

Interview of Nick Flores.

Interviewer: Okay, give us your full name.

Nick Flores: Nicolas Flores.

Interviewer: And you were born in, where were you born?

Nick Flores: What year?

Interviewer: Yeah, what year.

Nick Flores: 1925.

Interviewer: And, you were saying, what town did you come from?

Nick Flores: Well, I was born in Ballinger, Texas. It was just a real small farming community down in Texas at that time. And --

Interviewer: And tell us, when did you get into the Army and tell us about how you got there?

Nick Flores: Well, I was asked to get in; I was drafted into the Army in 1943, and so --

Professor: And so, where did you go once you were drafted?

Nick Flores: Well, they send me from Texas into Oklahoma to take our introduction of whatever it was and from there they sent us to Fort Hood, Texas to do our basic training. And after our basic training, they sent us to Black Stone, Virginia. A camp in Virginia. So got to do a little traveling out of my territory at that time. That was a thrill for me because I'd never been out of Texas and that.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, you were assigned to the infantry?

Nick Flores: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Were you happy about that, or --

Nick Flores: Well, no. I wasn't happy about it because I wanted to join the Air Force because I had some of my friends and they were drafted and they had a chance to go into the Air Force, and I wanted to be where they were. But when they got to me, they said, "Well, you look like a good walker." And the infantry I got.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Nick Flores: But I kept volunteering, trying to get out of the infantry. But no, tried to join the paratroopers and I was too small for a paratrooper, and then I wanted to go in the infantry rangers, and I was not big enough for the rangers, either. So ended up just being a total infantry man.

Interviewer: And you were a rifleman?

Nick Flores: A rifleman, yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember what unit you were assigned to? We were talking yesterday on the phone, what unit you ended up in?

Nick Flores: Well, I was assigned the Second Lightning Division, that's the one that I served with overseas. But in the meantime here, I was, never in any units at all. Just going through basic training, basic training and that and so.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So you got assigned to the 72nd Infantry Division?

Nick Flores: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And you went overseas when? When did you leave the United States?

Nick Flores: I actually, I don't recall exactly what month it was and it's somewhere in September or something, I think.

Interviewer: Of 19 --

Nick Flores: 44.

Interviewer: And so, did you go by ship?

Nick Flores: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: What was that trip like?

Nick Flores: It was a beautiful trip. Yeah, it was a beautiful trip, I tell ya. That was the most miserable ship, well; I had never been on a ship before. And so, when we got in the ship, there was a, a cattle ship that English people owned and they converted into a troop carrier and they put it in the ship to get us into going across and it was all operated by the English sailors and that. And so, they --

Professor: Were you down in the hull?

Nick Flores: Down in the hull, the only way you could get out from under there was to volunteer to be up on guard. And sometimes they used to let us take turns on top at night and like that. And that was the only way we could fresh air, or else see if it was still day or night. And so --

Interviewer: That sounds like a miserable trip.

Nick Flores: That was, 12 days. It took us 12 days to get across and, the English wasn't so (inaudible) for us. What they were doing at that time, I think was that they was coming into New York and, uh, fueling there and also replenishing the groceries and everything like that and everything they could get. They would take it back into England and then the troops that they fed them whatever -- I know we ate a lot of boiled cabbage and homemade bread

and cabbage and homemade bread. We used to get one orange a day and boiled cabbage for breakfast, boiled cabbage for lunch, boiled cabbage. And then they had the English sailors used to have where they came around at night after selling sandwiches for a dollar a sandwich.

Interviewer: You didn't have a lot of money back then?

Nick Flores: At that time, I was getting 21 dollars a month. And out of that, they were taking out; of course I had got married awhile before I got shipped overseas. And so, they were taking part of my money to support my wife. I ended up with 16 dollars a month, and out of that, you know how we had to supply our own necessities and stuff like that. So, it wasn't too much money left over.

Interviewer: So, you got to England, is that where you ended up?

Nick Flores: We landed in England, Southampton England right there. And from there, they put us on the -- what you call -- a boat across the channel into France and from out of there.

Interviewer: So, this is a couple months after D Day?

