

**Interviewee:** Gainer, William D.  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Mr. Gainer, are you aware that we're recording this conversation?

**Gainer:** Yes, I am.

**Sellers:** We have your permission to do that?

**Gainer:** Yes, you do.

**Sellers:** Great. Tell me then a little bit about where you grew up and what happened to you as World War II became part of your life.

**Gainer:** Well, I was born in Spencer, West Virginia, population about 1500, and I graduated from high school there in 1937. I guess about a year before, maybe a year and a half before the war started, they had a compulsory military training. You had to go in and serve a year and then you got out.

**Sellers:** Okay, and this was a nation-wide thing?

**Gainer:** Yes. My number came up in June or July, and I was gonna go in the Army on December the 9th, regardless of Pearl Harbor. I did go in on December the 9th at Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio. And I was up there about two or three days and then I was assigned to the Armored Force Replacement Training Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Sellers:** Were you drafted or did you enlist?

**Gainer:** I was drafted.

**Sellers:** You were drafted, okay. Was that part of the compulsory one year but then —

**Gainer:** No, no. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** It turned out to be for the duration, didn't it?

**Gainer:** Yes. As a matter of fact, the fellow up in Columbus asked if there was any particular branch I wanted to get in and I said, "Yeah I'd like to get in the Air Corps." And he

said, “You have to sign up for three years.” And I said, “Well I’m not gonna sign up —.” So I ended up being in four.

**Sellers:** What did you do between the time you graduated in ‘37, and the time Pearl Harbor happened and you went into the service?

**Gainer:** I worked in a drug store and a furniture store there in Spencer and worked some on the farm.

**Sellers:** Your family were farmers?

**Gainer:** Well, we had a farm, yes. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** That was during the Depression, so at least you had your own food, right?

**Gainer:** Yes. Got tired of the same thing, but we had plenty of it.

**Sellers:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**Gainer:** I had two brothers and one sister.

**Sellers:** Were you brothers of draft age?

**Gainer:** No, I was the only one in the service.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit then about your basic training.

**Gainer:** Well, at Fort Knox, it was cold and in the wintertime.

**Sellers:** That pretty much says it, doesn’t it? [Laughs]

**Gainer:** And part of the equipment we had was from World War I, so they didn’t have much there to train with. But we were there probably six or seven weeks.

**Sellers:** Were you living in barracks?

**Gainer:** Lived in wooden barracks, yes.

**Sellers:** What kind of day-to-day activities did they have you doing?

**Gainer:** Well, we went to the rifle range and fired the rifles and handguns and drove vehicles, jeeps and half-tracks and tanks.

**Sellers:** Did you have any idea as to what they were going to do with you? Did you have an option?

**Gainer:** No, no option and had no idea.

**Sellers:** Did you have a preference? Was there something in particular since —

**Gainer:** I would have liked to have been in the Air Corps, yeah.

**Sellers:** But since you weren't in the Air Corps, did you maybe want them to do something else with you and was it possible to train for something in particular?

**Gainer:** Well, I guess I wasn't smart enough to know there was.

**Sellers:** What duties did you have once you got through with your basic? What were they pointing you towards?

**Gainer:** Well, they sent us to the 2nd Armored Division down in Fort Benning, Georgia. And we were the first recruits to go into the part that I was in. We were the first ones to go in there.

**Sellers:** Okay and what was that? Was that going to be a special unit or infantry group?

**Gainer:** It was an armored division.

**Sellers:** Armored division, okay. And that is tanks?

**Gainer:** Tanks and half-tracks. Well, it had infantry, artillery and reconnaissance.

**Sellers:** What was your specialty?

**Gainer:** I drove a jeep.

**Sellers:** Had you done a lot of driving on the farm, tractor driving or anything like that?

**Gainer:** No. As a matter of fact, I couldn't drive till I got down to Fort Benning.

**Sellers:** Really. [Laughs] How did that happen?

**Gainer:** Well, our family didn't have an automobile, so I didn't know much about it.

**Sellers:** Makes sense then. Did they teach you to drive? Did they think it was funny that

**Gainer:** Well, what happened was, we were there working with the rifles one day, and at that time most of the officers lived in town, in Columbus, Georgia. A fellow came over and said that the captain wanted to go home, and the sergeant said to me, “Well, Gainer, you take him.” And I said, “Sergeant, I can’t drive.” And he said, “Gainer, you take him.” And I said, “All right.”

