

## **Transcription: Ramon Galindo**

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*Today is Thursday, November 19, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I'll be interviewing Mr. Ramon Galindo at his home in south Austin, Texas. 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 taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us. And I guess the first question we always ask is tell us a little bit about your life and your childhood and growing up in all those years before you went into the military.*

**Ramon Galindo:** Well, I was born in Mexico, east of Monterrey, May 29, 1921. When my parents moved back to Austin, oh, I must've been 6 months old when they moved back to Austin, but they had been here in Austin 10 years before that. So I grew up here in Austin and I went to school here. After the second World War broke out, the Master Guard was taken in and then they built the Home Guard, and I joined the Home Guard with more teenagers, and we got military training from the 1<sup>st</sup> World War veterans at Camp Mabry. But meanwhile, I was taking flying lessons. I wanted to be a pilot. I wanted to get in the Army Air Corps. And my little brother Tom, he was born here, so I told him one day, I said let's go volunteer and get in the Army. I said I'm taking flying lessons, maybe they'll give me a chance to fly and I'll be the pilot and you be the radio operator. He was taking up radio. We went there to the recruiter's station to fill out the forms, and they said no, boy, we can't take you. You're not a citizen. I said what difference does it make? I have a big brother that's already in the service. And he was born in Mexico. So yeah, but we can't take you. I can take your brother Tom. And Tom looked at me and he says you see what you got me into?

*Now this was after Pearl Harbor, right?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Right after Pearl Harbor, yes.

*Go back a little bit. Do you remember where you were when you learned that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes. I was coming into Austin from Elgin. I was on Old Manor Road and East Avenue.

*Which is now 35.*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yeah, it's now 35. The newspaper boys were out there selling newspapers, calling extra, extra, we're at war! And yes, I remember that very clearly. And later on, a bunch of us guys got together and we thought we would go ahead and join the service. A lot of them did go. But I was held back because I wasn't a citizen to get into the Army Air Corps. So I waited around. That was 1942. I waited around and then they said well, you're gonna have to wait six months. I said why? I said that's too long. All my friends, my brothers are in the service, I want to get in the service. So they said well, how about next week? I said well that's fine, so I could take care of my own private business. I went to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and I took my little pilot log book, showed it to the major that was there. I said listen, I would sure like to get into the Air Corps. I said here's my log book. And he said well, I can see you would be good, but you can't join it because you're not a citizen. He said I'll tell you what, I'll put you in the anti aircraft. I kept hearing aircraft, aircraft. I didn't ask him what that was. I knew it had something to do with the airplanes. So I went back to the barracks and said say,

guys, what does anti aircraft mean? They said hell, we don't know. We just got into the service just like you did. But the major told me once I got established to apply for the citizenship paper right away. So I did, I did apply for it. I wanted to get into flying small planes or something, wherever they could put me. So we took a lot of training. What did anti aircraft mean? It's to shoot the airplanes down, not to fly. But anyway, about 9 months later, I was at Camp \_\_\_\_, Massachusetts, taking training there. We started out 40 millimeters canons, 37 millimeters, 50 calibers, and 30 calibers and all that. So one day the sergeant walked in and said Galindo! I said yes sir! He said get you two buddies to go with you to Boston, Massachusetts. You applied for American citizenship. He says go with them to the federal courthouse. He said but you need two witnesses. So I got my two buddies to get there, they volunteered, so they went with me. We got there at the federal courthouse and I looked around. It was all civilians. There were Italians, Germans, Puerto Ricans, Portuguese, everything. So I was the only soldier being sworn in at that time.

*And you were in uniform?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, I was in uniform and my two buddies were in uniform, yes. So after they gave me my citizenship papers, they said you can change your name now. This is a chance that you can change your name for good. I said like what? They said you can change your last name, like you're Galindo right now. You can put on there like Schmidt or any other. And I said no, I'm not going back home and say I'm Mr. Smith now! People would kill me. I said do I have to? They said no, but that's the chance you have. It's for free. I said no, I thank you for it. But I did go overseas on Armistice Day, that's November 11<sup>th</sup>, just a few days ago.

*What year was that?*

**Ramon Galindo:** That was 1944.

'44.

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, 1944. So I went on the ship called New Amsterdam, and it was Dutch, and it sailed out by itself. Usually they send out escorted ships. This time it sailed out by itself. We had 11,000 soldiers in there, and all the rest of them were Dutch sailors. So we got to Scotland, and then from there went to England, and stayed there to get our equipment. We got our equipment. I was a half-track driver and also a radio operator. I was a corporal. From there, we went over the channel and went up to I believe it was St. River, we went into France, Belgium, Holland, and when we got up to Aachen, that's on the borderline there. That's where we started seeing enemies there. So from there, they shipped us up, no, we drove up to Ardennes. So we got in a forest there and we got a radio call to get the hell out of there because the Germans were in there. Their tanks were there. We could hear the tanks, but if you can picture going through a forest, the road doesn't go straight. It snakes around. So that's what gave us the chance to get out of there in a hurry.