Nick Flores: Yes, it was, because D Day was in June and we got there and we stayed there in England for awhile, I don't know why or how come. But they kept us there for awhile. And then we went over in October, that's when they shipped us over.

Interviewer: So that's when you first got into combat was in October?

Nick Flores: Well, yeah, that's when they first got across into France and down there from France; they took us from France into Belgium and from Belgium into Germany. Actually, what we were, kind of towards the end there, we were just replacements.

Interviewer: So, you finally got into combat, what was that like?

Nick Flores: Well, I mean, to me, it wasn't too bad because I ended up being the radio man for the company or the platoon or my captain. Our company captain took me and another guy and were radio people. So we was constantly with the captain all the time, carrying the radios around. I don't know whether you recall what kind of radios they had at the time, a great big ol' radio besides you with your rifle and your duffel bag and everything else with you, you had to carry that great big radio and you had to be next to the captain at all times. So therefore, it wasn't too bad except that we had to -- we was always security guards for the captain, and anywhere that captain went, we had to go with him and be all around him. And also at that time, the Germans considered their radio people, you know, their enemies. And so, they left where they could hear the radio coming in from someplace. Right away, they try to eliminate that.

Interviewer: So they would target the radio people?

Nick Flores: Yes, they targeted the radios and the riflemen and the BAR, that's the one, they didn't like that. They heard one of those or they heard the radio. So when we first got there, the minute we got there, they took us in from trucks into the front lines and they, uh, come up and dumped us at that time. And they started, uh, the captain and all the officers, sergeants and stuff; they got together having a meeting or some kind of the something. And me and this other guy were close to where they were at. And so the Germans was watching someplace along the way so we was in big forest and it was a real forest. And you know, there was cold and there was snow and all of that. And so, somewhere or the other, they noticed we had come in or something and they started throwing the mortars over. And big guns and so, a bunch of our sergeants and corporals out there -- they were the captains -- they all got hit. And they didn't even get to unpack their packs, and they got wounded and got killed or something like

that, of course, they used to shoot at the trees and let all the shrapnel and that come down and they got the majority of all their (inaudible).

Interviewer: So that must have turned your unit upside down.

Nick Flores: It did, it did right away because I mean, everybody was already -- here we our sergeant and corporals and all of that. They got wounded and the ones that didn't get killed, they got sent right back out. They didn't even get a chance to say hello and they went out right away.

Interviewer: There goes your whole division leadership.

Nick Flores: Yeah, they did. And like with me and my other partner, we didn't have the opportunity to do any advanced to anything because we were right there with the captain. And therefore, we were not out in the actual combat part there. None of, at that time, you was getting promoted the minute you walk in to sergeants or whatever it was, you know? (Inaudible), but we didn't have that opportunity because we wasn't there. So we wasn't getting hit as bad as the guys in the.

Interviewer: So they bring in some new officers and "non-comms?"

Nick Flores: And they -- at the time they didn't, because down there they, like I said, the ones in the front line, they took the more experienced people they took them right now and they made them corporals and sergeants and platoon leaders and stuff like that. But us, I mean, we were in check because --

Interviewer: So what happened after this? Walk us through the next few weeks here.

Nick Flores: Well, I mean, with me, like I been the radio man like I say, me and this other guy. We stayed around with, uh, just in case something came happened or

wounded like that, they called for help, but we receive it on the radio and we tell the captain that we know, so-and-so, such-and-such got wounded or something like that. And the captain sometimes would send us, one of us to go take the medics where the area was at. And so, that's the only time we had the chance to get out a little bit. And the winter time came up in December and it was deep snow and the Germans was coming in, coming in close to where -- getting behind our lines. So we had to, that's what the reason the captain was always guarded was he -- the Germans were coming in and in those days, they used to, you know, dress themselves all in white so they could crawl along the snow and nobody would notice them very good. So you had to watch out because we was always looking for the main officers and that. And so, that was one of the opportunities I had to do that, but, in the meantime, we were in danger too because of the radio and the officers.

Interviewer: So, this was November of '44, correct?

Nick Flores: Yes, uh-huh.

Interviewer: And now you're getting into December of '44, and boy, tell us about the winter and how it was to sleep in all that.

