

Transcription: Glen Claxton

Today is Thursday, September 17th, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I'm interviewing Mr. Glen Claxton. This interview is being done by phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Claxton is at his home in Forney, Texas, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for letting us interview you today. It's an honor for us, and usually the first question we always start off with is just to ask you to tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life and that sort of thing before you entered the military.

Glen Claxton: OK, well, I was drafted when I was 18 years old. I was just a kid when I was drafted. I worked for A&P Grocery. I don't know if you remember them or not.

No, I've heard of it though.

Glen Claxton: And I lived in Dallas, Texas at the time, and I just grew up a normal boy. My dad left us when we was about, oh, 6 years old, but my mother raised me and my brother, and we always kind of took care of our mother. That's where I was when I was 18, just barely 18, three months later I got a greetings, and after there, well, they drafted me.

Were you drafted before or after Pearl Harbor?

Glen Claxton: I was drafted after Pearl Harbor. I was drafted in '44.

OK, do you remember where you were when you learned that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Glen Claxton: Yes, I was in Dallas at the time working for the A&P Grocery.

And how did you hear about it?

Glen Claxton: You know, I don't know, at that age, 17, you don't really pay too much attention to things, but it was just all over the news and everywhere else, and I never realized that I would be involved in the war. But at age 17, you know how it is, you didn't really worry about too much stuff.

Once the war had started and you were still there in Dallas and working, did you expect at some point to be drafted?

Glen Claxton: You know, I really didn't. It was kind of a surprise to me, really. But I guess deep down I might've thought, but I never thought I'd be drafted, no, I really didn't.

What did you do upon getting that draft notice?

Glen Claxton: Well, I looked at it and uh-oh, I knew exactly what it was when I got it. So I told my boss I'd probably be leaving him pretty soon and wouldn't be there anymore.

Do you remember how much time you had between getting that draft notice and the time you went out?

Glen Claxton: I was born May 1st, and I got the draft three months later in August.

So about three months later, you shipped out?

Glen Claxton: No, I got the greetings. I spent 17 weeks at Camp Fannin in Tyler at basic training.

OK, I was just wondering how much time between when you got the draft notice and between when you had to ship out.

Glen Claxton: Well, I shipped out about at the end of November.

OK, so a little bit of time. Where were the thoughts of your mom and your family and friends? Were they worried for you?

Glen Claxton: Oh yes, my mother was very worried because we were very close, you know, we didn't have a dad and I was very close to my mother, and it really shook her up really bad when I had to leave.

Had any of your brothers or friends been in the service?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, I had a brother four years younger.

But none of them had been drafted.

Glen Claxton: No, he was too young. I was the only one in the family that really went into the service.

So when you got drafted, what branch of the service were you drafted into?

Glen Claxton: I went into the Army.

And tell us a little bit about your basic training.

Glen Claxton: Well, when I got there, basic training, me, I was just a green horn and had never been away from home in my life, and I never will forget they lined us up and we had a little sergeant that stood up in front of us, Sergeant Leos, kind of a short guy, about as short as I was. I was only about 5'7". He stood in front of us 30 men and we were in plain clothes then before they had given us our uniforms. He said I want to tell you one thing, you're going to be the best platoon in this company. If you're not, you're going to have to answer to me, and he was tough. He said if there's anybody in here that thinks they can out rank me or out speak me or out do me, we'll meet in the quarters this afternoon and put on the boxing gloves – and he meant it, and I think a couple of guys took him up on it. I didn't.

Where was your basic training?

Glen Claxton: It was Camp Fannin, Tyler.

In Tyler.

Glen Claxton: It was very strenuous. They were getting us ready for replacements is what they were doing, and I never will forget that first night in our bunks. I could hear those boys crying all over the bunks. They had never been away from home in their life. I didn't cry, but I was really sad and sorrowful. It was really a shock to me.

Did they send you on a train or by bus?

Glen Claxton: See, I just lived in Dallas, and it's just 100 miles to where Camp Fannin, Tyler, is. I think we went by bus.

And how long did you spend there in boot camp?

Glen Claxton: 17 weeks.

17 weeks, and all there in Tyler.

Glen Claxton: All in Tyler, yeah.

