

## **Paul Scheufler Interview**

Scheufler Home in Hutchinson, Kansas

April 10, 2009

Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff

Present at Interview: Elva Lois Scheufler, spouse

Paul: My full name is Paul Bernard Scheufler and I live in Hutchinson, Kansas, I was born in Belpre, Kansas, on the farm in 1924.

Interviewer: What were the names of your parents?

Paul: My parents were Charley and Mary Scheufler, my mother's maiden name was Spacil.

Interviewer: What were your grandparents' names?

Paul: I had a grandmother, Emma Scheufler, on my father's side, and on my mother's side were Wenzel and Josephine\* Spacil. They lived in Ellinwood. (*Interviewee misspoke on name; it is corrected.*)

Interviewer: What brought them to Edwards County?

Paul: My father went out there to farm. At first, he wasn't at Belpre, at first he was down by Hopewell, where he first started, but of course they were married at Ellinwood.

Interviewer: Then they went to Hopewell?

Paul: Yes, they went to Hopewell and they lived there for a while, then they went up northwest of Belpre in Pawnee County, and then from there they moved back to Edwards County, which was like two miles south of where they were.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Paul: I think they were married in 1912, and I think 1916, and then my oldest sister was born in 1918.

Interviewer: So by 1916 they were in back in Edwards County?

Paul: I would say so, yes

Interviewer: Did they buy property to farm? Did they lease?

Paul: You know, I don't know. I think they bought.

Interviewer: Before we get into the World War II topic, we'd like to know what you remember about the Depression and Dust Bowl days. Do you have any recollections of that time period and what it was like to live on the farm?

Paul: Oh yes, they used to call school out, because it would get so dusty that you wouldn't be able to see to get home. They would leave school out, and of course we always had cows to milk, and if they were out in the pasture, we had a hard time finding them to get them up to the barn.

Interviewer: I never thought about this, did the animals ever get sick because of the dust? I know people had to worry about.

Paul: Not that I know of, but I did lose an uncle to dust pneumonia. Of course, I was one of the lucky ones; I always got to ride a school bus to school. Part of the times, there weren't school buses in some areas. The school bus was like a closed-in box, top and all, and it just had a bench on both sides, the only heater in that bus was the exhaust pipe that they put up through the floor and then out the back end of the bus. That was the heater we had in there. It was better than nothing, and the more kids you got in there, the warmer it got.

Interviewer: How did your family fare during the depression?

Paul: Well, it was ... a farmer can pretty well take care of himself. He has his own meat, milk, cream and eggs. And he has his own garden. We didn't have a lot.

Interviewer: How old were you when you started working the farm?

Paul: Oh, I was milking cows before I started going to school.

Interviewer: And you started school when you were six or seven?

Paul: Yes, everybody on the farm had a job to do. We had cattle, and hogs, and chickens. Someone had to carry in the wood for the stoves and the coal. We were lucky; we had a water pump in the house. Of course, all the water for the laundry was pumped and heated by hand on the stove.

Interviewer: Describe your family, your brothers and sisters.

Paul: I had a sister who was born in 1918, a brother who was born in 1920, and a sister who was born in 1922 and I was born in 1924. I had another sister born in 1926 and then my brother Ed was born in 1927. There were almost two years between each one of us kids.

Interviewer: So there were six children in all. Three boys and three girls.

Paul: That's right, girl, boy, girl, boy, girl, boy.

Interviewer: We never asked this before, but were your chores different than your sisters' chores?

Paul: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What was the division of the labor then?

Paul: The sisters usually gathered the eggs, and us boys usually fed the hogs and milked the cows, but the sisters also milked some.

Interviewer: Did the girls do more housework such as washing the dishes?

Paul: Yes, because I lost my mother when I was four, so then our grandmother on my father's side came and lived with us for eight years.

Interviewer: So your grandmother raised you for quite a while then.

Paul: Yes, now my grandmother couldn't hear and she couldn't speak English. My father could speak German, so they could communicate with one another.

Interviewer: Did you know German?

Paul: No, I could tell you what they were talking about, but as far as really speaking it, no. I got to where I could understand kind of what they were talking about.

Interviewer: You said that your older brother Charles went into the service before Pearl Harbor. How did that come about?

Paul: They had just started the draft in 1941, and he was drafted in the fall, in September or October.

Interviewer: So right before Pearl Harbor?

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: He was drafted into the army.

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: Where was he on Pearl Harbor day?

Paul: He was still in the States and he didn't go over for quite a while. He was in a tank destroyer company. He trained in Fort Bragg, Kentucky and he was in Fort Hood, Texas, and I don't remember...

Interviewer: If we interview him, we can find that out. So then on Pearl Harbor, what do you remember about that day? Where were you when you heard the news, how did you hear the news?

Paul: We heard the news when we were in school. Course we never had a radio at home in those days.. We were in school. It seems to me that they called us all to the study hall and announced that war was declared.