Nick Flores: Well, that was the thing about it was -- the good thing about it was that we were in the forest, the Hürtgen forest, and so therefore, there was a lot of timber around that that had been knocked down with the big guns and they, the previous guys, as they went along, they had time to relax or something, they built in. They either dug down or build locations out of trees and stuff like that. So we had kind of a built-in officers' hut to work out of that they take, you know. So there wasn't too bad because we had someplace like that at night where we went to bed and I'd crawl in the fox holes, they were covered by these big trees. And it wasn't too bad that way, except when you, in those days, the Armies or what we had, we had to

carry a lot of socks and all that because of the -- even though we was wearing rubber boots and that, but still, your feet got wet and cold and all that, and no way to build fires or nothing. The only kind of heat we had sometimes was those little heat cans. We'd get down in the fox hole and use those and use our little mask or whatever you call it. The little piece that they give you and heat it up like that. And we'd get warm a little bit. And we wasn't too bad because we sheltered a little bit. The guys in the actual front, they were laying in the snow and crawling on the snow and everything all the time.

Interviewer: So Hürtgen forest, I've been there. That's really a thick forest.

Nick Flores: It is, it is. And so --

Interviewer: And so, that's actually in Germany, at that point?

Nick Flores: Yeah, it is.

Interviewer: So how long were you there in the Hürtgen Forest?

Nick Flores: Well, I got wounded on the 13th of December.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Nick Flores: And I got wounded that because I was in the actual combat, but like I said, they were sending me in to go guide the medics and all that, you know, to where ever they --

Interviewer: If you don't mind talking about, tell us about that day.

Nick Flores: Well, I, uh, got the call that one of the officers got wounded and one of the areas out there and so the captain picked me to go guide the medics to take them back to where this officer was at. And in the meantime, I was just going along taking the medics up through there and run across some of my company friends and (inaudible) actual combat and I carried them. And the Germans had just littered the whole area with mines and so, a lot of the

soldiers go and see something like that, they would jump or drop down. And I know one of my best friends, right away, when he jumped, he hit the ground with his elbow like that and both of his hands blowed off, and when I was going there with the medics, he see me coming and he hollered at me to bring the medics. And I said, "I can't. I got to go take it to the officer over there." And so I left him there and taking the medics to where this officer was at, and that's when I got wounded because the Germans seen us and they start shooting at us. And I seen this one German took a shot at me and when I seen him, I seen where the shot came from and I seen him standing there all dressed in white and I jumped behind a tree and that's when I landed on my foot, I landed behind a tree and I stepped on a land mine and so I had my leg blown off. So I was lucky, because I had the medics right there with me. And the medics wasn't paying attention. They didn't want to go any farther, so they picked me up and brought me back and left the officer laying there, so I don't know who went back to take care of him and that.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it saved your life, you had those medics with you, I guess.

Nick Flores: Yeah, I was right there and I was in and they grabbed me right now and they -- but the thing about it was that I never, I don't know, that was a thing that I -- I never did pass out or nothing. I looked down, I felt a shock where it blew me up and went up in the air and came back down and right away, I grabbed for my rifle so I could shoot back at this German over there. But my rifle got broke when I fell down or something, it broke. So I had some grenades with me, so I got up and started throwing grenades to where he was at, and I didn't even know that I had lost my foot. And then I fell down when I take a step and I fell down and my foot was gone. Boot and all was gone. And I said, "What the heck happened here?" And so, that's when I hollered at the medic when they said, "Are you hurt?" I said, "Come and get

me, come and get me." So, they come and got me and they were real young guys, and they were really scared, those medics because they had no rifles or nothing with them, nothing to defend them. And they picked me up and started hauling me back through the woods with all the trees all over the place and everything else. And those mortars coming up all the time and that, and so they were dropping me, here one coming and they drop me and find some shelter or something. But, uh, but I -- it was a surprise because I mean, I never got scared or nothing. No pain or nothing, and I still to date, I didn't figure out why.

Interviewer: They took you to an aid station, what happened?

Nick Flores: How come?