Tell us what happened once you graduated. Where did you go to next?

Glen Claxton: When I left Camp Fannin, Tyler, they put us on a train and we went to I forget, it seemed like it was New York Harbor on a train, and it was a long train ride.

And did you know at that point that you were getting shipped - ?

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah, it seemed like to me, you know, it's 60 years ago and it's hard for me to remember, but it seemed like to me we went to another place in Oklahoma, and they got us all ready to go to different places where we were going to ship out, and from there we went to New York Harbor, and loaded on a boat there, a ship.

And this was sometime in late 1944?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, about the middle of 1944.

What were your thoughts about getting shipped off to war?

Glen Claxton: Well, you know, we got on that boat and of course I'd been with all the GI's for 17-18 weeks and our sergeant, he had been in combat, and he'd already told us a lot about combat, so it didn't enter your mind how bad it was gonna be, you know, but I never will forget when we got on the boat, when we got on the ship, we got on the lower deck of the ship and it was rockin' and a rollin', and I got seasick, and a sergeant over there said son, if you're seasick now, you're gonna be seasick for 10 days and 10 nights, and I was, boy and I was seasick. And the boat took us 10 days and 10 nights to get to Marseilles, France, and we unloaded there, and I remember it was dark and it was cold. I think it was early December or November, very cold. We unloaded there and we took our duffle bags and everything else and we unloaded there. They said stack all your duffle bags over here and you're going to carry it with you. When you leave here you're going to carry just your main things. You've got to have two pair of socks and your canteen and your overcoat and that's all you're going to carry away from here, and your blanket, that's what you'll leave here with. And so they said go over there and stand in these tents. So I was with my buddies, one was named Burkett and another one named James, and

we'd been in boot camp together. We went in that tent and it was dark, real dark in that tent, and I got to feel around for a bunk and there was no bunk in there. We had to sleep on the ground that night, and I never will forget how cold it was. And that's the first night I guess that I ever cuddled up to a man, but we cuddled up to each other to stay warm.

Yeah, so you got to that camp there in France.

Glen Claxton: In Marseilles, France, and from there they put us on one of those French trains, 40 and 8's. You know what 40 and 8 is, don't you?

I've seen them. They're smaller aren't they?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, well you know why we called it a 40 and 8? It was a boxcar and it would hold 40 men or 8 horses.

OK, I didn't know that. That makes sense.

Glen Claxton: And it was cold, I mean snow was all the way up to the bottom of the train. We had our canteen with us and we would hang them out the door and get that snow up in those canteen cups and then we had our little old mess kits and we'd light a fire under 'em and heat 'em up and make coffee out of that. And any of the guys had to stand on the side of the road at the edge to go to the bathroom, and it was a mess, it was just a mess.

How long did it take?

Glen Claxton: It seemed like it took us, I can't remember but I remember we would drive quite a ways and all of a sudden we'd back up, then we'd drive forward and then we'd back up, and I can't remember exactly where we got off the train, but somewhere in Germany, and from there on, we were ready to go. I can't remember, we were almost in foxholes from then on.

What was it like the first time you arrived to your new unit as a replacement?

Glen Claxton: We replaced a group that had been into, the Battle of the Bulge was on, and the Germans were actually retreating, but I replaced a man or a soldier that that company that I replaced him, they tell us that there was 80 men died out of 100, that had just went into a skirmish, and I was a replacement for one of those 80. That kind of shook me up. These were old died in the wool combat soldiers, and we were just as green as we could be. We didn't know anything.

Did they have any special advice for you?

Glen Claxton: Well yeah, they all did, you know, it's gonna be tough, you're gonna make it, and all this kind of stuff. They tried to help us all they could because they knew we were green. But you learn pretty quick.

And you were with two guys that you knew from basic training?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, and I hate to say but the first little skirmish that we went into, Burkhead got killed, one of my best buddies got killed. That hurt real bad.

Did you learn about it after the skirmish?

Glen Claxton: I learned after. I didn't see him killed. He was in another section than I was in, but I learned later that he got killed, first little skirmish we went into.

What was the sense of morale at that time? Did you feel like you were beating the Nazis, that you were pushing them back?