*Now you were still in the anti-aircraft unit at that point?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, I was still with the same outfit. Same outfit. So we got out of there and we drove out of there and looked for another place where we could stay overnight, and it was snowing. And we had to keep digging, and the ground was so frozen that our picks, we thought we hit cement or rock, our picks, when it got dark we could see the sparks come off the picks. Once we dug down about 6 or 8 inches, they drag us all. Then we would take a break and the

ground got hard again right there where we were digging. So we dug all night long, and we just had to put up with that cold weather. It was so cold that you just had to keep moving. But the next morning we got up, we got in our first battle. As we were looking up towards the sky, we could hear some planes up there, and what it was, it was a P-51 behind a Stuka airplane.

*German aircraft.*

**Ramon Galindo:** They were coming, it was clouded. The Stuka was in front. It was trying to get away from the P-51, and it would go right back up in the clouds. Once in a while, the P-51, you could hear that it was shooting at it, and they would go up, the German would go up through the clouds, up to the top, and they were playing like, well they were really dogfighting.

*Yeah, no doubt.*

**Ramon Galindo:** So the second time, we saw the same thing again. The German was trying to get away from the P-51. The P-51 was right behind him. Now that was twice, no, three times that they dove in and out. So we had our machine guns ready for 'em. We were ready, we said OK, we'll help him out. \_\_\_ ME109, a Stuka is coming in down below. As soon as we saw that, a shadow of a plane coming down in the clouds, we were all lined up, and we started firing. We hit. Everybody was saying on the radio, we got it, we got it, we got it! Well come to find out that the German didn't come down the third time. It was the P-51 that had come down. So it caught on fire and he bailed out. We found out right after we hit our target that it was a P-51. Then we saw, identified the airplane that was a P-51, it had square tails and square wings. And that was the worst feeling we had.

*Oh I'm sure.*

**Ramon Galindo:** So the pilot bailed out and the plane come straight down and crashed.

*How far did it crash from you guys?*

**Ramon Galindo:** It was approximately about 200 yards. Not far at all. It was right over our heads. So we went after the pilot. It was an American pilot. It happened to be a captain. He said what the hell? We said well, you know, we thought we would help you. So they told us from then on, if they're dogfighting up there, don't get into it. Just watch the show, watch the show.

*So what happened to the German plane?*

**Ramon Galindo:** We never saw it. It got lost in the clouds. We never saw it.

*But the American pilot survived at least.*

**Ramon Galindo:** Oh he survived. He parachuted out.

*Which is pretty lucky that only the aircraft was hit and that he wasn't hit inside the aircraft.*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, he was lucky that he was not hit. His plane got hit, the engine got hit. It was a lot of flack going up there. You take 450 calibers to each half-track, and they're all firing from all different directions, you can see the tracers going up there. Well, that was our first

experience. A few days later, there was another plane hedge hopping towards us, and it was an English plane, the Spitfire.

*You say hedge hopping meaning he was flying low.*

**Ramon Galindo:** He was flying real low, yes, flying real low. We got our guns and were ready to fire. Well we recognized it was a Spitfire because of the wings. We could identify it right away. But he was coming down hedge hopping because he was losing altitude, and the forest – I just said the name of it a while ago -

*Argon -*

**Ramon Galindo:** Ardennes Forest – that’s where he was flying over. So he was coming down and he landed, made a Bennett landing. Bennett. So he skied right close to us, so I went up there and I said what happened? He said well, the Germans got me, but I’m not hurt. He said my engine’s been knocked out. So he told me to get off the front – I was in front of the wings, and he said get away from the wings. He said I’m getting ready to unload these machine guns. He said I don’t want it to go off. So he had already radioed for help. So they come and picked him up right away. Of course, it was American territory, so they picked him up. But after that, we did hit some German planes. Our job was to get ahead of all the troops because they would ask for air support because the Infantry or the Artillery, they needed some support before they got there. So they always told us a lie. Get out there, look at your map, get out there, and because they’re waitin’ for you. Patton’s soldiers are waiting for you. So we’d get out there in a hurry. Three or four days later, here comes the tanks and the Infantry. Hey, what the heck are you guys doing up here? Well, ya’ll are supposed to be over there in front. Said no, we’re just, we were back there where Patton was just advancing. But our job was to get out there to give them air support, so any German plane would come down to strafe, at least we could run them away from there. If we didn’t hit, we could run them away from there, and that happened all the time.

*What were the German planes you saw the most of?*

**Ramon Galindo:** What type?

*Yeah, was there a certain type that you saw more than others?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Well yeah, the ME109, and the Stuka. They’re a little different, but we saw those. But they would come down to strafe. The big planes, they were up above. They didn’t come down that low.