Interviewer: They took you to an aid station? What did they do after the medics --

Nick Flores: Well, they, uh, we was close to a highway by there and the medics got me out to the road and then the jeep came by and to pick me up and so, the medics took me out to pick me up along the road and I don't know what the jeep -- the jeeps coming by picking up people or something like that, I guess. And they had a fix where they could put a stretcher right in front of the jeep, but in the meantime, when the medics try and go down the highway there, the mortar shells started coming over. So they dropped me right in the middle of the highway and jumped into the ditch and left me there and when I started hollering, "Come and get me out here, too!" They wouldn't come out of that ditch and left me laying in the middle of the road. Nothing I could do then because they had me tied up into that stretcher and then the jeep come along and pick me up and took me out to -- I wanted them to take me back to where my fox hole was because I had all my stuff and they said, "You won't need it no more." And I left everything laying in the fox hole and so, from then on, I was up to the field hospital and they

operated on me right at the field hospital and they kept me there for three days and then they took us and put us on a train going back to Paris, France. So, I spent Christmas day on the train going to France and we got Christmas day, we got there into Paris and so we got to spend Christmas day in Paris, but they just, you know, took us right to our hospital there and they converted an old school into a hospital. And they took care of my leg and everything else and prepared me for shipment out of there.

Interviewer: So, where did you end up after -- did you get back to the states? What happened?

Nick Flores: No, well, actually, we got to Paris and preparing my wound and everything and clean it out and cut it and snap everything to where it was to be and so, I had the opportunity to watch while they were doing that. They just gave me a spinal shot, so I had my pain but I just laid there watching them cut my leg off using an old hacksaw and so I got all of that kind of experience and, but it was, to me, it was -- I was 18 years old and that and I never been out of community there where I was born and raised in Texas and I go over there and all of a sudden, you see all the wounds and see all the dead people and all of that.

That was kind of, kind of like a shock or something like that. When we, the Germans wasn't doing nothing with the wounded or dead or nothing like that. They were just leaving them because they were retreating back and we was pushing them back and they, a German soldier got wounded or something like that, they would just leave them there and they froze to death or died from the wounds or something, but you could see all of that. To me, I never seen anything like that before, you know? No blood or nothing, and the Army tanks or the German tanks come for me and they use the flame throwers on them and they catch on fire and

the German soldiers would try to get out when the tank was caught on fire and they would burn right there when they tried to jump out, the flames would burn them up and that and all of that kind of stuff like that. That was kind of -- but now, to me, that was an experience I wouldn't want to go through again, but I'm glad it happened. I seen it and I wouldn't trade it for nothing, but I wouldn't do it again.

Interviewer: Did you end up at Bushnell hospital?

Nick Flores: I ended up at Bushnell Hospital up in Brigham City, yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Nick Flores: But they sent me from Paris. They put us on the plane and I got to spend New Year's Day in New York. They flew us out and we spent New Year's Day in New York City. And they brought us in and asked anybody that felt like going out, they took us to where we wanted to go. And I volunteered to go. I wanted to see the scenery and stuff like that. But it was winter time in New York, so they took a bunch of us that wanted to walk or crawl or where ever you could go, and I went to some rich person's home. They took a bunch of us and took us to a great big mansion up and looked like -- we never did get to see the owner, but they had a beautiful home that they had and had all of the help, the maids and butlers and whatever we wanted to eat. And so for New Year's Day and there and then they gave us Christmas presents and then, so right there. And the next day, they put me on a plane and they asked me where I wanted to go, either go to Texas or go to Utah or stay in New York. And I said, "No, I'd rather go to Utah."

Interviewer: Why is that?

Nick Flores: Huh?

Interviewer: Why did you go to Utah?

Nick Flores: I didn't like Texas. I was born and raised there, but when I got out, got to see the rest of the world, what Texas was like, and for my race, Texas was not the ideal place to be in. And so, they brought me to Utah and I was glad they done that because, ever since then, I never go back to Texas.

Interviewer: And so you were married before you left?

Nick Flores: Yeah, uh-huh.

Interviewer: Did you wife join you up there?