**Sellers:** So you learned to drive.

**Gainer:** Well, I got him in there and he said, “You think you can get back all right?” I said, “Yeah, I think I can.” So the next morning there was a notice on the bulletin board that said, “Private Gainer will have driving instruction immediately.” So they took me out and taught me to drive.

**Sellers:** And did you enjoy it?

**Gainer:** Yes. It was better than a lot of other things you had to do.

**Sellers:** How long did you stay there at Benning then?

**Gainer:** We were there probably several months and then we went on what they called the Carolina Maneuvers.

**Sellers:** Oh, you got to be part of that. Tell me about it.

**Gainer:** Well, we just lived out in the field all the time and, I guess, supposedly trained for combat.

**Sellers:** Supposedly?

**Gainer:** Well, you know, they didn’t know much back then and it was kind of new and rugged.

**Sellers:** Did they have you crawling on the ground with live ammunition going over you?

**Gainer:** No, I never reached — I guess some people did, but I didn’t.

**Sellers:** Did you continue in the driving capacity or did they move you to something else?

**Gainer:** No, I continued, clear through the war.

**Sellers:** Did your division then ship out?

**Gainer:** After maneuvers, we went to Fort Dix, New Jersey.

**Sellers:** Oh that's a bad sign.

**Gainer:** And we were up there, well, we were up there until – I believe we left Fort Dix on about December the 24th, I think, for the invasion of North Africa.

**Sellers:** So that would have been in '42.

**Gainer:** I have my discharge here, and on it it said, "December the 12th in '42."

**Sellers:** So did you go by troop transport?

**Gainer:** No, we drove into the Brooklyn Navy Yards and then we boarded a ship.

**Sellers:** Right. And the ship —

**Gainer:** It went up, clear up through in the North Sea and back around, I guess, a big convoy, because I suppose they didn't want the Germans to know where we were going.

**Sellers:** And the Germans pretty well had an idea where you were going, too, I'll bet. Had you been on a ship before?

**Gainer:** Um, no, no, had not.

**Sellers:** What did you think of the trip?

**Gainer:** Well, it didn't bother me. A lot of guys got seasick, but I didn't.

**Sellers:** Oh, well, that was lucky.

**Gainer:** It was.

**Sellers:** So how long were you on the Atlantic?

**Gainer:** I don't know but it seemed like a long time. And then we landed in the invasion of North Africa at Casablanca and another little town I think was Fidela or something like it.

**Sellers:** And then when you off-loaded everything from the ships, did you set up a camp or was there already something ready for you?

**Gainer:** No, we lived out in the field.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit about taking part in the invasion of North Africa. What did you do?

**Gainer:** We got there about D-Day plus three or four, and we only had one guy got injured there. There wasn't really any — most of that was over by time we got there. But then we went from there up close the Spanish Moroccan border and lived in a cork forest because they didn't know what the people up in Spanish Morocco was gonna do. And they used our division as replacements for the 1st Armored Division.

**Sellers:** Were you still doing duty driving officers or —?

**Gainer:** No, we just didn't do much there in the cork forest. I guess just waiting to see what was gonna happen.

**Sellers:** So what was your day like on a day-to-day basis?

**Gainer:** Well, we had to stand guard duty. And we played a lot of volleyball there in the woods.

**Sellers:** Are you getting any news about what's happening in the rest of the war?

**Gainer:** Not much. You get some and you didn't know how much of it was true.

**Sellers:** What were you writing home, if you were? What were you telling people or able to tell your family?

**Gainer:** You could tell them you was all right and everything was fine and that was about it. They censored all the mail.

