

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Harry Anton interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Isabel Mann

Born in Minnesota in 1923, Harry Anton volunteered to serve in a supply unit recruited through the General Motors Company during World War II. He spent two years on a base in North Africa before transferring to the infantry during the Battle of the Bulge. While crossing into Germany, Anton was struck by a German bullet and spent several weeks in recovery. After the war Anton moved to Georgia with his work in the lumber business. He recorded his oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in March 2016.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: If that's okay with you?

Anton: That's alright.

Interviewer: Thank you for your patience.

Film crew: [inaudible]

Interviewer: Okay, thanks. This is James Newberry. I'm here with Harry Anton on Thursday, March 24th, 2016 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University and Mr. Anton do you agree to this interview?

Anton: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you again. Alright, we'll start at the beginning. If you could state your full name?

Anton: Harry initial J. Anton.

Interviewer: And what does that J. stand for?

Anton: Well, I don't like to say it but it was my name for a while in grade school, Junior because I really wasn't named at my birth and I found that out when I applied for a passport. Because you had to have a birth certificate was one thing you had to have. So, I had no name. I had to get affidavits from different people, an army discharge and all to prove what my name really was. So, I don't use it. I use the name Harry and I've used the name Harry since the fifth grade.

Interviewer: I see. So, Mr. Anton, tell me when and where were you born.

Anton: Paynesville, Minnesota. A little town in central Minnesota.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

Anton: November 17th, 196—[shakes head]—1923.

Interviewer: Now you didn't stay in Minnesota?

Anton: No, when I was five years old, we moved to—we were on a farm, we moved to Waterloo, Iowa which was closer to all our relatives but far from the port city. It's a little town about fifteen miles out of Waterloo. We moved to Waterloo.

Interviewer: Can you describe the farm for me?

Anton: It was 160 acres on the east side of Waterloo—[shakes head]—Just an average farm.

Interviewer: What sort of crops did you grow, or did you raise animals?

Anton: No, I was—it was mostly crops—[clears throat]—corn, soybeans, and oats. Some of them for the feed for our own animals. But we found out that after we moved there that all of our horses died and there was a disease in the barn. So, we had to farm a tractor, all farming with tractor.

Interviewer: What were your parents' names?

Anton: My Dad's name was Harry that's where the Junior came from. And he had three—two middle names, Harry Byron Jacob Anton. My mother's name was Adaline.

Interviewer: And they farmed for a living?

Anton: [shakes head] Farmed, yes.

Interviewer: They didn't do other jobs?

Anton: Nope. [shakes head]

Interviewer: Okay, so, did you have siblings?

Anton: I had two brothers, both older. One was ten years older than I and the other fourteen. Of course, both are dead now.

Interviewer: You were going to say something?

Anton: Don't know what it was.

Interviewer: Okay. So, where did you go to school?

Anton: A farm school. Probably all eight grades. A country school, a one-room country school.

Interviewer: Did you learn alongside students that were other ages?

Anton: All one-room. We had eight grades in one room. And you would be called for recitation up to the front and other students had to do their studying while recitations were going on because it was eight grades.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of your teachers there?

Anton: I remember one. Probably I think was my last teacher I had in country school, but I don't know her name.

Interviewer: So, when did you graduate from school?

Anton: Well, let's see. I started when I was five years old and for five years went to that school and then we transferred and went to a different farm, a different location. Five years later, so, let's see, 1929—I started grade school in 1929 so it would be eight years after that I graduated from country school and I went to junior high in town called Waterloo.

Interviewer: So, you started high school in Waterloo?

Anton: mm-hmm. That's all through high school in Waterloo.

Interviewer: What type of school was that?

Anton: The high school? Waterloo was a town of about 70,000, small town. And we had two high schools, East Waterloo and West Waterloo. The river split the city. So, East Waterloo and it's still there.

Interviewer: So, what year did you graduate from East Waterloo High School?

Anton: That would have been twelve years after, twelve years after 1929 so it would be '41? About '40 or '41.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what did you know about the war going on in Europe at that time?

Anton: Well, the war had started in December of '41. I joined the Army in—enlisted in the Army in March of '42.

(6:13) Interviewer: Okay. So, what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of '41?

Anton: I remember the day well [laughs]. It was a Sunday and I was outside fooling around with a baseball, throwing it up and down and catching it and I remember hearing the news over the radio. I thought, well, we'll get those guys in a hurry [laughs]. But then I don't remember the beginning of—I remember Roosevelt's speech about declaring war on Berlin—[shakes head]—war on Germany but I don't remember anything other than listening to that.

Interviewer: So, when did you enlist?

Anton: In March of 1942.