Nick Flores: She never did, in those days, there was no transportations. It costs a lot of money; there was not enough for her to travel. So she stayed there in Texas in Abilene while I was in Brigham City. So I spent nine months at Brigham City hospital, and I was just telling my son Robert that I got towards the end of my stay at the hospital, they sent us to Fort Douglas to -- the German war had ended. And they were discharging a lot of the guys that were coming back. And this and a bunch of other guys went from Bushnell hospital over here to do the paperwork to, give all those guys their discharge and stuff like that. So I got to know Salt Lake City very good and so, but, you know, while I was recuperating, because at that time, it took nine months for my leg to get well. And I was in the hospital all the time, but I had the opportunity to go home, go to Texas on leave and that. And I would go whenever I could afford it to go.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: Because we had to take the train to go back.

Interviewer: Back in your unit, did you have some close buddies in the unit?

Nick Flores: No. Because we were so new, we were replacements, and therefore, we didn't get to know except the guys I went over with, they were watching with, in

my company. But we were replacements and substituting for the people that had already been there and that. And so all the officers and everything, they were all regular Army or something like that. And we didn't get too acquainted too much at all, of course, most of -- all the people that I served with were mostly all easterners from the east. And we went to replenish the outfit out of -- a few out of Texas and I got mostly New Yorkers, that's mostly who I served with. There was a few Texans, we were close. There was 3 of us that came from the same town that we were, we went together and stayed in the same company and everything else. And same, well, the same unit, not the same company and in the same infantry division. But other than that, there was no people at all. The only time I made any friends was when I got sent to the hospital and there was a lot there and we got acquainted for being there nine months together, so we got to know some of those people. But then, all the two guys that was with me from the same, from Abilene, they all went back -- they got wounded, too, but they ended up still able to walk back, go back home and that.

Interviewer: You were in such a short time and -- what are your feelings about your service and here you got wounded and you lose a foot? Tell me about being in the Army and World War II.

Nick Flores: Well, like I said, I was glad to go in the Army because in those days, being in uniform was an honor, was a privilege and everybody looked up to a uniform person. So, no matter where we went in the uniform, we were always welcomed and we were always respected. But, it was a very good experience for me. It gave me the opportunity to realize that, you know, all the world surrounding and not just being in farm country there in Texas and that. But, later on, I wanted to stay in the service, but they wouldn't let me because I, in those days, they didn't need have or facilities for handicapped people. And I didn't want to get

out. But, I liked it. And I could stay in, but they said, "You'd be better out in civilian life because you'll get a pension for your wounds and that." And I said, "Yeah, but I like to make a career out of it." But, no, you couldn't.

Elizabeth: Yeah, I want to know, after he steps on his land mine, what did they do about his leg and foot while he's laying out there in the middle of the Hürtgen forest? How did they treat him?

Interviewer: Yeah, how did they treat that?

Nick Flores: Well, I mean, that's what I mean. It's a (inaudible) to me and I didn't bleed. I didn't feel no pain or nothing. When the medic came up and they gave me a shot right away in order to control the shock. But I never did pass out or nothing, but I don't know why or how, that's a typical thing that happens because I guess the explosion fused the veins or something to where I didn't see no blood and I don't know whether I lost any blood or not. Evidently, I must have lost some blood, but I looked down and my rubber boot is gone, my regular Army boot is gone and I look down and see nothing but the bare bone sticking out. And when the medics come out and say, "We want to give you morphine," I said, "I don't want any." "It's for the pain." "I'm not hurting." "Well, we're going to give you a shot anyway." And so, they gave me a shot. But I never did pass out or nothing, so therefore, they just left me like that that. Instead of bandaging, they just covered my stump up until we got it to the field hospital and like I say, and all the time, I just -- they left you like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: And the other people there, too, like I say, that friend of mine that I made friends with in the Army, both of his arms blew off, the same way. I mean, he's

laying there with his hands blown off ask just bare bone. No blood. So, I don't know where that --

Interviewer: Do you know what happened to him?

Nick Flores: No, I never. Like I said, they put me in that field hospital from there on and I just, you were there with total strangers and you couldn't, you know, there was a lot of operating in the dark because out in the field, they had no electricity or nothing. They just metal lanterns and stuff like that and operate on you in candlelight and stuff like that. So, you could be next to 100 people you wouldn't know. Except some of them, they were wounded and they were hurting and you could hear them wounding and all that but other than that, it was never -- you knew there was somebody around you but there was nothing that you knew.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: So I never did, like I say, the only ones that I kept in contact was these two other guys from the same town. We wrote to each other, but other than that, we never, no.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Do you know what happened to the German in the white suit?