**Sellers:** It was being censored at that point, too?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Well, take me across North Africa then.

**Gainer:** Well, then we drove from around — we were close — Rabat. And we drove from there over to the Atlas Mountains up to Oran, and from Oran we went to the invasion of Sicily.

**Sellers:** You're just going to get in every bit of it, aren't you?

**Gainer:** Yeah. We landed. We were the first bunch ashore there in Sicily, down on the southern part of the island.

**Sellers:** Were you in the front of the battle or —?

**Gainer:** Yes. We landed ashore and I guess about a mile from where we landed there was

a German tank outfit on maneuvers. They drove us back to the beach.

**Sellers:** What was it like to be in battle after all — you've just been kind of waiting around and thinking that nothing really big is going to happen and then all of a sudden you're hit smack in the face with the enemy. What's it feel like? What do you think about?

**Gainer:** Well, I wasn't scared, just petrified. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** Did you actually have any kind of control over the situation as far as what was going to happen to you day by day?

**Gainer:** No. What saved us was the Navy was able to knock out all those German tanks. They had an observation plane and they knocked them out with the artillery from the battleships.

**Sellers:** And that, I'm assuming, came right over your heads.

**Gainer:** Yes. And they still had planes there that would come by and strafe the beach for the first day, and then I guess after the first day they must have destroyed the planes because there wasn't any more came over after that.

**Sellers:** What does that tell you, as just one of the grunts on the ground? Once the planes stop coming over and strafing, what are you being told to do?

**Gainer:** Well, then our objective was to cut the island in half and take Palermo, which was on the other side of the island, which we did.

**Sellers:** How long did that take?

**Gainer:** About two or three days or something like that. After the Germans started to evacuate, then the Italians didn't fight any, so after that there wasn't a whole lot of resistance between there and Palermo. I guess up in the eastern corner of the island where the Germans had congregated to retreat to Italy, there was more of them up there.

**Sellers:** So it wasn't a day to day bloody battle or anything like that.

**Gainer:** No, no. Not after the first couple of days, no.

**Sellers:** Is it living up to your idea of going to war? Is it what you expected it to be like or did you not have any idea?

**Gainer:** I didn't have any idea.

**Sellers:** Did any of the other guys that you were with have any idea that, you know, this was —?

**Gainer:** No, I don't think so.

**Sellers:** So it was just kind of a surprise! We're here! type thing.

**Gainer:** Yeah, just a day to day thing.

**Sellers:** What went on in between planes going over and shells exploding and things like that?

**Gainer:** We would usually dig the foxholes a little deeper. [Laughter]

**Sellers:** Were you eating K-rations? Was there a chow line that came behind you, a chuck wagon?

**Gainer:** No. Well, to start with we had the C-rations which I think was left from World War I. But then we did eventually get K-rations and they weren't bad really, K-rations.

**Sellers:** K-rations.

**Gainer:** Yeah, K-rations weren't all that bad.

**Sellers:** But C-rations were pretty awful.

**Gainer:** Yeah.

**Sellers:** What was the difference?

**Gainer:** I remember there were beans in a can and it wasn't a whole lot. Some crackers.

**Sellers:** Did you lose weight?

**Gainer:** No, I doubt it. I don't know. There wasn't any scales around. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** Yeah, well that's probably right. You're not making me feel like you were really in the thick of things. What were you thinking? What was going on in your mind? Was it one of these, "let me out of here!" things or —?

**Gainer:** Well, you know, the way they trained you, you just did what they told you. You couldn't see the end of the war from where we were, you just figured that, you know, as long as you stay alive you had it beat.

**Sellers:** Was there ever any occasion that you thought maybe you weren't going to stay alive?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Well, tell me about it if you'd like to.

**Gainer:** When the planes were coming over and strafing the beach, you didn't know, you know, whether you was gonna get it or not.