*What were most of the soldiers like that you served with? Were they all pretty young guys from all over the country?*

**Ramon Galindo:** OK, the American soldiers we’re talkin’ about. Yes, a lot of them were 18 years old, 19 years old, and I was 21 at the time. There were soldiers that were about 35 years old. We used to call ‘em hey, pop. We’d call ‘em pop because they were older. But it was a mix amount of soldiers. For as lot older soldiers, but more older soldiers than young soldiers. And we had our training, but let me tell you what, when we got to the Rhine River, of course the Battle of the Bulge was so cold that when you’d get a hot cup of coffee and the wind was blowing, you couldn’t drink it because it was too hot. So you laid it out for a couple of minutes

and pick it up again and it was cold. The coffee was cold. They used to call me red nose. My nose was always dripping. But you know, you experience quite a few things even with your own buddies. Some of them get nervous. They have a problem back home, their nerves get to 'em, and I pulled guard with a lot of 'em and at midnight, or early in the morning, and I'll tell you it's a sad thing. Some of the guys just go berserk. But I don't know if you want to hear about that, but that does happen. I'll tell you a little bit about it while we're talking here.

*Sure, yeah.*

**Ramon Galindo:** We were there at the outside of the Ardennes Forest, and I was pulling guard with a corporal. I was a corporal and he was a corporal. And we were pulling guard and he said hey, hey Dick, you know, my name is R.G. Galindo, and they thought "R" was Richard. So they either called me Dickie or Richard. Hey, look, look over there. I would look, but there was a lot of snow on the ground, and the snow reflects a lot of light. So you can see if the forest is dark, you could see. He said hey Dick, look, you see that? They're coming with a white sheet. They're coming – I said no, no, that's that cannon, the .88 cannon the Germans left there. The cannon's here and the front part of it, it's a shield that they have in it. It's like this, the wheels go in here, and the snow was here sticking on the shield. I said no, that's the shield. It's snow on it. He said no, no, no, they're moving. This German's down in the file. I said no, no, no, I could see. He calmed down for a couple of minutes, and all of a sudden, bring up his machine gun again, a Thomson .45, and would bring it up again. I said no, you're not gonna fire because it's nice and quiet. He said but you see, they're moving. They're coming after us. I said no, no, and I finally looked at him and he had his helmet on, and I saw something I had never seen before. His hair was sticking up. Of course it wasn't very long. It was sticking up inside it was real big. I said no, are you all right? He said yes, I'm all right. You're not all right. I said look, I'm here. I'm here to defend you and you're gonna defend me. That went on for three times. And I said no, we're not gonna fire because the Germans will know that we're here. So we had some trenches. We had a dugout for the second half-track with 100 yards from the, it was two half-tracks that were 100 yards apart. So I said let's go up there. We're going to go see the sergeant. I said we will get relieved. So we got there and it was a dugout, and just enough to crawl in there, but they had some cots. And I said well look, sergeant, he was sitting on the chair, I said sergeant, look at the corporal over here. He said what's wrong with him? And he looked over and there was a soldier on the cot sleeping and a hand grenade sitting beneath the cot, had TNT underneath his cot, and he looked at him and he said I'll kill this son of a bitch. He says he's no good. I said and he went after some hand grenades and we grabbed 'em, I grabbed 'em. I said sergeant, let's grab – this guy's cuckoo. So he kept fighting it. The soldier got up and he grabbed – we tied him. We tied his arms. Sit down. The guy that was sleeping in the cot, sound asleep and never woke up. He never woke up. So the sergeant radioed in for some help, for some medics out there. So he come there the next day. They took the guy, took him for a few days. We were hopin' he would never come back. So meanwhile, the guy that was, he was trying to fight, he was our cook. So I said Dakarou, I'm glad you didn't wake up last night. What do you mean? I told him the story. I said what have you done to him? Because he hates you – he said you're kidding. I said I'm not kidding. I told him what happened. He said oh, mama mia. He was Italian. So I said don't sleep in that dugout anymore. Come on over here and sleep with us. He said yeah, but you're always kidding around with me. And I said that's all right. I won't kid with you no more. This is, I'm telling you the truth. So he asked the sergeant. He said sergeant, Dick told me this. He says that's right, he told you that? He said but I haven't done anything to him. I said well, we don't know. Something's going wrong with his mind. So he got out of there to come back and slept next to me. We had another dugout. And he says it's hard for me to believe you're always kidding around. I said look, I'm like a little kid no more.

After this, I'm not kiddin' around anymore. And I said did you do anything to him? He says no. I never talked to him. So that was one time. We moved on down further, and we were at the 777 Field Artillery with, it was a black company with some heavy artillery there. And then there were some British also we were to help the British because we had anti aircraft, they needed help, air support. So that afternoon, one afternoon, this corporal got together with the tank, it was black tanks, a company of black tanks.