Interviewer: And what motivated you to enlist at that time?

(7:05) Anton: There was the General Motors was coming to the Midwest and getting volunteers to form a base in ordnance and supply depot and I enlisted in that because hey here's a chance to get into the Army without going to the infantry. And I didn't want to go to the infantry so—and that's a part of my story and the end of my story.

Interviewer: What is an ordnance and supply depot?

Anton: It repairs damaged vehicles and is a supply of all kinds of equipment that's needed.

Interviewer: And how did you think working for the depot would help you avoid the infantry?

Anton: Well just because I was already in an outfit, I wouldn't have to go to the infantry.

Interviewer: I see. So, where did you go to enlist?

Anton: I don't recall. It was in Waterloo. I don't recall my enlistment at all.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, did you go—how soon did you go to bootcamp?

Anton: Fairly soon. I actually may have enlisted at the end of February because we left for Camp Sutton in North Carolina where we took our basic training and left in March, I know that.

Interviewer: So, very soon after your enlistment?

Anton: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Tell me about Camp Sutton. Where is it?

Anton: Camp Sutton is in Monroe, North Carol—was, it's no longer there—Monroe, North Carolina which is about forty, fifty miles out of Charlotte. Southeast of Charlotte.

Interviewer: And tell me about arriving there. What did you find?

Anton: I've got a total blank on arriving. I don't know anything because we were doing nothing as far as our supplies were concerned. We were taking basic training which is a lot of marching and I don't recall whatever else, but we stayed there until December of '42 we went overseas and headed to Oran, Africa.

Interviewer: Okay but you did transfer to Camp McCoy?

Anton: Oh, I did, yes. That's right. We left in September of '42 from Camp Sutton and went to Camp McCoy, which was a camp then and that's still there, but it's called Fort Sutton—[shakes head]—Fort McCoy now.

Interviewer: And what type of training were you doing there?

Anton: Did—we trained somewhat on what we were going to do and on supply depot and repair.

Interviewer: And what branch of the military were you in?

Anton: Army.

Interviewer: So, in training to be a part of a supply depot, what are you learning?

Anton: Just how to handle equipment and repair equipment and supply and I was in the carpenter shop and did a lot of carpenter work.

Interviewer: So, what kind of equipment are you handling?

Anton: All kinds that the Army had—trucks, Jeeps, and combat equipment.

Interviewer: Tell me about the carpenter shop.

Anton: Well, there were three of us in the carpenter shop and then there wasn't much, we did any carpenter work that was called for.

Interviewer: Was that something you already had experience in?

Anton: Yes, because I was working as a carpenter for my father who was a build—homebuilder in Waterloo.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when did you ship out?

(11:18) Anton: I'm not sure the day we shipped out. I remember the landing very well. [clears throat] It was on Christmas morning in Oran, Africa and we docked at a regular dock and were able to get off the ship without any problem but we walked or marched to our depot which was a huge building that was able to supply and repair equipment. We had Christmas dinner early on-board ship before we landed. I guess we had brought our Christmas dinner. When we got to the base, they were having it late in the day and we had Christmas dinner there because they had scrounged the area for—I think it was turkey and not chicken. We had a full Christmas dinner there. We on our trip were bringing the Christmas dinner to those people [laughs] and so, the next day on the 26th we had Christmas dinner again [laughs] three times.

Interviewer: What did you have for those meals?

Anton: It was a regular Christmas dinner. All you would have anywhere. The turkey and well it depends on which—well they were all turkey as I remem—on board ship and when we got to the depot and then entered their Christmas dinner. They knew we were coming so they waited for us and then we were bringing their Christmas dinner which was turkey and all the trimmings—you have pumpkin pie.

Interviewer: Was it canned food?

Anton: I don't recall [shakes head].

Interviewer: Okay. Let's back up a little bit to the trip on the boat coming across.

(13:14) Anton: Hit a storm, probably was a hurricane. I don't recall all that but everybody on board got sick except a few of us and now, those few, after a couple of days were

called to clean up the galley. I got sick [laughs]. Oh, what a mess it was. I got sick and was able to get up and heave overboard [laughs].

Interviewer: How did you have to clean it?

Anton: I don't remember the equipment we had [shakes head] because I wasn't there long.

Interviewer: So, you said you landed in Oran?

Anton: [shakes head] Oran, Africa. North Africa.

Interviewer: Could you spell that?

Anton: O-R-A-N

Interviewer: What country is that?

Anton: In Algeria.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, you had brought Christmas dinner to the soldiers that were already there. Can you describe the encampment there? What did it look like?

Anton: Well, there was an area—probably was a parking area originally but an area we we had all our equipment [scratches face] and [clears throat] it was just like any other [inaudible 14:40] supply maintenance and supply—.