**Sellers:** Now were these German planes or American planes?

**Gainer:** No, they were German planes.

**Sellers:** Well then, I could understand how you would not be sure, right. And you were just in foxholes?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Foxholes may be deep but there's not anything on top of you, is there?

**Gainer:** No.

**Sellers:** So that's not a whole lot of protection.

**Gainer:** Well, it's better than not being in one.

**Sellers:** How long did it take for you then to get up off the beach and into Palermo?

**Gainer:** I think we got off the beach the next day. Then it probably was, I don't know, four or five days before we got to Palermo.

**Sellers:** And did you fight your way to it?

**Gainer:** I didn't see anything, no.

**Sellers:** Did you go in jeeps and in trucks or did you walk?

**Gainer:** I drove a jeep.

**Sellers:** You drove a jeep. And was the rest of the division walking behind you?

**Gainer:** Oh no, no. In an armored division, just about everybody rode.

**Sellers:** Okay. That's what I was trying to find out is if you had those big, I guess the British called them lorries or something like that.

**Gainer:** Yeah, they had trucks and tanks and half-tracks.

**Sellers:** And everybody kind of rode. When you got to Palermo, did you keep going up Italy?

**Gainer:** No, that was as far as we went. That was the 2nd Armored's objective and that's all we did. I mean, we didn't go any further. There wasn't any more combat after Palermo.

**Sellers:** But it was only 1943, and your 2nd Armored just stayed there and held —?

**Gainer:** No we stayed – we were there several months. Then we went to England.

**Sellers:** Then how did you get to England and when did you go and where were you based and things like that?

**Gainer:** I don't know when we went to England, but it was, you know, after everything was over in Palermo and we went over by ship. We stayed at a place called Tidsworth, about sixty miles south of London which had been the home of the old British Eighth Army, I believe. The barracks there were probably – they were ancient. I don't know how old they were. And we were there till the invasion of Normandy.

**Sellers:** Did you do any of the preparation for Normandy?

**Gainer:** No. We didn't do anything in England, just wait.

**Sellers:** Did you participate in Normandy?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Well, tell me about that one. That was a biggie.

**Gainer:** Well, I guess we landed there probably D-Day plus three. And of course, Rommel had fortified everything around Normandy. They had everybody bottled up around St. Lo, all the Americans and English and everybody. And I don't know how long we were there until they had what they called the St. Lo breakthrough. And the Air Force was gonna bomb the enemy there and they laid down a smokescreen clear across the front. By the time the bombers got there, the smoke had drifted back over the Americans, so they bombed the Americans rather than the Germans.

**Sellers:** Another one of those snafus.

**Gainer:** Yeah.

**Sellers:** Where did you land on Normandy Beach?

**Gainer:** I can't remember. I really don't remember.

**Sellers:** What was the scene when you landed? Do you remember that?

**Gainer:** Yeah.

**Sellers:** What was it?

**Gainer:** Well, it was just dead soldiers all over the place.

**Sellers:** Still? I would have thought that they would have been – graves detail would have been —

**Gainer:** Well, they were still shelling the place.

**Sellers:** All right. So it was still going on even though you were there at D plus three or so.

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** When you moved inland to St. Lo and then on, tell me about the progress that you made and what you saw as you went, things like that.

**Gainer:** Well, through the hedgerows, I don't know whether you know what hedgerows are.

**Sellers:** Yes sir, I do.

**Gainer:** Okay, you know, in the hedgerows you didn't know who was on the other side. So it was pretty rough through there. Once we got out of the hedgerows, we would just go until they met some opposition. Then if they couldn't handle it, they'd call the artillery and just kept going that way.

**Sellers:** Did you see *Saving Private Ryan*?

**Gainer:** No I didn't. But they wouldn't go to all that trouble to save one person.

**Sellers:** But I mean what you were describing was pretty much part of what they were showing as the troops were moving across.