*The one that had been, that you guys had sent away, he had come back, OK.*

**Ramon Galindo:** His mind was disturbed. He got put back into the outfit.

*What did they say when they sent him back to you? I can't believe they would send him back.*

**Ramon Galindo:** They gave him an opportunity to say well nothing wrong with him. I don't know what they said anyway. So he got back with, started talking to the tank soldiers, and that was a black unit there, and I was real surprised. But he was drinking with them. They had some shots or something they were drinking.

*You weren't allowed to have alcohol, right, when you were there?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Well, we weren't allowed, but they got the alcohol somewhere. It wasn't bulk. They took it out of the homes. So I had picked out, down at the bottom of the road there was a little hill, I guess about 14 feet up above, and I got my half-track up in position up there. But towards the back was a cemetery. But it was a good place for the half-track to be in. So this corporal, he got to cussing us out, so the black soldiers run him away from there. They said get back to your outfit. We don't want you here. So he got up to my half-track, which was up on the little hill, a platform up there, and he started aiming to all of us with the machine guns. There's a turret and he knew where the switch was and he was moving the turret back and forth. But the machine guns will not fire at a certain degree below, and he was cussing us all out. There was American soldiers, our soldiers up in front, and I was in shallow, and he was up there with the half-track with the turret back and forth and cussing everybody out. So I was down at the bottom of the cliff, so I come around the front of the half-track and jump up on the hood, and went and grabbed him from the back. There was a chance for me to grab him. So I grabbed him. But he had his helmet on and I'm glad he had the strap underneath his chin because he couldn't get away from me when I grabbed that helmet. And I hollered for help and they all come up there and helped me. So I said man, this guy's gone berserk. So we tied him up again and had the medics pick him up and take him away. And meanwhile there was a chef that went berserk that was down the street, one of our chefs. So we never did get to see him anymore, neither the chef or the cook or the corporal, and we were glad that he was gone. We didn't want him around.

*Yeah, that's the last thing you want in combat.*

**Ramon Galindo:** But he wanted to kill us, he wanted to open up fire on us. So that's one of the things that I've learned later on that that did happen in different places. I've heard soldiers talk about some of those experiences. But when we crossed the Rhine River, we were preparing for that. We had advanced up to the Rhine River and we couldn't cross it because all the bridges had been blown down by the Germans. But at one side, there was a German camp where they kept Russian soldiers there. They were all prisoners. So we were guarding there during the day

time, and we saw some soldiers coming across a broken down bridge, and now this was in day time.

*German soldiers?*

**Ramon Galindo:** No. There were, we couldn't tell at first. They didn't have German uniforms. Come to find out they were Russians that had escaped from the prison to go get something to eat. And the German people had told us around there, it wasn't populated too much there, they had told us the Russians would come out of the camp and go and take everything out of the house to eat, out of the icebox, anything they had to eat they took it out. So that's what they were doing. They had gone out to get something to eat, confiscate anything they could get. This fellow that I was talking to him, we couldn't understand one another, and he kept pointing up to the camp, and the camp was right across the street from us. So he went in there and so I was going to be relieved from my duties, guard duty, so as soon as I got relieved, I went into the camp there, and there was all Russians, prisoners. Some had taken their clothes off. They weren't wearing anything at all, raggedy, and I walked into this barracks and some of the fellows there were playing cards, and I said anybody speak English? Sprechen sie Deutsch? Shake their head no. Espanol? One guy says yo hablo espanol. I speak Spanish. And I said well good. How come you speak Spanish? He said I was born in Sicily, and Spanish is very similar to Siciliano. So we could communicate. And they were playing cards.

*He was with the Russian military?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, they were all Russian prisoners. The Germans had 'em as prisoners.

*Where had the Germans gone? Had they abandoned that camp?*

**Ramon Galindo:** They had abandoned the camp because they went across the Rhine River. This was on the river banks. So this Siciliano, I says, I told him in Spanish, give me the playing cards. Let me do you a trick. So I did a couple of tricks -

*Card tricks?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Card tricks, and he was translating. And all of a sudden somebody tapped me on the back, and I looked back and it was the same soldier that I was fussing with at the entrance, and the Siciliano says he's a major in the Russian Army. So he tapped me on the back and he asked me for the cards, put his out there. The Siciliano says he wants the cards. So I gave him the cards, so he did a couple of tricks. And he took off, but he was evidently that was his hobby, and that's my hobby at that time. But getting back to crossing the Rhine. Since we were around there for about five or six days, something like that, we couldn't get across, they had sent a lot of soldiers with their half-tracks into, it might've been Holland, to get some training. So they had to get on landing barges, get some training out, get the equipment on line, had to go across the river. But I didn't go on that one. But that night, our captain called us in and said we have to meet at a certain place not too far from there. So gather there. All the American artillery, the Infantry, the British, the Holland, Canadians, everything was gathered, assembled there. Our captain kept looking at his watch. I was in Battery A, Section A. A, B, C, D, and that's the way we would assemble in alphabetical order. Since I was in A, I was behind the captain. So he kept saying sergeant, what time is it? What time is it? He was looking at his watch. He had an envelope. So the soldier said it's not time. It's not time, don't open it yet. At a certain time, they opened up the letter and read it. And the letter says, the captain read it, he says our