Nick Flores: No, I don't know. Because I just fell down and then I just thought -- the medics came and picked me up and I don't know whether he survived or what because I don't know whether I heard him or what or anything at all because I was just throwing the grenades I had available then. I was more mad at him because he broke my rifle than anything because I didn't feel no pain.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Can he describe what the base unit -- I get a little confused as to the front lines, but he wasn't on the front lines. So --

Interviewer: Are you back at a CP or where were you?

Elizabeth: I need him to describe.

Interviewer: Were you in a CP or a headquarters most of the time?

Nick Flores: No, we was out in the field right there. I mean, like we was living right there, and like I say, the captain was not in the front line going forward with a rifle and then off moving and advancing. But we was moving along with the people at the front lines, we was right behind them. But the officers, they weren't -- well, some of the lieutenants and stuff were up there with the fighting guys and that. But other than that, the ones -- the officers got hurt mostly because of mortar shells or something like that because they kind of stayed behind and the rest of the foot soldiers were retreating. But we was right there in the front line because you're shooting all the time and that.

Interviewer: So, that must have been quite a -- I can't imagine. You were 19 when you stepped off that truck into Germany?

Nick Flores: I was 19; I mean, well, 18 more then. I wasn't even 19 yet.

Interviewer: And all of these people wiped out in the first few moments. That must have been something personally.

Nick Flores: Well, it was kind of a, you know, of course, right away, not like anything else even when you see the fire crackers and that, you dodge but we all ran to hide and that. But, me and this other person, my partner were close to where the officers where because we could hear what they were talking about and everything right there. So therefore, when this happened, I mean, we seen it happen. But I think more than anything, it didn't happen to us. So

therefore, we didn't consider anything when we wasn't in the danger part. We were in the danger part, but so we got to where they were at and the rest of us over to the side, and of course, the nine of us got a, you know (inaudible) like that.

Elizabeth: Were these the officers where he was, or were these the officers in the front lines?

Interviewer: I think, these were the officers in the -- the front line officers?

Nick Flores: They were the ones that came with us. They, the ones that came with us. Some of our officers, one of our lieutenants, he had already been to his service like that and then he came back, I don't know whether he came back or not. But he went back with us from here from the states. He went back with us and the only thing I can figure out is that he must have been wounded, came back for some R&R and then went back. He knew all the ways to go around and, of course, that was just to him because he started when we were told that we were going to go overseas, they told us what we could take with us. And so, this officer, he went to the (inaudible) and bought cigarettes, candy, and stockings. And he packed his foot lockers full of stuff that he was taking with him. So I asked the lieutenant, "How come you can do that?" And he said, "Because I'm a lieutenant, that's why." So how come you can take candy, you can take cigarettes with you? He knew what he was doing, the rest of us, we didn't know till we got over there that was a, you used it to trade with if you had any sugar, chocolate, candy, silk hoses. They were worth a fortune down there because the German girls, the German people -- whatever it was, in France, the first thing -- they was always asking for cigarettes and candy and silk stockings and stuff like that. And I wasn't a smoker, and they give you so many cigarettes a day, and so many candy bars and that. And I saved all my cigarettes and I was able to trade

where ever I went for local foods and stuff like that in Germany. I would stop at the towns and people come out and we'd trade for food and that.

Interviewer: Were you a religious kid?

Nick Flores: No, I did go through all the ceremonies in the Catholic church up -- I went through all of the deals, I'm a real believer, but I was -- I was a boy and I liked the girls and all that, but I was not a religious person at all. Unless you got married, I got married through the Catholic Church, a Catholic priest married us. And on the Army base in Texas getting ready to go overseas, a Catholic priest (inaudible), but other than that, I was never religious at all.

Elizabeth: Does he feel lucky or unlucky?

Interviewer: Do you feel lucky or unlucky?