**Gainer:** Yeah, I imagine that's probably, yes.

**Sellers:** And that's what I'm able to envision from it. Where did you eventually end up?

**Gainer:** In Berlin.

**Sellers:** You kept going all the way to Berlin?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Well, tell me things that are happening along the way. I mean this is a long trek, months long. Were you involved in the Bulge or anything like that?

**Gainer:** Yes. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** Well, why don't I shut up and you tell me, okay? [Laughs]

**Gainer:** Well, it's hard for me to remember all that. [Laughs] We did. We went on and went through France and through Belgium, and we entered Germany at Aachen. And that supposedly was the home of Charlemagne. Are you familiar with Charlemagne? It was supposedly his home. The city had a different name then; I don't remember what it was. But then we ran into the (I can't think of the name of the line, the line that the Germans had built. The pillboxes and all that stuff). We went through there. We went across the Rhine River, I think around Cologne. Then we got up almost, I guess, maybe across the Elbe River in Germany, which is I'd say forty or fifty miles from Berlin. I guess at the Potsdam Conference they had made an agreement that they would let the Russians take Berlin. So we just were sitting there – we came back on this side of the Elbe, and I presume that we were just gonna for the Russians. And it was around Christmas time, and that's when they had the breakthrough, the Battle of the Bulge. We, I guess, left in the morning and drove all one day and all one night. Then we stopped the first penetration down around Liege, Belgium. Then after that there wasn't a whole lot of resistance, I guess, after the Bulge was over. That was Hitler's last chance in Europe. Then our division was selected to go to Berlin for the Potsdam Conference. So we were up there probably another month or two. But I was more interested in coming home than going to the conference.

**Sellers:** I'll bet. What did you do in Berlin for the conference?

**Gainer:** Marched, you know, in parade and that was about it.

**Sellers:** Just paraded, okay. Just showed off our strength and superiority. How many points did you have? How long was it before you could come home?

**Gainer:** I had about three times as many points as needed to come home, but because of

the Potsdam Conference we had to stay there.

**Sellers:** So that was throwing a monkey wrench in it.

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** When did you finally get to go home and did you go back to one of the cigarette camps in England?

**Gainer:** Yes. I don't remember which one. But I got out of the service in October the 20th, 1945. I got discharged in Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Sellers:** Was there any chance while you were in England waiting to get out that you thought you were going to be sent to the Pacific, or did you know you wouldn't be one of those?

**Gainer:** Well, we were up in Germany when the war ended in Europe, so they said they were gonna reclassify all soldiers. But I'd made up my mind I wasn't going. I wasn't gonna go.

**Sellers:** So the threat was there but you weren't going to do it.

**Gainer:** Well, [Laughter] that's right.

**Sellers:** How were you going to tell them no?

**Gainer:** I just wasn't gonna — I was gonna leave.

**Sellers:** So you got back to the States on a liberty ship?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** How many did they have on that ship with you, do you recall if it was crowded or what?

**Gainer:** Crowded.

**Sellers:** Were they bringing back wounded at the same time or were you all able-bodied?

**Gainer:** No, I think they were all able-bodied.

**Sellers:** Were you wounded at all?

**Gainer:** No, I had malaria three times.

**Sellers:** Malaria in the cold?

**Gainer:** I got it in North Africa.

**Sellers:** Did it affect you in ways that made it difficult for you to —?

**Gainer:** Not really. I had it just before the invasion of Normandy and I thought maybe I wouldn't have to go, but they gave me some pills and loaded me up anyway.

**Sellers:** When you got back to Kentucky and were discharged, did they offer you the opportunity to stay in the Reserves?

**Gainer:** Oh yeah. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** And I assume you told them no on that too.

**Gainer:** That's right. [Laughter]

**Sellers:** Did you use the GI Bill in any way?

**Gainer:** Yes, I went to college on the GI Bill.

**Sellers:** Where'd you go to school?

**Gainer:** I went to Glenville College in Glenville, West Virginia. It's kind of in the center of the state. It's a teachers' college. As a matter of fact, there's a lot of graduates teaching down in Florida.