President of the United States, Roosevelt he was, wanted to thank all of us for being in the service and that we were going to engage in a heavy battle and a lot of us may not survive. And if you have anything in your mind that you want to write a letter to back home, tell it to your buddy and he will tell you and you confidentially will write to your family whatever they wanted to. There was a soldier there next to me, was a corporal, he says Galindo, you gonna get it tonight? You gonna get it? You got it coming to you!

*Was he joking or was he angry at you?*

**Ramon Galindo:** He was a friend. And something struck me, something that happened to him. I had that feeling. Something's going to happen to him. And I said OK buddy, OK, if something happened to me, that's all right. You pray for me. Well, then the captain takes out another envelope, it's from England. And they're thanking us in the same way. So the time was getting close. I don't know how many minutes to 12:00 at that time, but as soon as 12 o'clock struck, all the American artillery that was gathered there was firing across the Rhine River, and it looked like the end of the world. I mean just cannons boom, boom, boom, boom, and soldiers, American soldiers, the Infantry were all scattered out and there were a lot of them crying, a lot of them went looking for one another, but our artillery went across the Rhine, but two minutes later, they had us zeroed in, it was hitting on our side. They were hitting behind the dikes. You know what a dike is, OK. I guess about 10-12 feet high. Well we were behind the dikes. They were hitting in front of the dikes, they were hitting behind the dikes, and behind they were hitting a convoy that was coming in, and they was all in flame, everybody hollering, running across, Infantry trying to find their men, and everybody was trying to go for cover and yet try to get to a pontoon bridge – they didn't have pontoon bridges then – they were building pontoon bridges, but they had the landing barges there and they were trying to get into a landing barge to go across. So our job was to be on the alert. And that night, that's the worst night I had ever seen. It looked like the end of the world because Germans had us zeroed in, and they were hitting in front of the dikes, behind the dikes. What saved us, saved me and my buddies was that dike in the front. So the lieutenant that was sitting on his belly, he says I had a half-track, I had a trailer behind it, I had gasoline, TNT, ammunition, had just about everything, attached to my half-track. So I tried to get over the dike, but the dirt was too loose, and by pulling that trailer I couldn't manage to get it over there. I kept asking that lieutenant, lieutenant, how far is water? He said I don't know, get across, he said get across. So I said look, my clutch is smoking. We had clutches on the half-tracks. I said my clutch is smoking. Look at it smoking. I said look, I can't make it with the trailer. I can leave the trailer. He said no, you can't leave the trailer. So we dug right parallel with the dike, that's what saved us, that dike. The buddy that had told me you're gonna get it, I heard on the radio about 30 minutes later that he was shot. He was trying to get over the dike. It blew off the windshield and everything. He was dead. We heard that on the radio. So the next day, we get up, the Belgium soldiers had already put up this balloons where they were gonna build the pontoon bridge, so there was a couple of German planes that tried to come down and strafe, but we run 'em away from there. One of my buddies in that section, he hit one of those airplanes. So he got credit for that. But we guarded there. Oh, let me tell you something beautiful. The next morning that I'm talking about, we looked up at the sky, there were American planes flying in formation, and the paratroopers were dropping off \_\_\_\_, but the Germans had their anti aircraft and they were firing at everything up there. The P-51's come I guess in about 6 or 8, they come in formation, the most beautiful thing, once they crossed the Rhine, they would dive down to the anti aircraft – ta-ta-ta-ta-ta – and they'd go right back up. And the second plane behind would do the same thing, come down, dive – ta-ta-ta-ta-ta – all of a sudden, well a few minutes later, you didn't see anymore German anti aircraft. They were wiped out.

*That's great.*

**Ramon Galindo:** But that, I can still see it in my mind.

*And the P-51 is a beautiful airplane, too, the Mustang, yeah.*

**Ramon Galindo:** It had a lot of speed.

*They still fly those at air shows and they're still real popular, just a beautiful airplane.*

**Ramon Galindo:** They had very good power. And they kept on diving down until they wiped 'em out and then they took off.