Nick Flores: I feel now that I was lucky. Of course, like a friend of mine that was in the service, I wrote to him. He was over there, too, in Europe, too. I wrote back and forth to him and he called and told me, "You got a million dollar wound." And so therefore, by that, it's painful, but still, I feel like I didn't get mangled like some other persons did. I got to go see what it was like and got to see other parts of the world and that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: But they took me out of farm country and that, so I didn't want to become a farmer after that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: I have one more. Did he talk about his war experiences when he came home?

Interviewer: When you came home, did you talk about your war experiences?

Nick Flores: No, because that was the thing about it. That's one of the reasons I kind of -- the deal was, I went in the service and like I say, I was born and raised in Texas and Texas was very racist at that time. We, the Latinos, the Hispanics, the Mexicans, whatever we were, we didn't have no rights. Just like the Negroes did. The Negroes didn't have -- they were not considered, you know, humans and that. Therefore, I got out, but I was born and raised there, but I didn't know the difference. When I went in the service and then they took me in the service and when I got back out, I walked off a train in this little town where I was raised at, I got off the train and the depot was right in the middle of the town. The town was divide by the train depot, and I knew it from before that we were not allowed in the restaurants, we were not allowed in theatres, we were not allowed to drink water out of the same fountain, stuff like that. By then, I said I was in uniform, I got off the train, and as soon as I got off the train in Texas, I had to ride the train in crutches all the way to where I was going standing on the aisle, and of course, nobody would give me a seat. And so, that was -- we had to sit in the rear of the bus if we took the bus in the city. But when I got off the train, I walked across the road to a restaurant that was there, walked in, getting a cup of coffee so I could walk home and the guy, the owner came up and said, "Did you read?" And I said, "Yes, sir, I can read." He said, "Go out there in the door and look at the sign that was there." And it said, "No dogs, Mexicans, or Negroes allowed." And so, that kind of hurt me because it was the notice that I had received, that person noticed that I was Mexican, and that, and therefore I said, "Sure." And I went. And then in the duty, I went and served because I was forced into it, otherwise I would still be in Texas right now not knowing there was something different in the rest of the world. But I, that made

me kind of mad in there because this person stayed here. He was white, but yet, he didn't want me in his place to serve me a cup of coffee and that. And that's the only thing that hurt me. That was the only reception that I got when we got back to Texas. And so, I thanked the Army though because they did get me out of there to realize there was other places.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: I'm confused -- he went back to Texas before Utah? These things happened to you in Texas?

Interviewer: Tell us the sequence of how you got back to Texas and then to Utah. Did you come to Utah first and come to Texas on leave or what?

Nick Flores: Well, no, because like I say, on leave right there, I was right there before we went overseas, I was right there close to the town.

Interviewer: This was before you went overseas?

Nick Flores: Before I went overseas, yeah.

Interviewer: So you weren't wounded?

Nick Flores: No, I wasn't wounded yet. But when I got wounded, I was shipped directly here to Brigham City, Utah. So the other time I was in the service, I went back to Texas was when they, I think I went back twice when I got out of the hospital. I could use crutches and walk on crutches and go back to Texas and everything was still the same as it was then. By then, when I got relieved and discharged from the service, and that's when then when I started noticing what the difference was because --

Interviewer: So, this incident you told us about, the coffee shop and getting off the train, that was before you went overseas?

Nick Flores: No, that was after. When I got wounded, after I got released, discharged from the Army.

Interviewer: So this was after Brigham City?

Nick Flores: Yeah, when I got discharged from the Army.

Interviewer: Did they fit you with an artificial foot? What did they do?

Nick Flores: Well, they fixed me with an artificial foot right away, but in those days, they used to take a stump. A wooden leg, they used to call it. And they would just carve it out, take the stump and carve it out to fit your stump. They would measure your stump and this and that. Measure, measure. And they take plaster of Paris and make whatever you call it, and then they make it fit there. But it, it was miserable though, because your skin wasn't used to being rubbed against a piece of wood and that all the time.

Interviewer: It took some time.