Interviewer: Do you remember your reaction? I'm trying to remember, how old were you about then?

Paul: I was about 18.

Interviewer: So you were a senior?

Paul: Yes, I would have been. I graduated in '42, and the war started in '41, so I was a junior when the war started. (*Error by Interviewee: He was a senior in the fall of 1941.*)

Interviewer: Do you remember what your feelings were or how you reacted?

Paul: No, I really don't remember. Because I do remember them taking the kids older than I out of my sister's class, because they had to go to the service. I thought surely the war would be over before I'd ever have to go, but it wasn't.

Interviewer: Then you said that you had a farm deferment.

Paul: You see, they changed the draft. It used to be that you had to be 21 to go, then they changed it to 18. That's when I was called; you see I wasn't 21 when I was called.

Interviewer: Were you called right after you graduated from high school then?

Paul: No, I was deferred for like two years I think, Yes, I would have been because I went in '44 and I graduated in 1942.

Interviewer: You said that was because you were the oldest boy at home?

Paul: Yes, I was the oldest after my oldest brother went in, when Charles was drafted.

Interviewer: How did life change for you when Charles went away and you were the oldest boy? Did it change much?

Paul: No, it just seemed like I had more work to do.

Interviewer: You were short one hand.

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: When did you get a tractor?

Paul: Oh man... I know the first tractors we had didn't have rubber tires on them. They had steel wheels and lugs.

Interviewer: So did you farm with horses first?

Paul: Oh my yes, we used to plant and cultivate all the corn with horses.

Interviewer: How old were you when you were driving a team?

Paul: Probably twelve. I cultivated lots of corn. And when we would go to the field, the field was like four miles from where the house was. Course, we had to take feed in the wagon for the horses and take our food too. Course, it was pretty good. You didn't work like you do today; the horses couldn't go all day; they could only go so long. I think that was the downfall of the farmer, he thought he could work all day and all night when we got tractors.

Interviewer: So by war time, you would have had a tractor?

Paul: Yes. The first tractor I remember was a 1927 McCormick Deering. My dad had one before that, it was a Fordson. We had a '27, a '28 and then a 1936 Farmall, so we could work the row crop and not use the horses.

Interviewer: So when you got the '36, was that a new tractor?

Paul: That was a new tractor.

Interviewer: During the depression?

Paul: Yes, we also was rationed on gas during the war.

Interviewer: The farmers got a ration for farming? For the gas?

Paul: Yes, we also had different rationing, we had an A card and a B card and a C card. Some of that was for farm and some of it was for if you needed gas to go to your job, if you worked somewhere else. We were rationed for tires, we couldn't just go buy tires. You had to go to the county seat and prove that you needed tires. But I do remember that my dad was saying something about how much gas was, and that was 4 cents gallon. Of course, that would have been without any road tax. They done it different then, you used to pay for it, and then you would fill out a piece of paper and send it in and they'd send back the tax money for the gas that you used on the farm. So they weren't taxing the farmers for using the fuel.

Interviewer: So when they lowered the draft age to 18 and your younger brother got old enough...

Paul: Yes, when they lowered the draft, I was deferred for two years and I went in when I was 20.

Interviewer: And then Ed had the farm deferment, or was there any other help on the farm?

Paul: Yes, they figured Ed could do it, and then when he got old enough then he had to go. By that time, Charles had come home because the war was over. Ed probably wouldn't have had to go if Charles hadn't come home.

Interviewer: He could have stayed on the farm deferment?

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: So you got your letter from Uncle Sam. Do you want to tell us about your induction? Or to start with, maybe you can tell about when you left.

Paul: When we first started, we became 18, we had to register. Then when we registered, we were put into a class, like 1A or 2A or whatever. When mine came up, we went to Kinsley and got on a train and went to Leavenworth and took a physical.

Interviewer: How many of you were there?

Paul: It seems like that when we went there were 10 or 15 of us that went up for the physical. Then they gave us our physicals, and sent us back home, and then they classified us. I can't tell you what all the classifications were, but if you were 4F, that meant you were physically unfit to go, there was something wrong with you.

Interviewer: So you came home. How long was it between you coming home and when you left?

Paul: Well, I was deferred then for two years.

Interviewer: Oh, you had your physical then when you were 18.

Paul: Yes, then I was deferred for two years. I had a farm deferment because of course with my oldest brother going there was no one to help my father. Then after they thought Ed was old enough, they took me. We went to Kinsley and rode the train to Leavenworth we got our physicals.

Interviewer: When you left Kinsley, was there a big group of you?

Paul: I think 10 or 15 of us.

Interviewer: Was there any kind of a send off? Or did you just get on the train?

Paul: No, we just all lined up and got on the train. I remember changing the train at Kansas City and we got another train to go to Leavenworth to take our physicals. I can't remember that they... of course, I passed my physical. And then after I passed my physical I came home and was home for about two weeks before I went to the service.