Interviewer: Was Oran a large city?

Anton: Fairly large, yes. The size I couldn't tell you.

Interviewer: And it's on the coast?

Anton: Right [shakes head] it's on the coast, yeah, Mediterranean Sea.

Interviewer: How many soldiers were milling around there? I mean, was it a good number?

Anton: There were a few there but I don't know what they were there for, what their duties were at all. And we had a battalion and I don't know how many people are in a battalion but there were four companies in a battalion: A, B, C, and D. And they had their own specific duties. I remember D Company was small arms, repair of small arms and we were in A Company but I don't recall what the specific duties for each one was.

Interviewer: Do you remember the number of your battalion? Or the name of the battalion?

Anton: I knew you were going to ask me that and I can't recall the name or number of the battalion because later on it was changed into just companies and we were in 3251.

Interviewer: Okay.

Anton: That was in Africa.

Interviewer: So—Go ahead.

Anton: Well, they made the split in America before we left so we left as companies.

Interviewer: Okay. How long were you in Oran?

Anton: Almost two years. uh huh [shakes head]. All through the African campaign which is a story in the end by itself. Then, through Europe, D-Day, and then we landed in Marseilles when we—we left, we left in December, it had been two years later.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's, let's wait for that.

Anton: Okay.

Interviewer: Since you were there for two years—.

Anton: uh huh.

Interviewer: What were your daily duties?

Anton: Same as—well—[clears throat]—pretty much the same as they'd always been and I don't know why we were there for that long. We were shipped out in September of '44.

Interviewer: Did you see any combat at that time?

Anton: Not in Africa, no [shakes head]. But later on it'll come into play.

Interviewer: Was there entertainment in Oran?

Anton: We had one of the major and I can't recall who it was—it wasn't—I don't think it was Bob Hope but it was one of the major entertainers for all Oran area.

Interviewer: And what sort of stage—what—where were you going to see this entertainment?

Anton: I think it was staged at our depot [shakes head] out in the area, the parking area.

Interviewer: Okay. How did you keep up with news of the war, of the Africa campaign?

Anton: Radio, mostly, and we had *Stars and Stripes*.

Interviewer: What's that?

Anton: Newspaper.

Interviewer: Tell me about that newspaper.

Anton: It was the Army newspaper, or it was published—I have no idea—probably right there because we were a major spot, major post. That was about it, radio and the *Stars and Stripes*.

Interviewer: Did you ever see or meet, come into contact with any of the sort of well-known generals?

Anton: Eisenhower.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Anton: Came to visit our depot. Yeah [shakes head]. Never, I never talked to him personally but [inaudible 18:34] around with him and he was there to view our operation.

Interviewer: Did you have—.

Anton: He was a major, he was a major, major general. [laughs]

Interviewer: [laughs] So, that's before he was Supreme—.

Anton: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: —Allied Commander?

Anton: Yeah [shakes head].

Interviewer: Okay. Did you have any communication with your family or friends back home?

Anton: Only by oh email [probably means V-mail]—it's called email—electron—when you got it it was a page about that big [shows size with hands]. That's how I contacted—had mainly contact.

Interviewer: What sort of news were you getting from home from your family?

Anton: Not much. Just general news of what was happening there.

Interviewer: What did you eat on a day to day basis?

Anton: Oh God [laughs]. We had everything. At a base, we were served just like any army base. Any food was good food.

Interviewer: And what was the dining area like?

Anton: Just a big dining room with tables and benches.

Interviewer: mm-hmm. So, how did you get the news that you were going to be transferred?

Anton: Well, to Europe? [shakes head] That came through our officer and they let us know.

Interviewer: Okay. So, how did you feel about this transfer?

Anton: [chuckles] This was a part of duty that's all. We crossed and—not regular ships, they were LSD and LS—tank, LST and LSD. And that's a small flat-bottomed boat and of course, we hit another storm in the Mediterranean and we went all directions and finally got together before we landed and we had to land in the water because we walked to shore.

Interviewer: Did you have your gear on?

Anton: Yeah [shakes head].

Interviewer: So, what was the reason for this change of posting?

(21:03) Anton: Well, it was supposed to get us closer to the action because we, after we landed we blocked the road up to Beaune—Beaune, France which is just northwest of Switzerland and a part of our convoy on the way up to there—two of us driving a Jeep and some other Jeeps ahead of us and trucks—we got separated from the main convoy and ended up at the Swiss border. If we got into Switzerland that

would have been the end of the war for us, but they turned us around. [chuckles]
We got back to our convoy then and settled in Beaune, France.

Interviewer: Can you please spell that city?