*That's great. So I guess during the war, did you ever have any doubt that we were gonna win? Did you ever worry about the outcome of what was going to happen to you or your unit or our country when you were over there? Or did you even think about that?*

**Ramon Galindo:** No, we knew we were gonna win because we were advancing so much territory. You see, Hitler had gotten the airplanes from Italy. I understand that the Italians were the first one that made that jet planes. They didn't have propellers. Before we got to the Rhine River, we had fired at some airplanes that didn't have a propeller. I says this airplane is going at tremendous speed, we can't hit it. It doesn't have any propellers. You're kidding. No. It doesn't have any propellers. But we didn't know there was jet planes. We didn't know what they was. We knew it was a plane that had a lot of speed, but didn't have any propellers. So that was towards the end. But then after the war, in Munich, we guarded a lot of those jet airplanes, the jet motors, to ship back to the United States. But we advanced from there all through Germany, went up to Czechoslovakia, and before we got to Czechoslovakia, some of our soldiers were lost going through all of the roads and fields and all that trying to get there. You don't know the terrain, that's the problem. So one of the fellows, I got lost because if you can imagine seeing a convoy after you gather together, you try to follow one another, but it's just like an accordion. It goes in and out, in and out, and as you get to a crossroad, you don't know whether to turn left, to the right, or what. So the sergeant was always on my right. I said sergeant, you want me to turn to the left or to the right? He said hell, I don't know. And it was a highway. I said well let's go up this highway, it was called an autobahn. We go up that road, and I said man, I don't see any American half-tracks. I said those are Germans. You could see the swastikas on the half-tracks. They had half-tracks, too. And I said hell, let's get the hell out of here. So we drove back and found that road that we were on, and they said well, let's take this road and go up further. So we finally caught up with them, with the American soldiers, wanted to know how come we were so late. So we didn't know how, where to turn. Even if you had a map, you didn't know which way it went. But one of those soldiers, one half-track got lost, and the sergeant's name was Wheeler, and he got back and he said, they asked him how come he was so late, and he said you know, we got to that place that Dick's talking about, that I was talking about. He says and we stopped there, but they had adopted a young kid from Belgium, and he spoke German. He was 14 years old, he was a cute little kid. But he could speak English. So he was translating. So the sergeant says you tell his men, these soldiers that the war is all over. There's no more war. They can go home. So he said get your captain or your commander over here. He says look, there's no more war, no more war. He says didn't you get communication? And they talked amongst themselves, the Germans. They had not had any communication. This little adopted kid, he was translating. He says they're saying that you're right. They don't have

any communication. So he said get up. Put your guns over here. Go home. And the guy did it. He talked to his other officers and they made up their mind within a few minutes that they would do that. So come on back. They finally called up and told us that story, and that little interpreter, he was talking to him and he said that was it.

*That was a true story?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, that was a true story. And that was the guy that we were gonna meet ourselves but we got the hell away from there. So we get into Czechoslovakia and the convoy stopped, and I said, there was a lieutenant ahead of me, you know, a little half-track, said hey, lieutenant, we're not in enemy territory anymore. He looked at me, wouldn't say a word. There was a lady that had a farm house and she was an elder lady and she was on the fence, she was waving at us and all that, and she had, she said she had some wine and she wanted to give it to me. I said lieutenant, I'm not gonna fraternize. If I talk to her, I'm not fraternizing. He still wouldn't say nothing. So I took a chance. She took me in the house, gave me a big bottle of wine and gave me some eggs, two eggs, and I put 'em in my jacket. So I come back out and everybody looking at me. So the convoy was still there, wouldn't move. So I told all my friends, let's go up here on the field out here and see what's on top of that forest, over that forest there was open space. We got there and it was four of us. Only one of 'em had a rifle. I had my submachine gun but I left it on the half-track. So we get up and look around, and I want to say this, I don't know why we did that, but anyway we looked around and we saw a German soldier. He was ducking behind some trees that were knocked down. And I hollered at him, and I told my friend, I said well, why don't you go ahead and shoot towards him, just shoot at him. He got his rifle up and aimed, and he says you know what, I can't pull the trigger. I said let me holler at him. So I hollered at him and got him to come to us. Well, I knew a few words in German. I said Soldat, kommen sie hier. So he come to me, and that poor soldier, there were some more soldiers there, but they wouldn't show their faces. So he come up towards us and I felt kind of sorry for him. He had on some glasses, they were real thick glasses. I said this poor guy. But he didn't have any rifle. I guess he left the rifle or whatever he had, he left it there. So we got him to come out to the road, and he called me a Schwein.

*What's that mean?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Pig.

*He called you a pig?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yeah. So as we were coming off the bluff, said Schwein. So I said hell, I tripped him, and he went down rolling down on the ground. I said hell, you're the damn pig. He got up and I pointed, you keep walking that way. Well, all our American soldiers were on the half-tracks looking at this monkey business going on. Now we didn't have any business going up in the first place without a weapon. But we've heard then that the war was over.