Interviewer: And then where did you go? Did you get on the train again?

Paul: Yes, and I went back to Leavenworth after they inducted us and we got our army clothes and they put us back on the train and I went to Texas and took my training. It was at Fort Hood, and I went down there. Of course, they did an IQ test on you. They put me in IRTC, which meant "Intelligence and Reconnaissance Training Center. Then I went to Texas and took my training for 12 weeks. Then we had a delaying grant, and I came home for about a week. My orders then shipped me to Fort Meade, Maryland. I took the train to there and from there went to Camp Shanks, New York. And from there got on the boat and went to Europe.

Interviewer: Now we had a question about being on the train, did you remember any... we've heard stories about towns that would put out lunches for the men as the trains went through...

Paul: Oh yes, there was usually someone there in every town that would talk to people who were there. They called them troop trains. I do remember when you rode the trains in those days, they burned coal. You would get real black from riding on them. There wasn't any air conditioning in those days, and you opened the windows and everybody just got black from the smoke. There were quite a few people on the train; there weren't any airplanes back then.

Interviewer: So there were both troops and civilians? And brides and...

Paul: Yes, but some trains were strictly troop trains, and you know how long a train is, there were just troops on a lot of those.

Interviewer: And you were traveling with a unit at that time? Or were you going to meet...

Paul: We were just going to different places, like I went to Camp Hood and some of them went to California. They went wherever the camps were.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the ship was that you went to Europe on?

Paul: The *Thomas H. Barry*, that would have been in the fall of 1944.

Interviewer: What was it like on the ship and on the ride over?

Paul: Well, a lot of them spent their time hanging over the rail. They'd get sick, but it never bothered me any. They never had very good food on the boat. It wasn't real good

Interviewer: How long did it take?

Paul: It took us ten days to get over there.

Interviewer: That was pretty quick!

Paul: Yes. I went over, I think, on the largest convoy, or a whole bunch of ships, that was carrying troops.

Interviewer: Was there any worry about German submarines?

Paul: Oh yes, they told me that we didn't just go straight over there. We kept zigzagging, because it took a submarine so long to get lined up to your boat. So you didn't go straight. And then when we got to England, we transferred off of that boat onto an English ship. Everybody said we would like that, because they would feed you three meals a day. We were only getting two meals a day on the American ship. But it wasn't worth it. Did you ever try to eat liver for breakfast? Their food wasn't any good at all.

Interviewer: Did you have any time for a layover in England? Or did you just get off of one ship and get onto another?

Paul: Yes, we just got on another one. We got out in the Channel, and I don't know how far we were from the shore, but anyway, everybody had a duffle bag they had their belongings in, you know, and then this little old LSI boat came up beside that big ship and you threw your duffle bag down into that little boat. Then you jumped out of the ship into there and tried to land on your duffle bag to break your fall. Then when it got full they would go to shore and the end of it would just fall out and we would all run out on the ground. You had a little water to go through, because they couldn't go up on land.

Interviewer: Where did you land?

Paul: I landed on Omaha Beach.

Interviewer: Was this D-Day?

Paul: No, this was long after D-Day. D-Day was on June the second, or maybe the first?

Interviewer: So you were right there on that same beach?

Paul: Yes, where they had the.... There were still bodies floating on the water when I went in because they had had some terrible battles along those beaches. And then we landed, and I went on our special diet, Spam. Then from there, we were assigned to our different units, beings we were draftees and not in an outfit; we were replacements. Then if I was in the Yankee Division, the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and then if they needed 500, then 500 of you went there and they would put you into the battalion, or unit or regiment, whichever they needed troops in.

Interviewer: Now you said your training was in intelligence and reconnaissance? Was that what you did when you got there?

Paul: No, they changed that then, after I was there and had started my training in intelligence and reconnaissance, then they changed it to infantry replacement training.

Interviewer: Sounds like the army, so, where did you go from Omaha beach then? Where were you assigned?

Paul: I went to the Yankee Division, it was the 26<sup>th</sup> division, and I can't remember what part of France we went in when I first joined them.

Interviewer: Then what happened?

Paul: Right to the front line we went. It was in France, but I can't remember what town it was. Most of our traveling there was by foot.

Interviewer: Did you have tanks with you?

Paul: Yes, as a general rule. But the infantry was always in the front. Of course we had the big shells that came first, they shelled before we came in as a general rule, the bombers went in first.

Interviewer: Were you under air strike from German planes?

Paul: Yes, they had a plane; we called him "Bed Check Charlie." He came over every night when it was dark, and he was trying to find out where we were.

Interviewer: So he was reconnaissance?

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you light a cigarette?

Paul: No, you didn't smoke at night or light a match or anything. But like I said, then they changed it to infantry. You had an MOS number (*Military Occupational Specialties*) where they classified you as infantry or with tanks or artillery. Anyway, they knew that I'd been in reconnaissance and intelligence. There was nobody in front of you but the enemy, so we would go out on night patrol back into the German lines to find out how many guys they had.