Glen Claxton: At age 18, I didn't have any sense of morale or anything like that. I was just there and I just did what they told me to do. That's all I knew. I was very, a good soldier because anything they told me to do, I did it and without even thinking. But I didn't really think that much about it because I was just too young. I was just a kid.

Did you ever get any letters from your mom?

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah, I got letters all the time.

How often, how long would it take for a letter to get to you?

Glen Claxton: Sometimes it took about maybe two or three weeks, sometimes it was long for us to even get a letter. She would send me a box of cookies and cakes and stuff that she had baked, and sometimes it would take three or four weeks before we'd get those, and I'd always divide 'em up between my buddies, and we really enjoyed that, fresh cookies and cakes, pies.

What was the leadership like in your unit, your sergeants and your officers and those folks? Did you see much of them?

Glen Claxton: I didn't see too much, we saw mostly our sergeant in charge of the squad, and a GI squad has 12 men in it and we saw him mostly. I really can't remember too much about him because they changed squad leaders two or three times before it was over. I think some of them got killed when we went into those skirmishes we went into. I call the skirmishes. I don't know, half the time I didn't know where I was.

Did you ever encounter many civilians, German families or civilians?

Glen Claxton: Well, the way I encountered the civilians was we were doing a lot of house to house fighting, and we would go into those villages and of course the rest of the Germans were retreating, and they would retreat out of those villages and the people were still there, the German people, and I remember they were friendly to us, and we were friendly to them because we knew they were just civilians and couldn't help the thing at all. But I know one thing we did that was probably bad, they would make some of those German families move out of their houses so we'd take over their houses and stay in 'em where it was warm, and that wasn't really right but we did it. You know, it was war time. Of course I didn't do it on my own, but the whole group did it, and they had to move out of their houses and we'd stay in their houses until we moved on further because we'd been sleeping in foxholes most of the time.

Oh yeah, I can certainly understand the desire to have a bed and food and warmth. What about the German soldiers? Did you encounter them very much as POWs or that sort of thing?

Glen Claxton: Well, my first encounter, you might not believe this, I was 5 foot 7, I weighed about 135 pounds, and the first encounter we went into, I remember there were three large homes kind of out in the country and we raided those homes because they knew, I guess the sergeant or the captain knew that there were German soldiers in those homes, and when we got to that first big house, they told me, said Claxton, you go to the basement, you get the basement and clean it out. The rest of 'em went on up in the building. I went in that basement and there were two or three doors in there and all of a sudden a door opened and a German soldier handed me his rifle. Well gollie, I threw my rifle on him. I come up out of there, boy, I was a big dog then. I had already captured a German soldier. And I turned him over to the squad leader and I don't know what ever happened to the man. I never did see him after that. But that was really a shock to me.

He must have felt that was his only way out of there.

Glen Claxton: I guess so. He could've shot me just as easy. Many times I could've gotten killed. I went through some close places.

Tell us a little bit about if you would, some of the more memorable things from Europe.

Glen Claxton: What I remember is living in those foxholes, that was rough. It was cold and two men to a foxhole. One man would stand guard duty at night and the other one would sleep, back and forth. That was pretty rough to a little old civilian like me that hadn't been anywhere. I remember one time we were going across a road and a German 88 was setting up on a hill and we didn't know it, and he started firing those 88 shells at us. We ran back and jumped in the ditch beside the road, and I remember I heard one of the shells coming in, and I heard it coming in wh-h-wh-h-h like that, and that meant it was gonna hit pretty close to you. That 88 stuck up in the ground about two foot from me, and it was a dud. I thought Lord, you saved my life there.

Yeah, I would definitely think, that's right.

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah. And I didn't really have any actual hand-to-hand combat. We never did really get into that, but we did a lot of house to house fighting, and we got pretty close to the German soldiers that way, and they were retreating. Well, they were firing at us while they were retreating, but I remember when we crossed the Rhine River, my outfit was 79th Infantry, we spearheaded the Rhine River crossing. They three artillery shells across that Rhine River all night long before we went over, and they would start at one end and fire about, it seemed like 20 guns, and then they would go back to 1. It seemed like they fired those artillery shells over that river all night long, and for some way or another, when we come out of the foxholes and went down to the river, went over a big bump of ground, there were those Navy pontoon boats to take us across there. Well how they got there? It wasn't a pontoon, but it's that kind of boat that you use to put being in from the butt, front of it falls down and you walk out on it. I don't know what you call it.