Anton: B-E-A-U-N-E

Interviewer: Okay. What sort of city was Beaune, France?

Anton: It was a small town. I can't remember a lot. We visited—after the war, we went to Europe and then, we stopped in Beaune. I don't remember any much of—I remember the downtown a little bit and where we used to eat but that's about all I remember.

Interviewer: Where did you eat?

Anton: It was in a restaurant that we'd go in and pass—go into town. We were in—we were actually bivouacked at the edge of the town, edge of the city, so it wasn't far to walk into town.

Interviewer: Why did your unit wander up to the Swiss border?

Anton: We got, somehow, got—someone ahead of us got lost and made a wrong turn.

Interviewer: And were there—who was standing at the Swiss border to keep you from crossing over?

Anton: It was just a little, little, how do you call anyway—a little shack. And then there were two soldiers or two—I think they were Swiss Army soldiers, yeah.

Interviewer: So, in Beaune, how long did you stay there?

Anton: Well, let's see. We landed there—I really don't know [crosses arms across chest]. We left in Decem—let's see. I don't want to get the landings mixed up. [pause] I think I'll think a little bit on that. We left in September, I know that. We left Africa, Oran, in September of '44. The war, past Beaune, France where we were stationed, they were already gone beyond it.

Interviewer: How many soldiers in your unit bivouacked there?

Anton: [shakes head] Don't know.

Interviewer: A large or small group?

Anton: A company size which was less than 200.

(24:24) Interviewer: Okay. Now you said at some point here you saw your name.

Anton: On buildings. My ancestry was Alsace-Lorraine area which was an area between Germany and France so naturally, you've got some German, some French people. And the name Anton was on some buildings we saw when we went to Beaune.

Interviewer: So, tell me what happened what happened after Beaune, France?

Anton: [clears throat] [pause] Oh, what was the name of the Belgium—the Germans broke through there.

Interviewer: Bastogne?

(25:12) Anton: Yeah. That came in, I think December—November, December. Battle of the Bulge—there I'll get it. Battle of the Bulge is what happened and the Germans broke through for a ways but we were able to stop them and turn them around and that was at Bastogne—is that well-known, oh what did he do—Battle of Bastards at Bastogne [shakes head]—I'm blanking there on a couple things but anyway because of the Battle of the Bulge we lost a lot of men and needed and needed people in the Army so what happened that came through all of base sergeants and base supply of all kinds and took men who had no family or single, no family, and put us in—gave us six weeks of infantry training. So, I ended up in the infantry after all. [laughs] Six weeks of infantry training and then they put us in oh—just before the bridge—the name of the bridge was recaptured intact—well—.

Interviewer: That was a bridge over the Rhine River?

Anton: [shakes head] Bridge over the Rhine River that the Germans tried to blow up and something didn't work and they left the area and the bridge was intact so all, all of our army or our equipment there crossed the bridge so we were able to get across fairly rapidly. I wish I could think of the name of that bridge.

Interviewer: Well, so, you say you were drafted at that point into the infantry.

Anton: Right.

Interviewer: And that was not something you wanted?

Anton: That was something I didn't want.

Interviewer: So, how did you feel being drafted into it?

Anton: I didn't feel very good about it [laughs] but you just say well this is the Army and they need me so I guess I'll better go. No problem that one.

Interviewer: Did you have any sense of what you'd be facing?

Anton: Yeah. Because we had people in Africa that were assigned to our army, our base, individuals who had been in battle and were reassigned so I had a pretty good idea what it was about and they were right.

Interviewer: What did they say?

Anton: I remember one guy said two months in the infantry was like two years out of the infantry, doing other things like we were doing and he's right. I really was not in the infantry very long.

Interviewer: Where did you carry out those six weeks of infantry training?

Anton: In northern France. There's a city north of France, it's an older—and I can't tell you the name of it [clears throat]. It's not a big city but it's an average sized city that we took our training. I can't remember the name of that town.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about the training.

Anton: Well, we just had planned infantry training. I remember shooting a bazooka.

(29: 41) Interviewer: What was that like?

Anton: It was a tube about six inches around [brings hands together to show size] and it was four foot long, you put it on your shoulder [shows with hand how to sling it over shoulder] and the controls were right here [shows with hands where controls were] and you shot a shell out of it like a small, small—it had a fin, it had a tail. It was a real small bomb is what it was.

Interviewer: What was the thrust like when it shot?

Anton: Really, not much of anything because it had—it was open on both ends. The missile was put in about the middle.

Interviewer: How heavy was the—.

Anton: Not heavy at all because I was small like I am now and [clears throat] I weighed 165 pounds; I remember that. But you just set it on your shoulder and the controls were right here. [shows with hands where controls were]

Interviewer: Now, when you went into training for the infantry were you issued new gear?

