we left Germany in December' we waited for boats, and it was oh, my – well, it was – I got discharged February 4, 1946 and we were at Marseilles, for oh, my, a long time. I expect we were there sixty days at least, crowded right in there. Another thing- when I was there, I had a pass to go to the French Riviera – and these guys came back and those boys, some of those boys were pale. I said, "What in the world how come you look like your pale?" "You wait until you get in them trucks and see the way those guys drive!" I just turned around and walked back and turned my pass in; I didn't go.

Palmer: Must have been bad!

Hull: Well, there was oh, my, I wouldn't know how many. Anyhow, there were a hundred thousand German prisoners there.

Palmer: Hmmm.

Hull: When I was at Wolfenbuttel, we heard this noise over the hill, and couldn't figure out what in the world that noise was. Pretty soon over that hill here come German prisoners from grader ditch to grader ditch, and they came by for about half an hour. There were guys in there 60, 70 years old, and kids 14, 15 in there. They had one MP in front, and one MP in back; that's all. They didn't want to get – they didn't have any place to eat unless they stayed there.

Palmer: Now, did you ever have contact with any of the camps in Germany?

Hull: No, but I had a friend of mine that was at Buchenwald. He was a hauling out – you know those 55-gallon barrels?

Palmer: Yes.

Hull: Took me quite a while to find out what that was and I said "What was it?" "Tallow oil from the people that they cooked." They made ammunition out of it. Can you imagine how a human being could get like that?

Palmer: It's hard to understand.

Hull: It sure is. It sure is. Oh, yeah, when I went over, they didn't pay no attention to your MOS but when he went over they did; and he ended up in the food depot. Have you ever heard of making sidewalks out of sugar?

Palmer: No.

Hull: Never heard of that? They did.

Palmer: Huh.

Hull: 100-pound sacks of sugar.

Palmer: That was your sidewalk. Whoa.

Hull: It didn't hurt the sugar, either. That sugar started out just an ordinary hundred-pound sack. Then they'd put a burlap sack around that; and around that burlap sack they'd put tar, and then on top of that, they'd run another burlap sack. They were waterproof.

Palmer: Neat.

Hull: Probably cost a couple hundred dollars to do that, but that bag

Palmer: Hey, they had a way to get through the mud, right?

Hull: Yep.

Palmer: I've never heard that one; that's neat.

Hull: Yeah.

Palmer: Well, they had the question where and what were you doing when you got the news the war was over. Well, you were marching into Berlin when the war was over, right?

Hull: Oh, no! Yeah, the war was over when we went into Berlin on July 4, 1945.

Palmer: Where were you when you got the news?

Hull: I can't remember the name of the town.

Palmer: What was the response to your unit?

Hull: Just a sigh of relief was about what it amounted to. There wasn't any shooting or nothing. Yeah, it was very calm, I'd say. Where I was at, that don't mean that was what it was someplace else.

Palmer: Sure. I'd say you were up in the front lines. No wonder it was a sigh of relief.

Hull: I was getting close; I wasn't there.

Palmer: So, you were in France waiting for boats home and got a boat in December of '45, right?

Hull: Oh, no, January.

Palmer: January of 1946?

Hull: Yes. I don't remember what date.

Palmer: Where did they – where did they bring you to in the States?

Hull: It was New York? Kilmer.

Palmer: Kilmer?

Hull: That's the funniest thing. The first thing you had was steak; they had all the steak you wanted; anything else they had you could have whatever you wanted. Me and another guy – they handed us a head of lettuce each. And milk – I didn't realize I craved milk; drank milk like crazy for a while.

Palmer: I hear you.

Hull: You see, when we were in Pecos, and I said they got a car load of milk from Kansas City every other day, the reason was at that time there wasn't no dairies that had clean enough milk to suit the Army. That's where they had to go there to get it.

Palmer: And the soldiers could go through a lot of milk when you've got that many guys

Hull: Oh, yeah.