Yeah, I know what you're speaking of.

Glen Claxton: And when we got over to the other side, there were dead bodies all over, I mean dead Germans everywhere. We couldn't hardly walk for 'em. That really shook me up. And from then we stayed in, we went into a German POW camp that they had, that the Germans had had some people in that camp, and we released 'em, and they ran out all over the place. I don't know where they found it, but they found some jugs of beer and they come out handing us all a

beer. I don't know where they got it from. We stayed in that building, an old school building, stayed in that building that night and slept on the floor. From then on, we went on into Germany. So that's one of the things I remember. I remember one time I got a shrapnel, cut the side out of my steel helmet, and that was pretty close.

Oh wow, yeah, that's about as close as you can get.

Glen Claxton: About as close as you get, and I didn't even know it until I took my helmet off and the side of it was cut out.

What was your food like while you were there? Did you eat pretty much just K-rations?

Glen Claxton: When we were out on the field, we had K-rations, and once in a while the cooks would bring us up a hot meal, up on the front lines, and that was the best thing and we said give 'em all a gold medal for that, and they came up under fire and gave us meals. But that K-ration, you eat it two or three times and you could hardly eat it again. Once in a while we would get some C-rations, and C-ration fed 10 men, and it was better. But we lived on K-rations most of the time during combat.

While all this was going on, did you have any, I think you said earlier, you didn't really know exactly where you were, so I guess you didn't have any sense then either of how the war was going and some of the battles?

Glen Claxton: No, we really didn't. Or I didn't. Just knew where we were and what we were doing, and half the time I didn't know where I was. I just followed the leader. I remember one time we went into a little town, we were on the outskirts of this little town and we raided that town, and when we did, it was kind of dark, and we raided the town and there weren't too many Germans there. I think they had already retreated. In fact, I didn't run into any myself. But I went into this house with this group of men that I thought was my squad. It was not my squad, and when you got into, we went down into the basement and they wouldn't let you light any fire, no lights, because artillery would come in on you, so finally they lit candles there after they covered all the windows and everything in the basement, and he saw that I was there and said what are you doing here? I said well, I don't know. Well you can't stay here, you got to go find your own unit. I said what do you mean? He sent me out across that little town to find my own unit at dark in the night, and I never will forget, I was going across ditches and crawling across lawns and all this kind of stuff, and I didn't know exactly where I was going to, and I thought where I was, and about that time somebody put a 45 right in the middle of my head, and he said, I forget what it was now, I think he said, there was a password, and I knew the other part. I forget what the password was now, but if I wouldn't have it, I'd have gotten killed right then. That was strange going through there in the night, you know.

You didn't know where your unit was?

Glen Claxton: No, I didn't know where I was. I couldn't find 'em. But he found me. But that was pretty rough.

Did your squads have radios? Could you talk to other squads by radio?

Glen Claxton: Well, I think the sergeants had radios, yeah, but we didn't, the individual men didn't.

So he just sent you out to go find 'em.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, he just sent me out. He said you go this way, go right straight up there this way. He knew where they were I guess. He had been talking over the phone.

Otherwise you might have gone the wrong way.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, they were waiting for me, see, but that's one thing I remember.

Did it feel like your unit was moving really quickly?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, I felt like we were moving pretty fast, we were moving pretty quick. We covered a lot of range.

Tell us what it was like, what was the last action you guys had when you finally found out the Germans had surrendered. Do you remember where you were that day?

Glen Claxton: You know, I can't remember exactly. I remember we were in a little town called Whitten, Germany, and we weren't near to combat at that time. I think maybe we were on R&R at that time, and they come out that the war was over, and everybody rejoiced over that. I don't think we were in combat at that time. That was, oh, it was a great thing to hear that. From then on, they sent me, after, I can't remember exactly all, but after that I was attached to the 1st Infantry Division, and I stayed in the army of occupation for a year.

Tell us what that was like, that had to have been interesting.