Interviewer: Did your slight knowledge of German help you there?

Paul: No, because you never made contact with them. It was strictly...

Interviewer: So you never got close enough to hear them?

Paul: No, you could hear them, but you didn't make yourself known that you were there, because it would have been too bad.

Interviewer: Did you have contact with the French people as you progressed?

Edward: Not much, I was trying to think who was on our flanks, I hate to say this, but we didn't like the French. They weren't very good soldiers. We didn't like to be close to them. Of course, the first thing you did when you got into a place was dig a foxhole.

Interviewer: I'm trying to think, is it winter now?

Paul: Yes, it is starting to turn winter. I think it was October or November. I can't remember the name

of the first... you know, they named the battle zones, like the Moncourt Woods, or different places like that you know. The battles were mostly in a lot of trees, and of course, you had springs everywhere. When you made a crossing, you held your rifle up and went in. And of course, you didn't have any dry clothes; you just wore them until they got dry. I don't know, it seems like every soldier would have died of pneumonia, but it didn't seem like anybody had colds or anything. So, they just kept going.

Interviewer: And the food was Spam and cigarettes?

Paul: Yes, at first we had C rations, which came in a can. They weren't very good, and then we got K rations, which were real good. They came in a box. A square box about that deep. Then you would get three of them in the morning and they were your meals for the whole day.

Interviewer: And what was in those?

Paul: In the breakfast was a little can of scrambled eggs, and four crackers, and toilet paper, four cigarettes...

Interviewer: Any meat?

Paul: Not in the breakfast.

Interviewer: Fruit?

Paul: We had a little bar, I forget what they called it, a K bar or something. The dinner had meat in the can. There was always a little packet of powdered coffee. And if you burned the box, it would make enough heat to make you some hot coffee. There was matches in there, and it seemed to like one meal didn't have cigarettes in it.

Interviewer: Maybe the night one when they didn't want you lighting up.

Paul: Maybe.

Interviewer: So you went across France and into Germany?

Paul: Yes, I went into Austria and Belgium. Luxemburg, Belgium.

Interviewer: Netherlands?

Paul: No, I wasn't there.

Interviewer: So you were doing combat and pushing the Germans back?

Paul: Yes. Of course, after so long of a time, the platoon had 36 people in it and each squad had 12. My job during the war was to be a BAR assistant that means I carried his ammo and stuff. I was a BAR assistant. It was an automatic weapon. It took a lot of ammunition for those.

Interviewer: So you were the carrier of the ammunition?

Paul: Yes, I carried a lot of ammunition.

Interviewer: So you were assigned to one person? To one gun?

Paul: Yes, I had several of them, because I lost several of them. We ended up with only... We were supposed to get a break. We were going back to Minsk, France, for a rest. At that time, there were only two of us left in our squad. Then we went back to Minsk, and we were there a week or ten days when the Bulge happened. You heard about the Bulge, where the Germans broke through again, and then we all replaced and went right back to the front, everybody did, with a whole bunch of new replacements. They were a bunch of new kids, just like I was, of course, they were younger than me. We just kept getting new replacements, constantly, because we kept losing them, all the time. But I have to tell you a little story about one of the attacks we made. Of course, we'd all go to attack an area, and when I got up there, here came a German tank, course, and he was shooting his guns, you know, and I got behind a tree. It was about four inches around, and I thought I was real protected. The bullets were just a flying and a flying. My sergeant hollered at me, "Paul, get up and go on further!" and I hollered, "I can't, I think I'm hit." He shot my canteen, and I could feel the water, and I thought it was blood running down my leg. I said, "I don't think I can go." I could feel it when it hit, and then when the water started running and I knew I was hit. But I could, after I found out.

Interviewer: You could and you did?

Paul: Yes. I was within... that tank was probably 10 to 15 feet from it. I don't know why they never got me; I suppose I was too close they couldn't see me. Then that tank finally decided to leave. He turned around and went back.

Interviewer: Where were you on VE Day?

Paul: I remember that so plain. I think it was Roosevelt. I have to tell you another little story. We were walking that day and the lieutenant announced that our president had died, Roosevelt. He died just before the war was over. Then we all felt bad and of course we thought we had the war won by then, and we thought it was such a shame that he didn't get to know it was over with.

Interviewer: I just remember something you said before when you said you were there in the fall. Do you remember Christmases and what they were like?

Paul: Yes! Christmas and Thanksgiving, we always had a Christmas meal and we always had a Thanksgiving meal. It didn't come on that day, but we always had a hot meal for Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Interviewer: Were there times when you didn't fight over Christmas? That's what I heard...

Paul: No, it went right on.

Interviewer: OK, it must have been in different places. So you were in Austria on VE Day, and then what happens to you? What about at the end of the war? Were you part of the liberation?