*How did you get that word? Just through the radio communications?*

**Ramon Galindo:** No, it wasn't through the radio. Oh, soldiers started speaking about it that the war was over, the war was over, war was over. But see, that first sergeant that talked to those Germans, he just made it up. He had a feeling, and he was a big bullshitter, but it worked out.

*Wow. So how much longer was it before you were able to, once the war was over before you were able to come back home?*

**Ramon Galindo:** OK, let's see, the war was over in May. I come back home in February -

*Of '46?*

**Ramon Galindo:** In '46, but after we come back from \_\_\_\_, we went to Munich. There's a Camp Dachau, the prison camp. We come back to Munich and we were assigned to stay at the couple of buildings, and that's where Hitler had some of his quarters. That's where Hitler signed I'm gonna call it a treaty pack. In 1938, Hitler signed up with Mussolini, de Gaulle in France, Chamberlain in England, and several other countries, and that building that they signed a bunch of papers, we stayed in that building. The name of it was, I'll think of the name after a while. But anyway, we stayed in those buildings, and we saw, we had at least I got a lot of professional pictures that were shot professional photography. They had a lot of pictures there that I brought back and I gave some to the University of Texas, where Hitler had a lot of books and a lot of history in that. But we stayed in those buildings for a while and then we were going to Camp Dachau to get prisoners every day, to get 'em out of there. OK, Camp Dachau, when the Americans took over, they took the German soldiers and put 'em in there as prisoners, and they also took out the Hungarian soldiers, Hungarian was in favor of Hitler. So they would take out German soldiers to work 'em out, clean up the rubble and the buildings and all of that mess in Munich. But we'd lose soldiers, prisoners every day.

*They would just escape?*

**Ramon Galindo:** They would hide in the basements and the train, we needed to get 'em on a train a certain hour, and the train would take off. Of course the train was for that purpose to take prisoners in and out. So one day we'd take out German soldiers and the next day we'd take out Hungarian soldiers. So every day we would lose soldiers. They would escape from us. One of my friends, he was a Hungarian American, and he could speak to those guys, and he says you know these guys are hard headed. And I said yeah, I can imagine so. But they didn't want to cooperate, the Hungarians, but German soldiers would cooperate with us. So later on in that same building, we were still in that same building, I'm trying to think of the name but I'll get it, you know the Germans, when they were advancing they were taking a lot of pictures, paintings, and a lot of beautiful, old furniture. Well the American soldiers took 'em out of the salt mines in Germany, and they would bring them back and restore them in these two buildings. The two buildings were identical alike. And the pictures were guarded there on the second floor; big, beautiful paintings. Old, old paintings. There were two paintings in there as tall as a door, a standard door, of Hitler's paintings, Hitler's portraits, all painted. But our officers told us we're pulling guard here. Every two hours we're going to change soldiers and we're going to check every painting in here and this one here, I none of you like the SOB, that was Hitler; do not take advantage and rip it.

*What were they gonna do with it?*

**Ramon Galindo:** That was the law. That was the law that said you do not, you hate the SOB, you will not take advantage and cut it. We know who it's gonna be and you're gonna be punished. And every two hours they would check it, that was it.

*So you're talking about this huge portrait of Hitler that you guys were guarding.*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes, we had to guard those 24 hours a day. Nobody could get in but the soldiers, the guards. Patton come over there to examine those one time, and first thing he saw Hitler, he wanted to kick it. But I went back to Munich and I took my wife, like 27 years later, and I went to this building and I walked in and there was a security lady there, and I asked her if I could walk through there. She was standing just like this. And she said no. She said why do you want to go through there? I said a few words in German to her, but she spoke very good English. So we carried our conversation in English. And she said why do you want to go over there? And I said well, you know, I was in the second World War and we occupied this building. And I said you know, there's a tunnel going from here to the other building, but on the second floor, we had a lot of paintings that the Germans had stolen from other countries. There was old bells, old furnishing, and she says, then she drops her hands down like this. Oh, and I says the building was right across, over here behind there. She says, you know, within a couple of minutes, you have told me a lot of history. You are telling the truth. And she relaxed completely. She was a different lady. She says I know you're telling the truth. She said there is some paintings there yet. Nobody has ever claimed them. 27 years later. So Ron just called me, and I took Ron, we was traveling, I took Ron to Munich. I said Ron, this is what happened, and this is the building that had all that paintings there and that's where Hitler had his headquarters, and we went back here about 6 years ago, and went to another convention, to a magic convention in Holland. So I told Ron, I said we'll get on a train and we'll go back to Munich, I'll take you back there. So when we got there, I explained everything to Ron what had happened, and he said well, that was a nice story that he had learned from me. So that's one of the stories that I remember. It was a lot of history. And in 1938, here in Austin, Texas, where you used to see the news reel – we didn't have television back in those days – we'd see the news reel when we went to see a movie, and it showed exactly the event that happened in Munich at that particular year, and I remembered all that, and I said I've seen this movie before. I've seen it and that's exactly where it took place.