Glen Claxton: Well, that army of occupation was real good for us because we were conquerors, and this captain that we had, he hated the Nazis, and the little town that we went into was called Ehrlangen, Germany, and he put us in a resort hotel there, our company. Each man had his own private room and they were nice rooms.

Yeah, I bet.

Glen Claxton: And then we had a big place to eat, where in the mess hall we had a 10-piece German band that played for us every day while we ate lunch, and he told us, he said if any of you ever walk down the street, and this was his words, and you see one of them damn Nazis coming toward you, you make him get on the other side of the street. Don't even let him walk with you. And he hated the Germans. I guess he had a lot of encounters with them. But that was really, and I stayed in that army, and every day I was in a patrol. We got in a jeep, me and three other men, and we patrolled the Czech, the Russian and the American border. Germany was divided. And we patrolled those borders in that jeep every day to make sure people didn't come across the border, for some reason or another.

At that point did you have much interaction with the German civilians?

Glen Claxton: Well, we had quite a bit of action. We all had us a girlfriend, and they didn't want us to do that. They didn't want us to fraternize, but we did, and I was just a kid, you know, and well I never had that in you, like that there was girls or nothin', but -

Could the German girls talk to you?

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah, they could speak English and we learned to speak a little bit of the German. Haben Sie shokolat? That was one. Wo gehen Sie was another – where are you going? And ich liebe dich, I love you. And I remember another one that was kind of a funny thing that they taught us in German, it was wo ist der Burgermeister? Der Burgermeister bis in da Kellar kinder machen. You know what I said?

Something about burgers?

Glen Claxton: Burgermeister, that was a mayor, and where is the mayor? The mayor is in the cellar making kids.

Oh.

Glen Claxton: That was just kind of a funny joke we had going between us.

So you spent a year there.

Glen Claxton: I was almost a year in the occupation. You know really I hate to say it, but I kind of enjoyed that because I had been so tied up at home and never been away from home in my life, and we were out of combat and we weren't in any danger, and they fed us real good and we had nice facilities and went out on a jeep every day and patrolled those borders and I really enjoyed it, really.

Did you ever learn how it was you got to be part of the army of occupation and that you weren't going to be picked instead, I mean I know the war ended pretty quickly in the Pacific as well, but were you worried at any point that you might be sent to the Pacific?

Glen Claxton: No, I really wasn't. I never did even think about it. It didn't enter my mind. I went home on the point system. Finally they came to me and my point was up, and they asked me. I had made sergeant. I made sergeant during the combat. They said Sergeant Claxton, tell you what, your point system is up and you're ready to go home, not unless you want to stay and reenlist and we'll send you to officer's training school? And what about it? I said well I'll tell you what I want. They said what? I said I want a one-way ticket to Texas. Let me out of this thing.

So you had not seen, so after the war was over in Europe, you spent another year there before you came back home?

Glen Claxton: Almost a year, yeah.

I guess your mother was no longer worried about you at that point.

Glen Claxton: Not that much, not at that time because we conversed back and forth. We never did talk on the phone or anything, but we conversed back and forth by letter a whole lot.

Tell us a little bit about what it was like the day you finally got back home to Texas.

Glen Claxton: Oh, I'll never forget that. I remember we had been in dark green clothes and everything was dark and rainy and snowy, and just everything was dark it seemed like when we were over there, and when we started home, they put us on a bus, or I was on a bus, and you've never been to Dallas, have you?

Yeah, I've been to Dallas.

Glen Claxton: Have you? Well there's a viaduct that comes from Oak Cliff over into the Dallas area, and we came over that viaduct over that bridge, and in the middle of the day and I never will forget how the streets were crowded, people had on white colored clothes, and the streetcars were running and everything. I thought oh, golly, this is wonderful. Then when I hit the bus depot, my whole family was there waiting on me, my aunts and uncles and I'll bet there was 30 people waiting on me, and they all greeted me and it was just great. I never had a better feeling in my life than I had when I came home.

That's great, wow. So after you got home, I guess you went ahead and got discharged.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, I got discharged. I went right back to work for A&P two weeks later. I didn't take any time off.

That's great.

Glen Claxton: But I was still kind of shaky. I still, you know a car would go off, blew a flat or something and I'd just jump and hide because I was kind of shell shocked I guess, just a little bit shell shocked. But I got over it pretty quick.