Nick Flores: It was, I had a friend that was, before in school, when we was going to school as kids, I had a Mexican friend that had lost an arm and a leg there just when he was a kid, young. And so, he -- he was wearing a peg leg all the time. And he never had nothing on his arm. And so, therefore, he had a peg leg and I thought that's what the deal was going to be with me, too. That I was going to be on a peg leg. And so, they made the leg for me and therefore, unless people knew that you were wearing an artificial -- you tell them. But they couldn't notice the difference.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: No, but I was -- it was an adventure for me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Nick Flores: And in a way, I'm glad it happened because I went and got out and got an education. I never went to school before I went into the service.

Interviewer: So you went on the GI bill?

Nick Flores: I went on the GI bill and that, and so therefore, what education I got, I got it through that. And so but other than that, of course -- I wanted to get away from what it used to be like. And therefore, an education helped me. And that's why I came back to Utah as soon as I got out. I met Bob's mother there, a white girl, and that was a no, no in Texas. We were not even allowed -- our school was segregated. We had our own school in our community, and the Negroes had their own school and their own community. The town was divided into three sections, the Mexicans, the Negroes, and the other race. And we, if we were on the sidewalks and that, if we walked along the sidewalk and a lady would come along, if we was wearing a hat, we had to take our hat and walk like that around the side. Had to get off the side of the sidewalk if it was too crowded. And they had all the stores and like that that they got in town, they had water fountains out. And they had one for whites only, color only. We were colored. So, we had to drink out of that colored fountain only. I don't know what the difference was or what kind of water they had in that other fountain, but it was the same thing in the restaurants. If we wanted to eat in the restaurants, they would serve us, but we had to go around to the back in the kitchen. They would serve us in the kitchen, but they wouldn't serve us in the front of the restaurant like that.

Nick Flores: Did you experience anything like that racist behavior in Utah?

Nick Flores: No, I never did. That was the thing that kind of, I liked about it because when they sent me over here, I got a lot of attention from all the community there in Brigham City. And the people there are very friendly and they used to come around and never

notice anything and like I said, like in Texas a young person got caught talking to a white girl, we, if the police seen you, you go to jail. And so, therefore, here, when we got here, there was all that was. White girls would come around the wards to the hospital all the time and bringing games or all kind of stuff like that. There was never any difference. We get out; go all over town and like that, never -- never any difference. Then, when I got out of the service, I said, well not only that, but I always liked the mountains and that. And when I got out, I met Bob's mother while I was working and going to school. I was working part-time at a big hotel there, waiting on tables. And she was doing the same thing there. So we met there and then we realized we couldn't be together. So, well, "Let's go to Utah." And so, we came to Utah to come and get married over here. But we couldn't do that in Texas. But in those days, I mean, brutal to me and then. But now Texas is like anywhere else.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Elizabeth: So your mother is a Texas girl?

Nick Flores: Yeah, born and raised in Texas, too.

Interviewer: I see.

Elizabeth: You know, I think I have everything.

Interviewer: I think we're done here.

Nick Flores: Well.

Elizabeth: Unless --

Interviewer: Is there something we haven't asked you that you want to talk about?

Nick Flores: Well, no. It's a lot of things and that, but, uh just different and that. The only thing that got me to, that got me; the Army got me out of the cotton fields. That

was our livelihood in Texas. I started helping my mother and my father pick cotton when I was five years old. Of course, that was the only work available for us. So we was strictly farm laborers and that. And so, I didn't want to be a cotton picker. When I grew up, I said, "I'm never going back to them fields again." And so, that's what I decided.

Interviewer: That's hard work, jeez.

Nick Flores: It was, I mean, of course to me, when I was small, it was kind of -- because I could pick off and go fool around and my mother say, "Hey, get back here." Even though I wasn't doing too much, but she still made me be by her side when she was picking cotton and my father in the cotton field. Of course, I was the oldest one in my family. I was first born in my family and that.

Interviewer: Yeah, all right. Thank you very much.

Nick Flores: Well, I'm glad to --

Interviewer: We enjoyed this and are very happy you're here. And thank you very much for making the effort to come up here. It's going to be a very important part of our story.

Nick Flores: Well, it helped me get out of work, too (laughter).

Elizabeth: That's the best part, isn't it?

Nick Flores: Yeah. My job over there is mostly to answer the phones and stuff like that.

Interviewer: We're very glad you came.

Elizabeth: You don't have to record this, but I'm curious. What happened to your first wife?

End of recording.