Anton: Well, I don't recall anything of the nature of what we were issued. Probably similar to what we had before.

Interviewer: What did you carry on you at all times?

Anton: Just a uniform.

Interviewer: Did you have a rifle?

Anton: [clears throat] Different rifles and [clears throat] base ordnance was assigned the rifle—was something O6, something O6, I don't recall but it was a standard rifle for an infantryman, and we had that. The only time [clears throat] it was different, I had a carbine, a carbine it was lighter weight, smaller but shot faster.

Interviewer: So, let's return to the crossing of the Rhine River.

Anton: Okay.

(32:00) Interviewer: Do you remember the closest—

Anton: We crossed beside the bridge on a pontoon bridge that was put up because when we were there we got to the Remagen Bridge, we got to the Remagen Bridge around that area and Remagen was a town. It was not suitable to for cross—for anyone to cross it because it had been bombed by the Germans. They were trying to bomb it and sink it which you know they finally did after we crossed the Rhine. We crossed the Rhine on pontoon bridges right beside the bridge. And then went into battle beyond that and that's when I was hit.

Interviewer: Okay. What was the weather like?

Anton: Just like it would be around here, I guess. I don't remember that. It was a nice day when I was hit.

Interviewer: Okay. So, it wasn't wintertime?

Anton: Let's see. No, I was hit on March 23rd.

Interviewer: Okay. Describe that day for me.

(33:17) Anton: [clears throat] We were on kind of a side hill [points two fingers ahead] shooting at some Germans and in forest area. We were in kind of a forested area and they were in just a field, an open field in between us but we did not know that there was also some beside us and they were shooting at us and that's when I was hit in the side.

Interviewer: Do you know what sort of, you know, what had hit you?

Anton: We think [clears throat]—I was all tore up, not just by a gunsh—not just a single bullet wound. We were hit by a burp gun and it shot a small shell about the size of a '22 and it shot about 600 shots a minute.

Interviewer: So, it may have been multiple—.

Anton: Yeah, multiple ones because it hit me in the side—I was laying down and it hit me in the side and tore up my—along my side, came out my belt buckle and really mutilated my belt buck—and I had my belt buckle for a long time but somehow it got lost when we moved. [clears throat] I went back to what we call now a mass unit and then went from there to an army hospital in Paris, France.

Interviewer: What was your level of consciousness after being hit?

Anton: Normal. I had no problem at all, just—I think I yelled out I'm hit, and I slid down the hill into the aid, aid people who were on a lower road. They gave me temporary and sent me to the hospital.

Interviewer: What level of pain was it?

(35:20) Anton: Evidently it was not all that great because I don't remember that much about it. It did not, it did not—it tore me up flesh—it was flesh wound—it did not penetrate the abdominal wall. That's one of the things that happened because—and then it, I couldn't—well, let me start over. When you go back to the hospital in Paris, if you weren't ready to be discharged to duty—certainly at the time and I don't know how long, but anyway I know it was less than a month, it's about two weeks, I think. I went—you're transferred to back to England, to a hospital in England and they couldn't repair my wound because it was all tore up. They couldn't suture anything so it just had to heal on its own and so I was in the hospital in England probably six weeks, two months. I don't know. I need to go back and think how long it was I left the hospital. I don't remember but anyway I had been in contact through email [?] with my buddy back in the old outfit. My