Palmer: Every couple days.

Hull: Part of it went to us, part of it went to Fort Stockton, and part _____; there were two small air bases there.

Palmer: Now from New York, how did you get – where did they send you for discharge?

Hull: Leavenworth.

Palmer: How did you get from New York to Leavenworth?

Hull: Train.

Palmer: Uh-oh, not the same way you went out, right, the forty and eight?

Hull: Well, that forty and eight was France.

Palmer: Oh, okay.

Palmer: So, you took a train from New York to Leavenworth, Kansas, and then how did you get from Leavenworth to back home?

Hull: Well, if I remember right, we took a train.

Palmer: Were you able to take a train clear – let's see, you were in Atchison County then? Were you able to take a train clear home?

Hull: Oh, no! Craig.

Palmer: Craig?

Hull: I had to get off at Craig.

Palmer: Did your family meet you there?

Hull: Yeah.

Palmer: Did your family have a party for you when got home?

Hull: Well, yeah.

Palmer: How did the people react when you got home?

Hull: Well, there had been so many of them, that it was just all the glory thing was over with; there wasn't nothing.

Palmer: That's not fair!

Hull: That's what – it was just calm thing. I never thought a thing about it.

Palmer: Did you have any trouble adjusting back to civilian life?

Hull: Well, the only thing I had to was to worry about how to get some work. That wasn't easy to do. I ended up being the parts man at the John Deere implement in Tarkio. That's the work I started. Then in '51 started farming which was a bad year to start, because I didn't raise nothing. Too wet.

Palmer: How long did you farm then?

Hull: Thirty-two years at the same place; I rented it, and I was there for thirty-two years.

Palmer: Now did you leave a girlfriend behind when you went into the service?

Hull: No, I got married in July of '43.

Palmer: Before you went?

Hull: My wife was with me in Pecos, Texas, for a while.

Palmer: Nice. Okay.

Hull: But that was the end of it there.

Palmer: That's when they sent you off to Louisiana and then overseas?

Hull: Yeah.

Palmer: So, she came back to family?

Hull: Yes, her folks.

Palmer: What is your wife's name?

Hull: Evelyn. She passed away a couple of years ago.

Palmer: And how many kids did you have?

Hull: Two. One boy and one girl.

Palmer: No twins this time?

Hull: No.

Palmer: Did you stay in touch with the people that you served with in World War II?

Hull: Well, I did for a while, yes.

Palmer: Did you go to reunions and such?

Hull: No. See I was – it was just a little old company down there in Pecos and well, just look at the time that went by; they did have a reunion one time, but I couldn't get to it – I couldn't go. There couldn't have been very many there; they'd already started dying off.

Palmer: Did you join the American Legion or the VFW when you got back?

Hull: Both.

Palmer: After the war, were you concerned about the Soviet Union's spread of Communism?

Hull: Sure. Sure.

Palmer: Now, were there experiences with the Russian soldiers that helped you to be concerned? Did you see something?

Hull: Really not. No.

Palmer: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill when you got back?

Hull: Some, yes.

Palmer: Lot of people talk about the agriculture courses?

Hull: Yes. That's what I did.

Palmer: Are you proud to be a veteran of World War II?

Hull: Oh, yes, I guess so.

Palmer: What do you see are the differences between the war that you were in, and the wars that we're fighting today?

Hull: Well, it's altogether different. The way you do it now, they don't have the front and stuff. Its – our hands are tied; we can't use what we got. It's just like the automobile industry. We helped Japan get started; We helped Korea get started; look what they done to our car industry. We had wrenches and that kind of stuff; that went out of the picture on account of Japan – they sent that cheap stuff in here. So, we cut our own throats.

Palmer: If you could give some advice for the kids today, from your life with the Depression and the war and today we have the bad economy and the wars going on; if you could give advice to the kids today, what would you advise them to – what would be important for them to do?