That's great. Did you stay involved, stay in contact with any of the guys you were with over there?

Glen Claxton: No, I really didn't. I kind of wish I had, but we all separated and went our own ways, and they were off in all different parts of the country, so I never did see any of them anymore. But that was about it with me. I guess I did my part.

Well, we're glad you did. We're thankful that you did.

Glen Claxton: And I'm thankful the good Lord took care of me and didn't get me killed over there.

Oh yeah, definitely, it sounds like you had some pretty close -

Glen Claxton: Yeah, I did, I had some pretty close encounters. I remember one time that the Germans were shooting at us with a machine gun and we were in a building, and I happened to kind of be standing where he cut the whole top off of the door right over my head with that machine gun. So I always said the good Lord was just watching over me while I was over there.

It also seems like, too, because you joined a replacement unit, that it was a pretty battle hardened unit and that as soon as you got there you guys were almost always on the move.

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah, we were.

Would it be safe to say that you were pretty much in constant contact with the enemy?

Glen Claxton: Yeah, I would say so, from that time on, yeah. But like I say, the Germans at that time, which I didn't know anything about the Bulge or anything like that, they were retreating at that time, they were in retreat, and they weren't fighting back as hard as they would have if they'd have been on the other end coming toward us.

Yeah, they weren't really dug in as well, on the go.

Glen Claxton: It seemed like we were in charge. We usually won every battle we went into because they retreated. And to this day, well I guess, I married a little German girl after I got home.

Oh really. Did you meet her while you were in Germany?

Glen Claxton: No, I met her later.

But she was from Germany and moved here?

Glen Claxton: No, her parents were from Germany, but they had already moved here.

OK, so she was born in America.

Glen Claxton: Yeah. That was kind of unusual.

That would be.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, she really made a good wife, too. She's a really good wife.

That's great. Were you able to speak any German with your in-laws?

Glen Claxton: No, not really. Well, their dad and mother lived in Germany and they all moved over here, so they weren't really, they didn't speak German, her people didn't speak German. They spoke mostly American.

Yeah, interesting. And so you ended up going back to the A&P and then you worked there.

Glen Claxton: I worked there about 5 or 6 years, and then I went to work for Nabisco cookie company selling cookies. I've been in the grocery business most of my life after that.

Yeah, that's great. Well sir, we're proud of your service and sacrifice for our nation and the fact that you, what you did along with thousands of others.

Glen Claxton: I tell you what, I'd do it again if I were called up to do it. I appreciate any soldier, I appreciate 'em because I know what they're going through, and I'd do it again if I were called up to do it.

Absolutely. Were there any particular moments or instances we haven't touched on yet that you would want to share?

Glen Claxton: Well, let me look at my notes here. I started about Marseilles, France, 39th Infantry -

What about your gear and your equipment? Did you feel that was pretty good?

Glen Claxton: Yes, they were very good for what we needed it for.

Even in the cold weather that you guys were in, you felt like -

Glen Claxton: And they would take us back every once in a while and put, I don't know where, but they would take us back somewhere, and one time they took us back to a building. I don't know where it was. Then stay all night in that building and give us all a shower and brand new clothes to go back up on the front with. So we lived pretty dirty while we were up on the front, you know, didn't bathe or anything. And that was great when they'd do that.

Oh I bet.

Glen Claxton: Let's see if I got anything in here. I guess that's about it.

OK, well I tell you sir, it's a great story though, what you were able to do and some of the things that you saw over there, and the fact that you were so young and serving in such a tough situation.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, it was. Now I have a friend of mine that's, the one that gave me your name, Tom Floyd?

Yes sir.

Glen Claxton: Oh, he's one of these dyed in the wool veterans. You've seen him. Every time you see him, that's what he's gonna talk about. And I was gonna tell you about him -

He was a nice gentleman to interview. I really enjoyed him.

Glen Claxton: Oh yeah, he gave me a book at one time not long ago. It said how the children won the war in Europe. The American children. That was us, 17-18 year olds. Because there were a bunch of us that were replacements over there.

That's true. I mean that's such a young age.

Glen Claxton: You really didn't know anything when you're 17 or 18.

But did you have a sense when you were there and fighting that what you were doing was pretty historic?