base outfit—and [clears throat] the war was over at that time when I got out of the hospital in Europe it was over and [clears throat] he and I corresponded back and forth and they were getting—I remember sending people to England on pass if they wanted it. So, we arranged and on the discharge from the hospital you had a week's leave. We went—I went to London and we got four days together in London and I noticed on his shirt [inaudible 37:18] he had a ribbon that was not there—it was something in Africa, it started in Africa and I called him about it and said how come you've got that? And he said oh you're eligible for it, it was while we were in France or in Africa [shakes head] we had direct—we were in direct contact with the front lines. There was no in between so we were considered in the battle zone and we got a battle star for that. That was five points for discharge. You'd have to go back—the army—I mean the war was over—were giving discharges on a point system. You had to have 75 points for discharge and points were allowed for being married and having children, how long you were in service, how long you were overseas. Each thing was worth five points. When they first came out with that, I think I had 65 points. Well, I—and then they declared the 23rd of March as the central European combat zone. I earned five points there and five points for my wound. I had 60 points so that gave me 70 points to discharge. Well, I knew I didn't have 75 but when I saw that ribbon for that battle in Africa, I knew that I was eligible or he told me I was because I was with the outfit at that time that would give me 75 points for discharge. Now, what they were doing when you leave the hospital you go through what's called a replacement depot which is people that are going to be assigned to a unit. There were different replacement depots. There was one in Le Havre, one in northern France, I don't know where, and one in Frankfurt, Germany. Once I got to Frankfurt, Germany, I was to be reassigned but I went to the first replacement depot [clears throat] and I went to the office and asked to be applied for my star and for Germany—[shakes head] for Africa—and they said there was no need in applying for it because it takes about two weeks for that thing to get here, you'll be gone to the next replacement depot before that which I was. In about three days I went on to a replacement depot in northern France. I did the same thing. I went to the office and asked for—to get, to get credit for that battle star and he said the same thing, you won't be here long enough and so on I went to Frankfurt and I knew that was the end. At Frankfurt I'd be assigned. Well, if I got assigned to one of these outfits, many of the soldiers had over a hundred points and I knew it would be a long time before I ever got assigned—I got home. So, I went into the office and talked to the guy there and he said well same story you'll be assigned before they get approval of it. Then we talked around a while and afterwards and he said, “oh hell I'll go ahead and turn your papers in and we don't know what'll happen.” So, we did and the day after that—not the next day but the day after—I was called by the headquarters and they said you had switchboard experience haven't you and I had in Africa, in the carpenter shop, I had been assigned the switchboard for a while. And I said yes.

They said well we need a switchboard operator would you mind coming up here and being assigned to us for switchboard duty until your approval comes through on your battle star. [laughs] I didn't say no. So, I did and I don't know. It was two, three weeks I got my orders I could go. So, I left and went back to Le Havre and on-board ship for home.

Interviewer: I want to briefly go back to the hospital where you were in recovery.

Anton: uh huh.

Interviewer: Were you there when victory in Europe was declared?

Anton: Well, I had to be. I don't know which one because—I think it was in, was Victory—May, May something—.

Interviewer: May 8th

Anton: Yeah, May and I was in the hospital in Paris or [shakes head] Fra—England then.

Interviewer: Do you remember the announcement of victory?

Anton: Not really, no.

Interviewer: In the hospital, you were there several weeks?

Anton: I was because the wound had to heal on its own. They couldn't suture it.

Interviewer: So, what were the day to day activities in the hospital?

Anton: I have no idea. I don't remember what I did at all.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you departed from Le Havre, France?

Anton: uh huh. [shakes head]

Interviewer: Okay. And what sort of ship did you board to return home?

Anton: Liberty boat. Liberty ship, they called it. Average sized troop ship.

Interviewer: Okay. And where did you dock in the United States?

Anton: New Jersey. [clears throat] I went to Fort Dix when we docked. The war in Fran—in the Pacific was over while we were on board ship. I remember they made the announcement. The war in the Pacific was over.

Interviewer: So that would have been in September of 1945?

Anton: No, it was August of 1945.

Interviewer: Do you remember any celebrations on board?

Anton: Oh, just some cheers that was about all I remember. I remember the announcement was made. See, in all of these, they were expected. The war in Europe was expected so when they said it was over, really it was not a big deal.

Interviewer: How did you feel about returning home?

Anton: Well, glad, yeah.

Interviewer: And you separated at Fort Dix?

Anton: No, they had a ship to Fort Dix to oh a base near Chicago, in northern Illinois. I can't recall the name of it but that's where I got my discharge and [clears throat] we had a sergeant to give us a discharge talk if you want to call it that and I brought up about joining the reserve and he said you can but I advise against it. I was glad because not long after that the Korean War broke out and they took all the reserves, so I missed it.

Interviewer: Why are you glad?

Anton: I didn't have to go into the army again. [laughs]

Interviewer: How do you evaluate your general experience in the army?

Anton: I don't know, just a normal soldier that's all.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy it?

Anton: Well, I didn't hate it.

Interviewer: But you didn't want to go back?

Anton: No. [shakes head]

Interviewer: Okay. So, tell me about meeting your wife. Describe that.

(45:20) Anton: Oh! [laughs] The day after I was discharged, the day I got, the day after I got home—this is at the—the city is a small town, it had a good bus system and the bus stopped at three houses away me at the corner and I [clears throat] was dressed of course all in my army outfit and all but I got on the bus, I wanted to go downtown for something. What for I don't remember what I went down for but anyway I got on the bus and at the next stop my former wife got on the bus. [laughs] She was—at that time she was 17 I think when I first met her. I didn't meet her then but I flirted with her. She wouldn't have anything to do with me [laughs]. But after that, a couple of days after that, there is a small drugstore, not far, two blocks from our home which was a kind of hangout place for kids and that's when I met her then because she was working there. I don't know anything much about after meeting her or anything else.