Hull: Well, be honest, for one thing. That's kind of went out of the picture. Not that I've had experience like that, but it's just different kind of – I can remember when I was a kid, a handshake meant something; it don't mean nothing today. You got to have a hundred and fifty dollar lawyer to do it today. My boy and daughter are going through – settling an estate for my wife's sister. They're having a heck of a time, and she did everything in the book to do it right; she passed away in January, and they haven't found the title to the car yet. They can't get in the safety deposit boxes. It's just too much crooked stuff, that's what it is.

Palmer: That just makes it harder.

Hull: And the kids now a day better get an education; that's the main thing. Not that that's the answer for all of it as far as that goes.

Palmer: It helps.

Hull: Some of them guys I ran into in World War II, especially like Tennessee and Kentucky and through there – they didn't have any education, period. Terrible. That's how I pretty near got killed down in Louisiana – from one of those kind of guys.

Palmer: Now tell us about that. What happened?

Hull: A hand grenade – you know what they look like?

Palmer: Yes.

Hull: You're supposed to have the lever down when you pull the pin?

Palmer: Yes.

Hull: We were doing it by the numbers – one, two, three, four, supposed to throw it on four. This crazy nut next to me didn't have the handle down and I heard it go off and I jumped down in the corner and he finally threw it, and shrapnel came from here to the end of that table from it. Missed him, too. Just because – just stupid, that's all it was. We had a whole week of dry run on it. Some of them you couldn't teach nothing; that's all there was to it.

Palmer: That's bad.

Hull: I saw a guy – great big guy – he wasn't fat or nothing, just a big man. He had a rifle grenade – you put that on the end of a rifle and then shoot it but you're not supposed to hold to your shoulder, you put it on the ground, for it will break your shoulder, see? "Ahh, that won't bother me any," and he done it, but he broke his shoulder too. [Laugh]

Palmer: There's a reason they told them to do it that way!

Hull: Right! Right! One time we were – this is down in Louisiana, on a machine gun, and they'd fired it and all that, and had an orientation and the guys were – he was a sergeant, too. He forgot to pull the breech back and we're from here out to the parking lot from where the gun was, and all of a sudden that gun started shooting. Heat, you see, got it started, and fired until the box was gone. There wasn't any place to get out of the road, either! [Laugh]

Palmer: A little bit of excitement there! Oops!

Hull: I was a non-com officer on the chemical stuff, and one night we were having a demonstration. We had a little capsule about that long, about as big around as a pencil, and they exploded it. It was mustard gas and the guys from our barracks – by the time I got there it was seven o'clock or so, and we had to swab the area with rubber suits on. Anyhow I got there and he said, "Look at my hand. See that knot right there? That wasn't there when I went up there. It's starting to hurt." I said, "By gosh, I think we'd better see if we can't get you in the hospital and let the doctor look at that." It was like trying to get into Fort Knox. Well, it was seven o'clock at night, or eight by that time. Do you know what that doctor said? If he hadn't come in here, it would have been over there [points to backside of hand] in the morning.

Palmer: Ouch!

Hull: That was mustard gas.

Palmer: That was what they used in World War I.

Hull: That's what got them, yes.

Palmer: So, it was worth fighting the system to get him in there, huh? Is there any other story that had special significance for you that I haven't thought to ask about?

Hull: Yes, whenever I leave here. [Laugh] Oh, yeah, this might be interesting for you. I was in Chico, California, and while we were there the Japs hit the Aleutians, and the security changed you know, and the civilians that were working there were used to going through the gate and holding their pass up like this and not stopping? Well, that particular night, when they said stop, they meant stop! This guy didn't, and this old guard took his 45 and shot the rear tire out from underneath him; now when that guy got out of his car you could have put a white sheet up and not see anything. [Laugh] A terrible thing happened there. They were unloading airplane gasoline, oh, about a mile away from me. Someone drew up in a scooter and it was hot, and the humidity – this gas was on the ground and the darn thing exploded. There was oh, I forget, four or five guys got burned up there. They didn't ----MPs come to the office where I was at, and wanted to know if – Oh, I can't say the guy's name no more, if he was there; yes, that's me. They just grabbed him and away they went and the poor guy didn't know what was going on. What they were doing, he had the right kind of blood to give a transfusion for this one guy.