Glen Claxton: Well, I didn't think it would be real historic or not, but I knew that we hated Hitler and we wanted to get rid of him, and that was our desire to catch Hitler and get rid of him, all of us wanted to do that, and how that they had attacked us. We didn't attack them, you know. So we were fighting for our country. We knew that.

Exactly. Did you ever have a chance to get into Berlin?

Glen Claxton: No, I never did. I wish I had but never got to Berlin.

What do you think was the biggest city in Germany you ever saw?

Glen Claxton: I think Nurenberg.

Were you there during the famous trials?

Glen Claxton: No, I was not, I left before the trials started, and I know the 1st Infantry Division were in charge of those trials, I mean the 1st Infantry, yeah, big red patch.

When you were over there during the Army of Occupation and you had to have known that a lot of the Nazis and a lot of the German soldiers had simply blended back into the civilian population, did you ever have any encounters with them or any dealings with them?

Glen Claxton: No, I never did, we never did. I guess maybe they were trying to stay pretty quiet as far as I know, but no we never had any encounters with them.

And then you mentioned, too, about doing the patrols in the jeep along the border that you guys had shared with the Soviets and the Czechs and others, what was the main purpose of that? Were they trying to keep people from fleeing to the American side?

Glen Claxton: Maybe so. You know, I didn't know but I knew that we were to stop people that were crossing the border and I remember one time we went into, it was a little bitty jail, and they had some of them locked up there that had come across illegally, and I'll never forget this, we called up to the roll of those men that were there that had crossed illegally and put them back in, and we called out this one man's name, and it seemed like his name was Polonsky or something like that, and they pointed to another jail cell and said he's in there. I went in there and he had hung himself. He was just hanging. And that was something to see.

Did you ever figure out why he had done that?

Glen Claxton: No, I never did figure that out and I don't even know why we patrolled the border. I just did like I said just what they told me. But I don't know why they didn't want them to cross those borders. They didn't want them on the American side or something.

And you don't know what they did with those prisoners? Did they send them back?

Glen Claxton: They sent them back. They had a big truck there and they sent them back across the border.

Well sir, one of the things that we try to do with these interviews, is we have documents in the archives here at the Land Office that go back to 1700s. We've got paperwork here that was written by Stephen F. Austin, and we have stuff here on Davy Crockett and others, a lot of historical items in the archives at the General Land Office, and our goal is for these interviews to be archived as well so that hopefully hundreds of years from now, people can listen to these interviews as well and get an understanding of what you and your fellow servicemen went through.

Glen Claxton: Yeah, that would be great.

One question I always try to ask in these interviews is if there was one thing that you would want to say to somebody listening to this 100 years or more from now, what would that be?

Glen Claxton: I would say that war is a terrible thing. And I would say why can't we as all human beings get along together and quit fighting over these non-essential things that really don't amount to a hill of beans, and let's all be as Christ is and have peace for all. That's what I would say.

That's great. Well sir, I don't want to take up too much of your time, unless you have more to share.

Glen Claxton: No, I'll probably think of some more things later on, you know, things come up if you think about 'em.

Sure, well you can always get a hold of me.

Glen Claxton: Yes, sure do.

You can always contact me and we can always record more later on if you'd want.

Glen Claxton: OK.

But what we'll do like I mentioned before we started this interview is we'll make copies of this to send to you and get a script made up eventually as well, and then if you have any photographs that you'd want us to put on our web site, we'd love to get copies of those too, and we can always scan 'em and send the copies back to you or however you'd like to do that.

Glen Claxton: OK, I didn't take too many pictures.

Well, any maybe from around that timeframe if you wanted to put on there, we could do that, too.

Glen Claxton: OK.

Well sir, it's been an honor. I know Commissioner Patterson is a veteran and myself, and others are veterans here, would even people that work at the Land Office that aren't veterans understand and appreciate your service to our nation and are very thankful for what you and your comrades did.

Glen Claxton: Well I appreciate it too, you know.

Yes sir. Well sir, it's been an honor and if you need anything from us, feel free to give me a call anytime.

Glen Claxton: Sure will, sure will. We'll talk to you, thank you very much.

Yes sir, thank you. Take care.

[End of recording]