Interviewer: What was her name?

Anton: Moneta (spelling?) Lessin L-E-S-S-I-N

Interviewer: How long was your courtship?

Anton: Oh, let's see. I would have met her then in August and we were married the—not the Labor Day month, not the November, it was a year later. So, we had over a year courtship.

Interviewer: Is that 1946 you married?

Anton: Yeah. That's when we were married '46.

Interviewer: And you're still married to Moneta (spelling?)?

Anton: Still married to the same lady. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, what anniversary is that this year?

Anton: 70 this year.

Interviewer: Wow. So, can you tell me—did—describe your readjustment to civilian life.

Anton: Well, I really didn't have a problem. I got—before I was discharged, I was thinking well I'll take a week before I go to work. I had a job already. I worked for my father who was building homes and I think I was about four days after I was discharged—nobody there, I was just so early because I was unattached, I

was discharged early. All the guys from my outfit were still in Germany—my original outfit. While I was in battle, I was the second infantry division and they were gone. They were transferred to the Pacific war while I was in the hospital. So, when I got home, I rushed back to work.

Interviewer: And you went to work for you father at that time?

Anton: Yeah. mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Tell me about working with your father.

Anton: I don't know what to, what there is to say about it because both my broth—
[clears throat] one—my brothers and me, both were working for him.

Interviewer: What were you doing?

Anton: Helping him to work.

Interviewer: What kind of—.

Anton: Home building

Interviewer: Okay. And that was in and around Waterloo?

Anton: Waterloo.

Interviewer: Okay. Was it a thriving business?

Anton: Just average. I wouldn't say it was bustling but just average.

Interviewer: What sort of income did your father bring in?

Anton: [shakes head] Don't remember. I remember I started working for 60 cents an hour. Then I went to a dollar. You got to remember that a dollar back then was pretty good wages.

Interviewer: Did you move in with your parents?

Anton: uh huh. [shakes head] I was married when I lived with my parents and then we rented a two-room apartment on the west side of Waterloo.

Interviewer: So, when did you decided to go back to school?

Anton: Well, [clears throat] I had that in mind all along and I didn't want to be always be a carpenter and so, I had close contact with the supply people, the lumberyard people and to me that seemed inviting, to be a lumberyard manager. So that's what I went to school for. I searched for different schools that had that kind of a degree—supply—building material supply. So, I went that route. Let's see. I went to [inaudible] Northern Iowa back at that time was [inaudible] Iowa State teacher's college. I took some of my basic courses there while I was searching for a place to go—to end up and I ended up in Denver because I thought they had the best course.

Interviewer: What was the college?

Anton: Denver Uni—University of Denver.

Interviewer: And you completed college there?

Anton: Completed college yes. I got a degree there yes.

Interviewer: What sort of degree was it?

Anton: In building materials.

Interviewer: Okay. And your goal was to become a manager—.

Anton: [shakes head] A manager—.

Interviewer: —Of a lumberyard?

Anton: And I started out as an assistant manager.

Interviewer: So, tell me about the lumberyard you first started working at.

Anton: Well, [clears throat] it was just a small-town lumberyard.

Interviewer: Where was it?

Anton: Well, [clears throat] I think it was in the same town I ended up in but it was a different company. I can't—I'm not sure.

Interviewer: What about the lumberyard in Dyersville, Iowa?

Anton: It was a small-town lumberyard carried all lumber, building, building construction materials.

Interviewer: But you weren't—you were prevented from becoming manager. Why?

Anton: Because he already had one. Now I don't know [clears throat] what the situation was—whether he really wasn't an assistant manager but they—they were in cahoots together. He called and told me that he was the assistant manager and that's when two days later I went to Davenport, Iowa and interviewed with my second choice and then was placed in that yard.

Interviewer: How were they in cahoots?

Anton: They were skimming, and I don't know how or what, but I know [clears throat] they both were fired. They were not sentenced—no no criminal activity or anything of that nature but they were both fired.

Interviewer: So, instead you took a job in Davenport?

Anton: mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. And did you remain in this sort of work throughout your career?

Anton: Yeah. I was there I think four year—four or five years and then Dad wanted to quit the carpenter business, so I went back and worked with him. I actually took over the business.

Interviewer: How long did you own your father's business?

Anton: Three or four years and—.

Interviewer: What was the name of the business?

(53:25) Anton: Just Harry Anton Construction. Anton Construction Company yeah. [pause] [clears throat] I'm trying to think the year, but it was kind of a depression year and there was no—very little homebuilding at all. In fact, the year that I declared bankruptcy, one home—one housing building permit was issued for the entire year. So, I declared bankruptcy.