Palmer: Okay. Whew.

Hull: Oh, yeah, I had an incident like that myself. Only mine was different. This was after – before we went to Berlin and the MPs came and got me. Well, then, what in the world did I do? We ended up in this barn; there were twelve of us lined up and I expect there was not an inch or two difference in our size of everybody; we were all the same size. Here come this man and woman. Come to find out somebody had killed their daughter the night before and they was -- when you find out what was going on, now that's scary. Boy, just think if they'd point to you! What could you do about it? [Laugh]

Palmer: You didn't expect to be in a line-up, huh? Man! You had all kinds of experiences!

Hull: That one wasn't a good one.

Palmer: Farming was almost calm after that, wasn't it? And farming isn't calm.

Hull: Come to find out, the guy that killed that gal, or supposedly, I don't know whether he did or not- they had shipped him out already. It was – in that little town was a guy I don't know how he kept out of the service, but he went over to Germany in 1936. He was raised in Brooklyn. He went over there to work. How he kept out of the service, I don't know, but he talked English of course.

Palmer: It was nice to talk to someone when you could understand, right?

Hull: Why, I had German in college, why shoot! I didn't know any more about it after I got done than I did when I started. Boy, I never – that just slayed me. I just couldn't get it in me.

The only thing that saved me was we had a real bad snow storm, and I knew the road would be blocked the next morning and we lived five miles from town, and I walked into town and I had a seven-forty class, and I was sitting there and there was the instructor and he kept – he'd swing back and forth and he kept doing that and the guys from the dormitory came in late. He asked me "how did you get here" or "Where do you live?" or something like that and I told him I lived five miles north and I walked in. Well, I could have gone underneath that door and not touched nothing, for he used me as an example and lit into the guys from the dormitory and they wouldn't have anything to do with me. Wasn't my fault, it was their fault.

Palmer: To walk miles in a bad snow storm, you got up real early, didn't you!

Hull: Yes, but I was having trouble with it, and I didn't want to miss class. That's made me pass.

Palmer: You were putting forth the effort.

Hull: Oh, yeah, in one of those towns we were in, there was an American pursuit plane that was shot down. Everyday you'd go by, and there was a fresh bouquet on it; and this was in the spring, before flowers or anything, but they could take – them women could take leaves and make a nice-looking bouquet. But there was a different one every day. The people themselves were good people.

Palmer: Sure sounds like it.

Hull: It happens right here in this country. Get the wrong people up there at the top. . . . Of course, we've got senators and representatives and they did too in Germany, but they got by them some way.

Palmer: So, you really didn't have any trouble with the German civilians in the towns that you went through?

Hull: Well, we did have. We had – oh, this is what I was talking about after we got back from visiting Bernstein, and we had a messenger that would go – there wasn't any reason for it, just something to do, I suppose. But this guy was going to headquarters and some German kids run piano wire across the road because he did this the same time every day, see? Well, his head was laying back here and the motorcycle down the road quite a ways. It just cut his head off. They said; I wasn't there.

Palmer: So, there were some problems.

Hull: Oh, yes. Yes, there was – but we didn't have any. There was – I've read about it afterwards. As far as that was concerned, they were nice people from what I've seen.

Palmer: Well, is there anything else that we've skipped?

Hull: I don't know.

Palmer: Well, you know how to get a hold of me if you've got another story for me. I sure appreciate your coming in today.

Hull: Sure thing.

Palmer: I enjoyed having your interview here.