Paul: Yes, I was over there another year after the war was over with the occupation troops. Our outfit really went home, but they took all of us out who hadn't been in long enough. They went by points on who got to go home. When the war was over, I was first put into another infantry division, but I wasn't in it but just a little while, and then they took a bunch of us out, and I went into the MP's for occupational troops. And then I went to Vienna and was in Vienna until I came home as an MP. In Vienna, there were four of us, and they divided it. The Russians had part of it, and we had part of it...

Interviewer: Oh yes, it was like Berlin?

Paul: Yes, France and England had part of it.

Interviewer: What did you do as an MP?

Paul: I got to be in the motor MP's; we patrolled in jeeps, which was ok, because we didn't have to walk. We patrolled the town. I don't remember how many hours we put in, eight hours or so.

Interviewer: You were just keeping the peace? The civilian peace...

Paul: And the military peace in our section of Vienna. That was real nice, because you could eat whenever and whatever you wanted to. You could just order it and the cooks would make what you wanted. That was nice, and I think we got a little bit better food; it seemed to me like we did.

Interviewer: Did you have more contact with the local people as an MP or not?

Paul: Yes, we did. They had a curfew. Whenever nighttime came, there were not supposed to be any civilians on the streets any more. So there were a few times when we had to pick people up and take them to the headquarters. We'd take them there. Of course, us old combat guys, we were nicer than that if they knew where they lived, we would just take them home instead of them back and letting them... They didn't need to do that, we felt like, they was just wanting to be home anyway, so we would just take them home. That's why they like America.

Interviewer: We're going to have to back up just a little bit, was there a girlfriend or anything like that in the picture at this time?

Paul: Nope

Interviewer: No. You were corresponding, but you were writing to your parents? How often were you able to get mail?

Paul: It depends. We had V mail. You would write a letter, and then they would shrink it up into this little thing and send it home so it wouldn't be as bulky.

Interviewer: They actually photocopied it and reduced it.

Paul: They actually reduced it to make it smaller.

Interviewer: I had never heard of that. I heard about censoring...

Paul: It was just a little bitty thing that went home. They photocopied it. I wrote home quite often, but not like I should have. I think my sister has all the letters that I wrote to her at home. I never did get them so I could look at them.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about that time in Europe? Something that stands out? What was it like when you came to a town and the people after the liberation?

Paul: Oh, the people were just as happy as they could be. The burgomeister, they called him, which would be their mayor, he would come to greet us, and the people were just as nice as they could be. They would give us all the food, of course the food wasn't like what we have here, but they would give us their best. When we'd come to these towns at first, you see, the people would be all gone. When we'd come to these towns sometimes at night, we'd just go in their houses to stay all night instead of digging foxholes. We might sleep on the potatoes in the basement, or we might have a big nice feather bed. Us GI's, we'd shoot deer and roast them over a fire. Those civilians, they knew we should all be in jail. They couldn't do that.

Interviewer: You were poaching!

Paul: Yeah, they couldn't do that, but we did. And we would go into these homes and get eggs or kill a chicken and fry it in our mess kit or something like that. It really didn't make any difference, because the chickens would have gotten killed anyway, and the eggs would have probably spoiled. To keep their eggs, they put them in a bucket of salt water.

Interviewer: Raw eggs?

Paul: Yeah, and I don't know how long they would keep in there, but all the ones we had were good. I don't know how old they would have been, but they were still good when we were there anyway, but that was how they kept them.

Interviewer: Now, you didn't get into Germany far enough to be where the concentration camps or ...

Paul: Yes, we did. Was it Bergen? ..., (*\*not sure, may have been Gusen*) we captured a concentration camp where they had it. The one where we were at, they told the people, "Now, you're all going to get to go shower." So they had a big shower room in there, and of course the showers were up there, and they run 'em all in there and then they turned gas on and that killed everybody. Then they had big trenches out there that they just threw them all in.

Interviewer: Did you see them?

Paul: No, we didn't see them, because they had already done it before we got there. Towards the end of the war, there were so many Germans would give up and want to be captured, it got to where we kind of interviewed them pretty coarse, we kind of fell down on them and tried to get all the information we could get. Then towards the end of the war, there were so many of them just surrendering, we would just tell them to just keep walking down that road. Just keep walking that way and somebody will tell you where to go. They got to surrendering so fast that we couldn't handle them anymore up on the front lines, because we were moving so fast too. I went into this town, and of course when you went into these towns you went through every building to look for the Germans. We were supposed to be going two together, but there weren't enough of us, so I went into this one house by myself and it was a room about the size of this, and I went in there, and it was all German officers. And they all just threw their guns out in the middle of the floor. They just gave up, see, and what was I supposed to do with all those weapons? I couldn't carry them! But I did get home with one... It was a Luger, a nine millimeter I think, they're not like our calibers.

Interviewer: You just marched those officers right out?