**Sellers:** Are there? And there you are in Tennessee still. It's cold up there, isn't it?

**Gainer:** Yes. It gets cold here.

**Sellers:** Well, we can use some really good teachers down here if you want to come on down and go back to it.

**Gainer:** Well, it's a little late now.

**Sellers:** What have you not told me about your experience during the war that we should put on this tape.

**Gainer:** Well, let's see. I got a Good Conduct Medal and I got the European, African, Middle Eastern Service Medal with six Bronze Stars.

**Sellers:** Six Bronze Stars.

**Gainer:** Six Bronze Stars and three Bronze Arrowheads, also Certificate of Merit.

**Sellers:** Wow.

**Gainer:** And I got a Belgian Fourragère Award.

**Sellers:** What did you get these for?

**Gainer:** Well, the Bronze Stars were for major battles and the Arrowheads were for invasions.

**Sellers:** And you just basically needed to participate in them and survive them?

**Gainer:** Yes.

**Sellers:** Did you ever have any really close calls other than when you were on the invasion of Sicily with the planes going over you?

**Gainer:** Yes. We were someplace either in France or Belgium, I'm not sure which. We would usually stop in the evening. You did n't drive at night unless you had to.

**Sellers:** Because you simply couldn't have your lights on and know where you were going?

**Gainer:** Yeah. No you didn't have any lights on. The Germans still had a lot of planes then. And we pulled into a field and we're sitting around talking and discussing whether to dig a foxhole or not. So I said, "Well, I'm gonna dig one and if anything comes over, I'll pull the jeep up over it." And the other guys said, well, they were going to a little ravine back there, so they'd go back and lay down in the ravine. And I hadn't even finished and a plane came over and dropped some anti-personnel bombs and it blew several holes in jeep and killed four or five of those guys back in the ravine. So I was fortunate there.

**Sellers:** Yes, you picked the right place, it sounds like. What's that do to you? Does it make you frightened?

**Gainer:** Yes. [Laughs]

**Sellers:** I mean, you said that you had been trained to do it and you didn't question it. You just kind of went ahead and did what you were supposed to do. Does it change your effectiveness in any way?

**Gainer:** Well, yes. You know, for a long time after I got out it bothered me. But I'm over that now. That doesn't bother me anymore. But you didn't — I guess for a long time you couldn't see the end of the war. You just figured every day you got by, you were lucky. Then when we got up in Germany and it looks like, "Hey we're gonna win this thing," that's when you're really worried. You know, you've been out here two and half years or something, wouldn't be horrible to get bumped off now?"

**Sellers:** Oh I see, yes. It's kind of like being jinxed by having a short time to stay or something. But you knew you couldn't go home. You weren't going to be rotated home or anything like that.

**Gainer:** No. They didn't do that.

**Sellers:** Did you ever have any, let's see, if you're a sailor you get liberty, if you're a soldier you got leave?

**Gainer:** When we were in England, we got a furlough to Scotland. I went up to Edinburgh for a few days.

**Sellers:** Was there any particular reason that you went to Scotland or just because that's where the furlough was?

**Gainer:** No, [Laughs] there wasn't any place else to go. There were so many soldiers over there at that time before the invasion that you couldn't hardly move. They wasn't any place to go in England that wasn't crowded.

**Sellers:** How were the English people to be around?

**Gainer:** At that time they weren't too happy with the Americans.

**Sellers:** Why not?

**Gainer:** Well, there was a whole lot of them and I guess the — well, I'll just tell you what the English said, "They're overpaid, oversexed and over here."

**Sellers:** So it was true, they really did say that. They didn't appreciate the fact that you were saving their skins?

**Gainer:** No. Well, I don't think, if they did I wasn't aware of it.

**Sellers:** They weren't welcoming to you? I mean, if you were off of your base, were you able to go out into the countryside or meet any of them or anything like that?