Interviewer: On, on that business?

Anton: mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. And what did you do after that?

Anton: [pause] Let's see. [mumbling] Davenport [mumbling] well—.

Interviewer: Did you continue working in the, in the lumber business?

Anton: I'm drawing a blank in something I should know right easily. Let me think.
[pause] [clears throat] [shakes head]

Interviewer: So, when did you come to the state of Georgia?

Anton: Okay. Now I got it. When I declared bankruptcy, I was looking for a [clears throat] anything to do anywhere. Now what did I come to Georgia for? [pause] That's terrible. [looks down].

Interviewer: Well, prior to this interview we were talking, and you mentioned that you came to Georgia in the early '60s.

Anton: '63.

Interviewer: And why did you come to Georgia?

Anton: It was for a job [clears throat]. What I'm doing is getting confused with that one and the one before [makes hand gestures]. Where did I go to work in Georgia? [pause] [looks down] Hmm, that's terrible.

Interviewer: Was it a job in the lumber business?

Anton: I can't remember. [pause]

Interviewer: I understand, that's alright. Do you remember the city you came to in Georgia?

Anton: Atlanta. I had a choice of Atlanta or Birmingham. Okay. Now I got it [clears throat]. Well, in January of forty—I'm not sure '46—anyway [clears throat] I always went to the Homebuilders National Convention which is in Chicago. And I went there and part of the reason to see what I could find for a job and [clears throat] they changed their name after I joined [pause] [mumbling] [looks down].

Interviewer: So, it was a business that was exhibiting at the Homebuilders—.

(58:40) Anton: Okay yeah. It was one of the exhibitors. They represented the Western Lumber and Trade Association Work and I applied there along with a couple others but I ended up with them and they were opening up a new position which they didn't have in Atlanta or well they said I could choose Atlanta or Birmingham and at the time I looked over the two cities and chose Atlanta. And what I was doing

was contacting any and everybody that used anything to do with lumber—architect, homebuilders, retail lumber and retail wholesale lumber people—anyone and just giving information to them and what the industry was about to do, why they wanted the field staff—they had five, five field staff members placed throughout the United States and we were, their industry was changing the size of dressed lumber, they were planning on it—changing from an inch and five-eighths inches to an inch and a half and they needed the field men to explain this new product, what it was, to keep them from rebelling against it. So, we were in the field talking about it before it ever happened but the—actually the people had a date set for it at the time. So, we did that and then, after they made the change, we still were out explaining it and talking to them. Our job was to help any and every one that had anything to do with lumber. Western Wood Products Association. And I did that until they began to disband it. Let's see. [pause] I'm getting the times mixed up [pause].

Interviewer: You were doing that work for them while living in Atlanta?

Anton: uh huh.

Interviewer: Okay. And when did you retire?

Anton: Ninety—well, it was the early '90s but I went on kind of—when they wanted me when a problem somewhere, they would send me for a while in my area. I remember I was in south Florida when Hurricane oh begins with a, letter A—

Interviewer: Andrew?

Anton: Andrew came. I got—it was on its way—knew where it was going to hit and I had been there to observe some lumber [clears throat] that someone—building in a park was complaining about so I was there to settle that. And I got out one day before Andrew hit.

Interviewer: Return to Atlanta?

Anton: Return to Atlanta, yeah [shakes head].

Interviewer: Okay. So, you stayed in this sort of representative in the lumber business throughout your career.

Anton: Until the '90s, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Anton: I was [clears throat] I was 65 I think in '88 but I stayed on partially and then I also did other jobs. [clears throat] My wife was working for an interior design firm that sold wallpaper and carpets and all things of that nature and [clears throat] she—what was I going to say? [pause] Well she was working there yet I [clears throat] retired in '91 from Western Wood Products Association and did these odd jobs along [shakes head] [inaudible 1:03]. One of the jobs I had was with her firm. They were—they needed a quick job for carpet in Dalton, Georgia so that—they had the truck for it and I would drive the truck, pick up the carpet and come back for them. I did that for quite a while, just off and on maybe a couple times a week or maybe a couple times a month until the '98. She left I think in '98.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you have one son?

Anton: One son, one grandson.

Interviewer: What's your son's name?

Anton: Victor, Vic.

Interviewer: And what's your grandson's name?

Anton: Michael.

Interviewer: And where does your grandson Michael go to school?

Anton: Right here at Kennesaw State. He's majoring in the GIS-Geographic Information Systems.

Interviewer: Excellent. So, Mr. Anton why do you think it's important to share your story of World War II?

Anton: Well, I just think it might be interesting to people.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much for sharing it today and we'll go ahead and end there.

Anton: Okay. Thank you [smiles and laughs].