Paul: I took them out then, I got all the weapons, but I left them in the house. I don't know what happened to the weapons. But I told those officers to just go out and start down this road and keep walking and somebody will tell you what to do.

Interviewer: Now, were you telling them that in English?

Paul: There was always about one German, as a general rule, that could speak English and understand. We had one guy that could speak pretty good German.

Interviewer: So, the war is over, you spent a year being an MP. How did you come home?

Paul: Well, finally, I had enough points that I could come home. I left and came home.

Interviewer: How did you leave? What port? Was it in France again?

Paul: You know, I don't remember where I got on to come home.

Interviewer: Did you get R and R's?

Paul: They would give us passes.

Interviewer: What did you do on those R & R's?

Paul: Well, I bought watches, 'cause they was cheap over there. And we would just go see different things. Of course, I went skiing. I went skiing in the Swiss Alps. I went to Paris and spent two or three days there. But I never did get a pass to England, never did.

Interviewer: You had had enough of their food.

Paul: Yeah, that's right. But anyway, we got a pass and flew out of Fallsburg, Austria, to Paris. We had a pass. There were about 10 of us, I suppose, with a lieutenant to keep track of us. We were supposed to meet back to come home, but the lieutenant had our orders, our transportation orders. He said we would all meet there on a certain day at a certain time, and we all got there but there was no lieutenant with our orders, and we needed to get back to Austria. I told them other guys, "I don't know what you're going to do, but I'm going to catch a train anytime I can and whenever they put me off, they'll put me off." So that's what I did, I got back to the outfit, and said, boy this is it, I'll be in the brig from now on, because I was about a week or 10 days late, cause I just couldn't make connections to get back. But nothing was ever said.

Interviewer: Did the lieutenant ever show up?

Paul: I never did know what happened to that lieutenant.

Interviewer: So you were pretty much traveling on your own?

Paul: I was on my own; it didn't cost me anything to get on the trains. I don't know why they were hauling us for nothing, because we were soldiers, I suppose. You could just get on a train and ride.

Interviewer: And you had money to buy food?

Paul: Yeah, but it didn't cost very much. In France we had francs, and then marks in Germany, and then we had money that would work everywhere. They called it... what did they call those things?

Interviewer: Today, it's a Euro...

Paul: But they would spend just like our money. If you had our money over there, you could get quite a bit for it. But I never had any American money over there. Of course, we weren't supposed to have our money over there. Those people loved it, because they knew their money wasn't any good.

Interviewer: So, how did you get back to the States?

Paul: Well, finally when I had enough points, I started back to the states. I got on a boat, a little Victory Ship, one of those Frazier and Kaiser Ships. That ship did not have a bolt in it. Everything had been welded, like where the wires went, it was welded, there were no screws there. But I need to tell you about the one when I was going over there, on the *Thomas H. Barry*. I was put way down, underneath the water, where I was in my bunk. And I was next to the wall, and that wall, we could not mop fast enough to keep the sweat off the floor. That's how that wall of that ship was sweating down in there where we were, with the water just down there in the bottom.

Interviewer: A lot of people, making humidity?

Paul: Well yeah, and that side of that boat, I never seen anything sweat like that, and the water just running off it, I kept thinking it had a hole in it, and thought, "Well, we're done for." I couldn't believe that it could sweat that fast.

Interviewer: So how was the Victory Ship different?

Paul: It was little, it was pretty little, there wasn't too many of us on it. That thing could stand on end; it would go over a wave and go right straight down in the water. In fact, they wouldn't let us out of our bunk area, because it stood right straight up on end one time when it went over a wave and we thought it would never straighten back up, but it did, it straightened back up.

Interviewer: Did you get sick on that trip

Paul: No, you know, a boat never did bother me, or the air, it never did bother me.

Interviewer: So you came into what port in the United States? Did you come into New York?

Paul: Either New York or New Jersey, I can't remember which one.

Interviewer: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

Paul: Yes! I saw it when we left, but I don't remember seeing it when we came back. I didn't call home, I just waited.

Interviewer: You didn't have to go to a base? You were discharged as soon as you got back?

Paul: No, we went from there and back to Leavenworth and we were discharged from Leavenworth.

Interviewer: Did you ride the train?

Paul: We went back to Leavenworth. I didn't call home. They knew I was on my way home, but there was no way to be in contact with anybody.

Interviewer: They didn't have a telephone?

Paul: No, there was a pay telephone every umpteen places, with a hundred guys...

Interviewer: No, did they have at phone a Belpre?

Paul: They had a phone, but the ones they would try to call from there was hundreds of guys waiting to call. When I got back, I just rode home. They knew I was on my way home, they just didn't know when.

Interviewer: Did you get off in Belpre or Kinsley?

Paul: No, I got off in, hum, that's a good question.

Interviewer: When Ed came home, the war was over and everything.