*That's amazing.*

**Ramon Galindo:** It is amazing.

*And you mentioned Austin, and we're sitting here in your home, and you said you and your wife have lived here over 50 years now, right?*

**Ramon Galindo:** 57 years.

*57, and before we started the interview, you were talking a little bit about some of the history of Austin, but you also mentioned talking about the Land Office, and Bascom Giles, and the land scandal, swindle that he was doing, and you mentioned some of the land around here. Maybe you could tell us a little bit for the interview about your memories of Bascom Giles.*

**Ramon Galindo:** OK. Being a tailor, I tailored for all walks of life. Bascom Giles, I used to tailor for him, clothing; Ed Clark, Lyndon Johnson, and a lot of the governors, being a tailor I did work for all of 'em. So I was acquainted with Bascom. I knew him. I used to work some of his clothes. Back in 1946, a lot of the GI's were getting out of the service, and one of my friends, Buck McCullough, he says hey Ramon, let's get some land down there. Bascom Giles, he's that land commissioner, he's got some good deals going for us. I said where? He said down in the valleys, he said you know they have fields where they plant onions, cabbage, all kinds of vegetables there, and he says he's got a good deal for us, for the veterans. I said but that's too

far. But anyway, later on I found out that Bascom got in trouble, and he didn't get anybody else with him, although he had some partners, but he took it all himself. He was sent to prison and he come back, and me living here at 511 East Riverside Drive, across the street, all that land belonged to Bascom Giles, and wasted land. There was nothing built on it. The Colorado River was nothing but a river at that time. There was a little water creeping through there. But then they started building a dam, and then Bascom Giles had a lot of this land, the filling off of 7<sup>th</sup> and Brazos. There was a Catholic school there, that was sitting on a big bluff there, a little hill. So they took that down and brought it all the way to Riverside Drive. And they did all that filling. So I used to go out there and talk to Bascom, and I said well, what are you gonna build here? He said, well, I'm gonna take advantage of all this filling and I want to straighten it out and make something out of it. And he did that, and I'm assuming he didn't pay anything for it, but -

*So he was land commissioner while he was doing all that filling over here on the other side -*

**Ramon Galindo:** No, no.

*Oh this was after he'd gotten out of prison?*

**Ramon Galindo:** It was after he got out of prison, yes. After he got out of prison, he did all of that. He still had some power.

*Wow, that's amazing. So well sir, I tell you it's been an honor. I know I've taken up a lot of your time. It's been an honor to be able to sit here and record some of your memories and our goal is to record and save these memories for posterity so that future generations can hear these stories and we've got archives at the Land Office that go back to David Crockett, and we have Stephen F. Austin's original where he strode and all that sort of thing, and so our goal is to save these and just by sitting here and talking to you today, I think we've been able to do that and save some of these, and kind of the last question I always like to ask is, is there anything you'd want to say to anybody that might be listening to this 100, 200 years from now about your time in the military or just anything in general?*

**Ramon Galindo:** OK, yes. One thing, you know, I'm a historian. I have filmed Austin since Austin was small. I have 8mm films that when Austin was small. The tallest building that we had here was the Norway Building and the University of Texas. But I've been filming Austin all these years as it grows, and been here on 511 East Riverside Drive. We had a clear view of the capitol and the University of Texas. There wasn't any tall buildings that got in our way. Now we don't have that anymore. But I have filmed a lot of Austin, some of San Antonio, and I have documented all of this. I also documented a lot of the Texas Association of Magicians' conventions and the stories behind the magic community. I was honored here this past month in Houston, Texas, for all my work that I've done with the Texas Association of Magicians. I've been very lucky that I furnished all the film for them to show it of my past, and there's a lot of documentary that I have. I have given some to Texas.

*Yeah, University of Texas.*

**Ramon Galindo:** University of Texas, and also to the, what is it -

*I think you said you'd given some to the Austin History Center, right?*

**Ramon Galindo:** Yes. Wait, Texas Media Award. If you want a copy of it, I'll give you one.

*You don't need to pull that out right now –*

**Ramon Galindo:** Well I want to show it to you.

*Yes sir. Oh, you made a copy of it, yeah.*

**Ramon Galindo:** No, I don't have a copy. I thought I did. OK, what I'm gonna show you here

-

*Ardennes, Rhineland, Central Europe, wow. That's great.*

**Ramon Galindo:** It shows you the medals that I got there.

*And on here it says American Theater Campaign medal, EAME campaign medal with three Bronze Stars, good conduct medal, WWII Victory medal. That's great. This is really neat. And then on the other side is the honorable discharge certificate. Battery A, 571<sup>st</sup> Anti Aircraft Artillery Battalion. That's neat.*

*[End of recording]*