**Gainer:** I didn't, no.

**Sellers:** You were just putting in your time and getting this over with.

**Gainer:** Well, there was a little town close to Tidsworth, and if you went in to get a beer, you'd have to wait till somebody finished their glass because they didn't have enough glasses. So I just didn't do that. It was just crowded. You can't imagine how crowded it was.

**Sellers:** So you got back. Were you engaged or going with anybody while you were in the service?

**Gainer:** No.

**Sellers:** So you weren't writing to a girlfriend?

**Gainer:** I just wrote home to my mother.

**Sellers:** How did your mom do while you were over there? She managed to —

**Gainer:** Well, she apparently got along all right. If she put anything in a letter that wasn't supposed to be in there, they'd cut it out. [Laughs] They censored incoming mail and outgoing mail.

**Sellers:** They censored incoming as well. So you couldn't even get anything from home that might sound interesting.

**Gainer:** No the only thing — well, I guess she followed the war to a great extent because when we went across the Atlas Mountains to Oran, she just asked if I saw a lot of flowers. Well, I knew she meant in the mountains. So she could get by with that.

**Sellers:** You didn't have code or anything?

**Gainer:** No, no.

**Sellers:** Some people worked out a code so they could kind of get information back and forth.

**Gainer:** No. You didn't want to say anything that would upset them anyway. You just always say everything's fine, getting along all right.

**Sellers:** The less they know, the better off they are probably. Can you think of anything else? Any anecdotes or anything like that, things that happened?

**Gainer:** Well, let's see, I told you how I learned to drive. When I got down to Fort Knox to be discharged – now I'd been in the Army almost four years then. And they apparently couldn't find some of my papers. Well, they sent me over to a barracks. I forget what they called it, but that barracks was where the people whose papers were lost or something was wrong. So I asked a guy there, I said, "How long you been here?" He said, "Well, I been here three days." So I said, "Well, I'm leaving in the morning." So the next morning, I got up and got all my stuff together, and I was going towards the front gate – which everybody else was going in the opposite direction. A major came by in a command car and said, "Where you going, soldier?" I said, "I'm going home." Well, I didn't have that ruptured duck on me. He knew I hadn't been discharged. He said, "What's the problem?" And I told him, I said, "Well, I've been almost four years and they lost my papers." He said, "Get in." And he took me around to all those places and I got my discharge by noon.

**Sellers:** Wow. [Laughs] He was a good one to run into then.

**Gainer:** I was gonna go home anyway.

**Sellers:** I think he knew that. So you got home and what did your family do for you?

**Gainer:** They had a big meal. I rode the bus into Charleston, and then I could n't get a bus to Spencer so I had to sleep in the bus station all night. There wasn't any transportation between Charleston and Spencer. It's about forty-five miles. Then I got the bus the next morning.

**Sellers:** Did they know you were coming in?

**Gainer:** No. But they said they thought it was about time for me to get there.

**Sellers:** Once you got there, was there a decompression time? What was the first thing you did when you got home? A lot of the soldiers say they wanted milk or they wanted a steak or something like that? Do you remember any of that?

**Gainer:** No, I don't.

**Sellers:** There wasn't anything that you particularly were hungry for?

**Gainer:** No. I went rabbit hunting right away.

**Sellers:** Were you able to do any hunting while you were in Europe?

**Gainer:** No.

**Sellers:** No. There wasn't any opportunity at all?

**Gainer:** No.

**Sellers:** And when you went rabbit hunting, were you successful?

**Gainer:** No. [Laughter]

**Sellers:** The rabbits must have known you were coming?

**Gainer:** I guess so, didn't see a rabbit.

**Sellers:** Well, if you think of anything else that you'd like to add, we can certainly do so later on but I think for right now we'll just kind of wrap it up. Let me ask you again if we've recorded this with your permission?

**Gainer:** Yes.

End of Transcription