Paul: That was a different deal. When I came home, I was on my way home and while I was over there, that's where my grandparents were from. And I told them, now tell me some of the places and I'll try to take pictures of them. I had taken a few pictures they had told me to. I didn't have contact with them, and my grandfather died while I was on my way home. Then, when I got home, they told me grandpa had died. In the meantime, Ed had just gone in. He had went to California, and he got to come back, and Charles, he was already home.

Paul: Ed hitchhiked. He got in a Navy airplane and flew to Olathe and then started to hitchhike. He got there just before they lowered the casket, and they raised it back up. But I didn't make it.

Interviewer: So you got home just after the funeral?

Paul: Yes, I could have made it if I had known it. As I said, I didn't call home because I couldn't get to a telephone. It would have been nip and tuck, but I could have made it. I would have had to had somebody with an airplane to get me here.

Interviewer: (intelligible)

Paul: of course, you know, we always had fox holes. The Germans started shelling us; this kid's name was Raymond. I said, "Raymond, let's get in the foxhole." I jumped in there, and he was blown in on top of me by the shell. And I said, "Raymond, get off me!" And he said, "I can't. I got hit." He got hit, and he lost his arm. Of course, he didn't have any place to push himself away from me.

Interviewer: He was from St. John?

Paul: His name was Hopkins.

Interviewer: He survived? Was there a medic there or did you help him?

Paul: Yes, everybody carried a first aid packet, and I gave him mine, and we got the jeep up there, and we did everything we could do, the medic and I we took everybody's packets and did him up real good and put him on the jeep and it's the last time I saw him.

Interviewer: So you didn't see him after you got back from the war? But you talked to him?

Paul: Yes, I talked to him, and he had a girlfriend, and he would write to her all the time, and I would tease him about it. I'd say, "See, if you was like me, you wouldn't be writing all them dang letters." And then, he married her, and then they moved to California. I have another friend that we see him every once in a while that I met in the MP's. He lives in Nebraska, Omaha? No, Lincoln? My squad leader kept a diary all through the war. He wrote a little bit every day. Company G's War. He wasn't our squad leader at first, he was the assistant squad leader and then he became the squad leader. Like I told you, we kept changing over all the time. His name was Bruce Eggers; he was from Oregon. He was just a little bit older than I am.

Interviewer: What was the reunion like when you got home and all the brothers made it home safe and sound? Did you just go back to life as normal? What happened?

Paul: It never seemed like I got home, because they had moved from where I left them to another farm, so it never seemed like I came home. You know where Ed lives; we use to live about four miles north of there. It never seemed like I came home.

Interviewer: So what did you do?

Paul: I just made the best of it. My dad bought land in Colorado. Charles had gotten married, and his daddy-in-law bought land and he stayed there and farmed. Ed and I went to Colorado and farmed out there.

Interviewer: So you were farming out there?

*(Some part of the interview is lost here. It picks up discussing how Paul and his wife Lois met.)*

Interviewer: So when does the lovely lady come into the picture?

Paul: When did I meet you? Well it was Ed and I, and another neighbor kid we used to run around with at the state fair. KFDI used to have a barn dance at the state fair. We always went to the dance. That night, she and another girl, I don't know if she roomed with her, but she knew her, she was from Kinsley. Was she a Jenson?

Interviewer: Was that Helen Jenson?

Lois: Yes, I knew some other Jensen's... But right now, I can't think... Helen Jensen kept saying, "You've got to meet Paul Scheufler! I know you'd like Paul Scheufler. Then I could go with Ed. Give him a call and get him down here sometime." There were these two wedding dances, and he came down on a wedding invitation. So, that year, we were both working, and we decided he wouldn't take any dates. We got white overalls and went to the fair... At the fair Helen said, "There's Paul Scheufler!"... He didn't have a chance. We were married a year to the day afterwards.

*(Lois' voice is often unintelligible, this is approximation.)*

Interviewer: So it was love at first sight?

(Laughter)

Paul: No, I don't know, but there was a lot of trips between Belpre and here.

Lois: I asked him how often he came to Hutchinson. He said, "Oh, about once a year at the fair."

Interviewer: During this time, of course you were out of the county during the war and after, but how do you remember the minority populations, Hispanic or black, and your relationship to these populations?

Paul: There never was any blacks in Belpre that I knew of, but there were several Mexicans, because they had houses for them because they worked on the railroad track. There was a girl in my class called Gillen, and she was Mexican, and they were real nice people. And we had the Molinas, and I can't think of the rest of their names. What they usually hired was Mexicans, and none of them, most of them, couldn't speak English.

Interviewer: And they were just part of the community?

Paul: Yes.

Interviewer: Could you have dated that girl? There wouldn't have been objections?

Paul: I guess, if I'd wanted to. You know, we got along with 'em good. They played sports just like we did. So, yes I thought we got along real good. It was amazing. Of course, I'm a Catholic, and we had, what, four churches in Belpre, and nobody ever quizzed anybody about what religion they were. We all just worked together and didn't pay any attention to it. If there was anything going on at the Catholic Church, the school said, "You kids can go." And it was the same way with any other ones. If they had something to do, the school would let them go, but you can't do that today, I don't think hardly. They want to expel you now if you do that.

Interviewer: Another question is, when you got back, did you have any trouble reintegrating back into civilian life?

Paul: The thing that I felt so, when I came home, was I did not want to take orders. I was tired of people telling me, "You do this, and you do that." I just felt better because nobody was doing that anymore.

Interviewer: Did your father and your brother, did they understand that?

Paul: Yes, I think so. When we came home, we felt like we had our freedom. We wanted to run around. We just felt like we'd been tied up and we wanted to have our reins to let us loose. We wanted a little bit of fun.

Interviewer: In talking to Mr. Miller this morning, he mentioned the VFW. Did you have one in Belpre? Do you go to any veterans services of any kind?

Paul: No, I really didn't. I didn't belong to anything like that for several years before I joined the VFW or the Legion.

Interviewer: Ed gave us a picture of you and your brothers on Memorial Day in 1955. You are all in your uniforms, you must have come back from a parade. He gave us a copy of that picture; in fact, it's on our web site already. You can go in and find it.

Paul: Like I say, we just wanted our freedom; we just didn't want to take orders.

Interviewer: Other than that, how do you think World War II affected your life? Positive things or negative things?

Paul: At the time, after I'd gotten out, I said, you know, it wouldn't hurt if every boy, it would do everyone good, to be in the service for at least a year, to realize how things are and what you have to do. I don't know how to explain it, but I just felt like it wouldn't have hurt anyone. You learn a lot of discipline. That's the problem today with a lot of kids that I think they're not disciplined. I think they could be, but their parents felt like... there was a generation that the parents didn't want to correct their kids. That's what I feel like, maybe not everybody else does. The parents felt like, "I didn't want to do that, so my kids don't have to." I don't think that's right, but our kids need discipline. In fact, kids cry for discipline sometimes and parents don't give it to them.

Interviewer: So it gave you discipline that that helped you with your farming. You stayed a farmer?

Paul: Yes, after I came home. But that's how it was.

Interviewer: Farming's pretty disciplined too, you may have learned a little before you went into the service.

Paul: The way I got up here is, we were farming out here, we was living at Belpre and farming, and her father had a heart attack. He had asked me, not us, he didn't want her to have a thing to do with it, her dad wanted me not her.

Interviewer: So he wasn't saying, "You're a girl; I'm not going to leave it to you." He was making sure that Paul wanted the farm, that he wasn't saddling him with something. You had no brothers?

Lois: I had one.

Interviewer: So you farmed with your brother in law.

Paul: Yes, for like ten years, then we split up. We both had our families then, of course. It was OK, because there really wasn't enough for all three of us to be at Belpre, so it really didn't hurt anything. Of course then, we did farm for a while in Colorado when we were married. Ed and I did.

Interviewer: Were you there?

Lois: It was a shack.

Paul: They had rattlesnakes out there.

Interviewer: So how do you think WWII affected Edwards County? Did you see changes in the county after the war?

Paul: Yes, after the war, I felt that some of them that wanted to farm didn't get to because the land was gobbled up by them that didn't go. There was a lot of hard feelings with the guys that didn't go at that time. They got the land, and when we got home, we didn't get the land back. There was hard feelings, and you can understand that. You went to fight for your country, and you did it, and now you won't let us come back in the community.

Interviewer: I was talking to Hiram Colglazier (from out by Zook) and he had a farm deferment, he never went in. We were driving somewhere, I knew his wife, and at some point in the conversation, he said, "You know, I always felt bad because I didn't go fight. We had to stay here to raise food, but I never got over that." He would have been in his 80's at time.

Paul: A lot of them felt that way.

Interviewer: Rosetta, have I forgotten anything?

Paul: You know the Carney boy from out at Belpre? David Carney?

Interviewer: Yes

Paul: His dad was my sister's age.

Interviewer: I think it is amazing that you three brothers are still alive and survived the war.

Much of Lois' conversation is inaudible at this time.

Paul: I told her about the dust bowl, it was so dusty that we couldn't hardly find the cattle in the pasture.

Interviewer: I think Ed told us the story about the locusts or grasshoppers getting on the poles and moving around to stay in the shade.

Paul: Yes, and just like a cloud, you couldn't believe it. I remember that there was five or ten acres in a tree belt, from our house about 1/2 mile. The trees just looked beautiful, and by night they looked like winter trees. Grasshoppers ate all the leaves off. The trees recovered. I also remember the dadgum grasshoppers eating the cork out of my water jug sitting at the end of the field.

Interviewer: They were hungry.

Paul: They would get on the light poles and stay in the shade. It would just be yellow up there.

Interviewer: I think I could take the dust better than that.

Paul: When a grasshopper sets on you, it kind of scratches. Barbs on their legs.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.